

ב"ה Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1542

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פרשת וישלח
PARSHAT VAYISHLACH



Yud Tes Kislev:
A Little Less, A Little More
Rabbi Judah Mischel Page 38



Lecha Dodi
Rebbetzin Zemira Ozarowski
Page 54



ואת־הארץ אשר נתתי לאברהם וליצחק לך אתגנה
ולזרעך אחר־ך אתן את־הארץ בראשית ל"ה:י"ב

This weeks Torah Tidbits is dedicated in loving memory of
אברהם בן דוד צבי ז"ל
on the occasion of his 21st yahrzeit - י"ח כסלו
May the Torah Learning from this issue be לעלוי נשמתו



YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYISHLACH ZMANIM
CANDLES 3:59 PM • HAVDALA 5:15 PM • RABBEINU TAM 5:52 PM



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See TorahTidbits.com > Individual Articles
for this weeks Divrei Torah by
Rabbi Moshe Hauer and Rabbi Daniel Mann.

HELPFUL REMINDERS



The 1st light of Chanukah is:
Thursday night December 7th.

A SHORT VORT | BY RABBI CHANOCH YERES

Rav, Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

כה תאמרון לאדני לעשו כה אמר עבדך יעקב עם לבן גרתי ואחר עד אתה (לבה):

"Thus, you should say to my lord, Eisav, thus says your servant Yaakov, I have dwelt with Lavan and stayed until now" (32:5)
Rashi asks what does "dwelt with Lavan" mean in his message to Eisav?

He explains that the word "Garti"- "dwell" in numerical value is 613, to imply that Yaakov had dwelt with the evil Lavan, only in the physical manner but Yaakov did not allow Lavan's corrupt ways to influence him. On the contrary, he continues to observe the 613 commands of the Torah.

Rabbi Meir Shapiro (Lublin 1887-1933) explains the words of Rashi a little differently. Yaakov said that he dwelt with Lavan and continued to observe the 613 Mitzvot, however, he never achieved the enthusiasm and dedication to fulfill the mitzvot with the same exuberance as Lavan committed his destructive behavior. This is what Yaakov confessed to Eisav to calm his fears.

May we learn to perform our Mitzvot with stronger fervor and devotion than the wicked which commit their evil.
Shabbat Shalom

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



| | VAYISHLACH | | VAYEISHEV | |
|--|------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| | CANDLES | HAVDALA | CANDLES | HAVDALA |
| Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim | 3:59 | 5:15 | 3:59 | 5:15 |
| Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al) | 4:18 | 5:18 | 4:18 | 5:18 |
| Beit Shemesh / RBS | 4:17 | 5:16 | 4:18 | 5:16 |
| Alon Shvut | 4:15 | 5:15 | 4:15 | 5:16 |
| Raanana / Tel Mond / Herzliya / K. Saba | 4:15 | 5:15 | 4:15 | 5:16 |
| Modiin / Chashmonaim | 4:15 | 5:15 | 4:15 | 5:16 |
| Netanya | 4:15 | 5:15 | 4:15 | 5:16 |
| Be'er Sheva | 4:17 | 5:17 | 4:18 | 5:18 |
| Rehovot | 4:16 | 5:16 | 4:16 | 5:17 |
| Petach Tikva | 3:59 | 5:15 | 3:59 | 5:16 |
| Ginot Shomron | 4:14 | 5:14 | 4:14 | 5:15 |
| Haifa / Zichron | 4:03 | 5:14 | 4:03 | 5:14 |
| Gush Shiloh | 4:14 | 5:14 | 4:14 | 5:15 |
| Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel | 4:16 | 5:16 | 4:16 | 5:17 |
| Givat Zeev | 4:19 | 5:15 | 4:19 | 5:15 |
| Chevron / Kiryat Arba | 4:16 | 5:16 | 4:16 | 5:16 |
| Ashkelon | 4:17 | 5:17 | 4:18 | 5:18 |
| Yad Binyamin | 4:16 | 5:16 | 4:16 | 5:17 |
| Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden | 4:05 | 5:11 | 4:05 | 5:12 |
| Golan | 4:11 | 5:11 | 4:11 | 5:12 |
| Nahariya/Maalot | 4:11 | 5:13 | 4:12 | 5:14 |
| Afula | 4:12 | 5:13 | 4:12 | 5:14 |
| Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem) - 5:52 PM • Next Week - 5:52 PM | | | | |

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities;
40 mins in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat and Haifa)

Daf Yomi: Bava Kama 30

JERUSALEM

**Ranges 11 days Wed - Shabbat
Nov. 29 - Dec. 9 / 16 - 26 Kislev**

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin **5:25 - 5:32**
 Sunrise **6:19 - 6:27**
 Sof Zman Kriat Shema **8:53 - 8:59**
 Magen Avraham **8:14 - 8:20**
 Sof Zman Tefila **9:44 - 9:49**
 (According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)
 Chatzot (Halachic Noon) **11:27 - 11:31**
 Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha) **11:57 - 12:01**
 Plag Mincha **3:30 - 3:31**
 Sunset (Including Elevation) **4:39**



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
Executive Director, OU Israel

Every Shabbat afternoon since the beginning of the war I have been going to shul with my son Mordechai Tzemach and my daughters Tzofia Chana and Moriah to say *Tehillim* for the safety and success of our soldiers, for the return of our hostages, and for the *refuah sheleima* of the many thousands in Israel who have been injured. We pray for *Klal Yisrael* to be strong during these difficult times. Like so many others, my family is also focusing our *chesed* and prayers during these times. I don't discuss with them the full extent of what happened and what is going on, but they know that Israel is at war. I have to tell you, it is such a beautiful thing to see when your children feel that they have a place, a role to play, in this battle, through the recitation of *Tehillim* and connecting to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* as individuals, as a family, and as part of a community.



In this week's parsha we know that Yaakov prepared for his battle with Eisav tactically, with gifts, and with *tefilah*. In previous week's I have written about the army and volunteers. This week I want to focus on *tefilah*.

Too often, we get caught up in what we *have* to do. A parent might say to their

child, "We *have* to light the Shabbat candles!" A student might ask their teacher, "What *bracha* do I *have* to say on this food?" It's only natural, but it's important to recognize that it is happening in the first place. Prayer and *brachot* often get the hardest hit in this. When you're asked to pray three times a day, with a set text, it is difficult to muster feel-

ing and passion day in and day out. This is really unfortunate, because *tefilah* and *brachot* are a way for all Jews to connect with their Creator at any given moment. The simple act of eating an apple gives me a chance to talk to the Creator of the world. Even when I leave the bathroom, I connect and thank G-d. But when we forget that purpose, and allow it to become a passionless routine, it is sad. How do we break out of an automatic, mechanized Judaism? How do we stop ourselves from

**Condolences to
Dr. & Mrs. Dan Jacobson and family
on the passing of his father**

HOWARD ז"ל

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

feeling like we *have* to, and instead feel like we *want* to?

The answer, I believe, is remembering that there are times where we really feel *tefilah*, when it's easy to have *kavannah*. A person driving through a dangerous area and reciting *Tefilat Haderech* will really mean it, with probably a lot more feeling than when he or she recited the morning prayer, "*Hanoten le'sechvi vinah*," "Who gives the rooster understanding." In times of celebration, it is easy to say "*Hodu Lashem Ki Tov*," "Let's give thanks to G-d, that He is good." What we need to do is grab hold of when we really felt the *tefillot* and the *brachot*, and keep that feeling even when the events that inspired it are in the long-past.

An example of this for me is a *bracha* I have said for a long time, every day, but never had as much *kavannah* as I do nowadays: the *bracha* of *Matir Asurim* ("Who releases the imprisoned"). For nearly two months, I have said this *bracha* with unbelievable *kavannah*. I pray deeply for the return of our families, of our friends, nearly 240 people cruelly kidnapped and held without regard for age, illness, or any other factor - Hamas terrorists only cared that they were Jewish. Knowing that our brothers and sisters are probably in one of the worst places on earth... It's difficult to imagine. I can only pray.

When some of the hostages were freed this past week, new meaning was infused in my *bracha*. I said it and I meant it. G-d truly does release the imprisoned. I know some people were for the deal and some against it, but whose heart does not shake with joy and happiness watching a freed child run into the arms of her father and mother? Of an elderly grandmother slowly and steadily walk toward

her family with open arms? I know what I felt was just endless joy. Yes, I say this *bracha* of *matir asurim* so much stronger now.

It is important to remember that our brothers and sisters taken captive in Gaza are really representing us, the Jewish people. If it were up to Hamas, the seven million Jews of Israel would have been taken. They didn't kidnap anyone because of their name or the size of their bank account. They kidnapped them because they were Jewish. Whether you think that the hostages should only have been returned through military means, or you think it should be done through agreements and deals, we must realize it is up to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, and that we must rely on Him for any return to be successful. *Baruch Hashem*, we get to see once again how our prayers are working.

Another *bracha* that I have been saying with new meaning these past seven weeks has been another of the morning blessings, "*pokeach ivrim*," "who opens the eyes of the blind." Seven weeks ago, our eyes were closed. We were blind. We are all asking each other now, how could we not have seen what was about to happen? How did we allow it to fester for so long without seeing what it was becoming? And the reality is that sometimes

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G-d gives us the ability to see, but we don't pay attention - we don't really have the ability to see. A few weeks ago, we read in the Torah about how Hagar and Yishmael were dying of thirst in the desert, and Hagar cried out. Suddenly, the Torah tells us, she opened her eyes and she saw a well. G-d didn't make a well. He simply opened her eyes to see what was already there. *Pokeach Ivrim* means to pray to G-d that He open all of our eyes so that we are not blind. So that we can defend ourselves and protect ourselves from the evil forces out there that seek our destruction.

Another *bracha* - "*Hanoten leyaef koach*," "Who gives strength to the weary." So many of our soldiers, our leaders, and security personnel, are working countless hours, sleepless nights, to protect us and fight for us. Please give us the *koach*, the strength, even though we are tired, to continue moving forward.

All of these *brachot* we say every single morning have taken on a new and unique perspective during these times. I shared with you some of my perspectives, but I am sure that each of you have your own insights and connections to the prayers. What we need to do is share these ideas and keep this meaning with us beyond these weeks and months we are living through, and our *tefillot* will not be rote and routine, but vibrant with feeling and passion, for all of our needs and for all of *Klal Yisrael*. With G-d's help, our *brachot* and *tefillot* will be answered and we will be able to overcome them.

Wishing you an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

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We continue to pray for the safety
and quick return of our soldiers, the
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Jeremiah 32:15



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PARSHAT VAYISHLACH

Yaakov's challenges never seem to end. He returns to the Land of Israel. He is fearful of a confrontation with Esav. He prepares by dividing his entourage. A man fights him through the night, changing his name to Israel from Yaakov at dawn. Yaakov sends gifts to Esav to appease him. Esav runs, hugs Yaakov, kisses him and cries. Yaakov spurns Esav's request that they settle together. Dina is raped by Shechem in Shechem. Shimon and Levi kill the men of the city. Yaakov arrives at Beit El, the place of his ladder dream and builds an altar. Rachel dies giving birth to Binyamin. Reuven lies with Bilha. Yaakov is reunited with Yitzchak. Esav's lineage is outlined.

Yaakov's life is one of travail. Esav wanted to kill him; he fled for his life. The time with Lavan was full of hard work and deception. He fights with an angel. On his return home, he never reunites with his mother Rivka. He avoids confrontation with Esav. Dina is raped. The city of Shechem is slaughtered. His dear wife Rachel dies in childbirth. And next week Yosef gets sold. We well understand Chazal's comment at the beginning of next week's parsha that Yaakov just sought some peace and quiet.



1ST ALIYA (32:4-13)

Yaakov sends messengers to Esav: Tell Esav that his servant

Yaakov has been with Lavan. We have much flock. Word comes back that Esav is approaching with 400 men. Yaakov is afraid; splits his entourage, so at least half will survive. And he prays: While I am undeserving, You promised that my progeny would be numerous.

Yaakov does not know what to expect from Esav. Last we heard Esav wanted to kill Yaakov. Yaakov does not know if he still does. Because, there is a crucial lacuna in our story. Way back when Yaakov stole the blessing from Esav, Esav vowed to kill Yaakov. Rivka warned Yaakov to flee. But she also promised him that she would send word when the coast was clear, when Esav no longer sought to kill Yaakov (27:45). But she never did send word. Where's his mother Rivka? The one who loved him? Yaakov never got word from her that it was safe to return. Now, he did get assurance from G-d to return and that He would be with him. But does that mean Esav still wants to kill him, but that G-d will be with him and protect him? Or that Esav has given up his anger?



2ND ALIYA (32:14-30)

Yaakov prepares gifts of his livestock for Esav with the message: from your servant Yaakov. A man fights Yaakov overnight, wounding his thigh. At dawn the man tells him his name is Yisrael, for he fought G-d and man and prevailed.

Yaakov does not know if Esav harbors murderous intent. If he does, Yaakov

attempts to appease him with gifts. Why does he think livestock gifts with a gift card attached, “from your servant Yaakov” will cool Esav’s murderous intent?

Esav wanted to kill Yaakov because Yaakov stole the bracha. What was that bracha? (27:28-29) “G-d will give you of the fat of the land, much grain and wine. And you will rule: your brother will bow to you.” A 3 part bracha: agricultural success, political power and dominance over your brother. Yaakov is telling Esav not to get too worked up about the bracha. Because it never came true. I have no agricultural success, no power and no dominance over you. All I have are animals. No land. Certainly, no fat of the land. And power? I have been a migrant worker with Lavan. And who is bowing to whom? “From your servant Yaakov”. 3 strikes – no fat of the land, no power, and you are the master, not me. So, no need to fuss over a bracha that was a blank.



3RD ALIYA (32:31-33:5)

Yaakov wakes with a limp, hence the prohibition of eating the sciatic nerve. He sees Esav. Divides his family. Esav runs to him, hugs, kisses and cries.

Yaakov must have sighed a sigh of relief. When he heard that Esav was coming with 400 men, he was convinced Esav still sought to kill him – otherwise, why the brigade? And, I never got word from Mom that Esav doesn’t want to kill me. And then Esav ran, hugged, kissed and cried. What a relief.

What changed Esav’s mind? Let’s leave Yaakov’s shoes. And jump into Esav’s. Rivka never sent word of Esav’s change of heart because he didn’t have one. He has

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every intention to kill Yaakov. Brings his army. But now he has a change of heart. Why? Perhaps he was convinced by Yaakov that the bracha was a dud and so nothing to get worked up about. But the Torah seems silent on this crucial flip.

Why doesn't it tell us why Esav changed his mind, gave up his intent to kill Yaakov and hugs him instead?

This leads the Midrash to question the sincerity of Esav's hugs and kisses. In our written Torah there are dots over each letter of Esav's kisses. This is a way of saying – take note, there is more than meets the eye in these kisses. Perhaps these kisses are fleeting; the murderous intent still lurking.



4TH ALIYA (33:6-20)

Esav is urged to accept Yaakov's gifts. Esav offers that they live in brotherhood. Yaakov demurs, sending Esav ahead, hinting he will catch up. He turns instead toward the Land of Israel. He dwells in Sukkot and then in Shechem. He builds an altar and calls in the name of G-d.

Yaakov's insistence on a complete separation from Esav could support the view that Esav's kisses were insincere. Yaakov saw through the façade and hence wanted a complete separation.

And while Yaakov may have tried to convince Esav that the bracha of Yitzchak did not come to be, he does not believe that himself. He is convinced he is the heir to the Jewish legacy. He goes to Shechem and builds an altar. Why doesn't he go immediately to Beit El? Didn't he make a vow when he had the dream with the ladder that he would return to that spot? And why didn't he immediately reunite with his mother and father? Why go to Shechem

and not Beit El or Chevron?

He is following in Avraham's footsteps – literally. Avraham journeyed from Charan; first stop in the land of Israel was Shechem, where he built an altar. Yaakov has just journeyed from Charan to the land of Israel, stopping first at Shechem and building an altar. He sees himself clearly as the heir of Avraham, walking in his footsteps.



5TH ALIYA (34:1-35:11)

Dina is raped by Shechem in Shechem. The brothers claim they will only ally with people who are circumcised. While the men are recovering Shimon and Levi kill them all. Yaakov is upset. But they counter; "can they make our sister a harlot?" G-d tells Yaakov to go to Beit El and make the promised altar. He does. G-d appears to him and tells him his name is Yisrael not Yaakov. And that nations and Kings will come from him.

The story of the rape of Dina is the first story of the next generation. And the brother's rhetorical comment will be a clarion for the rest of the book – not what they said but what they implied. "Can they make our sister a harlot?" meaning, and we, her brothers stand idly by? No. We stand up for our siblings. Thus begins the rest of the book – brothers standing up for brothers. And while they stand up for Dina, they fail to stand up for Yosef.

Yaakov's reaction to the slaughter of Shechem is also instructive. He criticizes the violence for it will impede good relations with the people of the Land. Yaakov may think that the Divine promise of the Land is about to unfold in his time. A promise was made to Avraham at the Brit bein Habetarim: your children will

be strangers in a foreign land, enslaved, oppressed and only after a long time will return here. Yaakov was kind of a slave in a foreign land, was oppressed there – perhaps then the promise of the Land was to unfold in his time. And for that, bad relations with the people are a bad thing.



6TH ALIYA (35:12-36:19)

G-d affirms the promise of the Land to Yaakov. Yaakov builds altars, traveling south. Rachel dies while giving birth to Binyamin. Reuven lies with Bilha. Yaakov goes to Chevron, to Yitzchak. Yitzchak dies at age 180, buried by Esav and Yaakov.

Yaakov continues walking in Avraham's footsteps, traveling south and building altars. But Yaakov's life differs, tragically, from Avraham and Yitzchak. He proceeds without Rachel, his dear wife. Women have played a dominant role until here. Rachel's death deprives Yaakov of the wise feminine voice that Avraham had with Sarah and Yitzchak had with Rivka. Would Yosef have had that special coat had Yaakov had Rachel's counsel?



7TH ALIYA (36:20-43)

Esav's descendants are enumerated: nations and kings.

As with Yishmael, Esav's family is detailed. This is the end of the story of who is in the Jewish people and who out. The rest of the Torah is the story of Yaakov and his family, all of whom are the Jewish people.

OVADIAH 1:1-21

This week's Haftorah taken from the book of Ovadiah describes the punishment that will ultimately be brought upon Edom,

the descendant of Esav. This theme relates directly to Esav's conflict with Yaakov which is highlighted in the Torah reading.

The navi Ovadiah is a convert to Judaism and had his own roots in the Edomite people. The Edomites did not offer to help Judea when they were attacked by the Babylonians. Many years later the Edomites, who are associated with the Roman Empire, were responsible for destroying the Second Beit Hamikdash and caused untold suffering and pain upon the Jewish nation.

Although the Roman Empire was one of the most formidable and powerful nations to rule the world, the prophet of Israel reveals the following: "The house of Yaakov shall be fire and the house of Yosef a flame, and the house of Esav shall become stubble, and they shall ignite them and consume them..."

The Haftorah then describes the division of Esav's land amongst the returning exiles. This memorable haftorah ends with the well known verse: "And saviors shall ascend Mount Zion to judge the mountain of Esav, and the Lord shall have the kingdom."



STATS

8th of 54 sedras; 8th of 12 in Bereishit.
Written on 237 lines; rank 11th.
9 Parshiot - 6 Petuchot; 3 Stumot.
153 pesukim - 4th (1st in Bereshit),
tied with Noach, but more words and letters.
1976 words - 6th (4th in Bereshit).
7458 letters - 6th (4th in Bereishit).



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BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB
OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, EMERITUS

Unheralded Heroes

You don't hear much about them, and sometimes you don't even know their names. But they are the true heroes and heroines in our lives and in our times.

As I hope to demonstrate, it was also true in biblical times that very important characters in the narrative are hardly mentioned, perhaps only hinted at.

I first became interested in this phenomenon shortly after the events of September 11, 2001. I was listening to one of my favorite radio talk shows while driving. The guest was a professor of sociology who was insisting, much to the chagrin of the talk show host, that the firemen who lost their lives saving others at the World Trade Center were not true heroes.

He maintained that a true hero does something very unusual, something neither he nor anyone else typically does. These firemen, he argued, were simply doing their duty. They showed up to work in the morning, went through their usual routine, and responded to this assignment as part of their job.

The announcer was horrified by this professor's opinion and pronounced it a typical example of "academic snobbery". My gut reaction was identical to the announcer's horror. Of course, those firemen were

heroes, great heroes. And they were heroes by virtue of the very fact that they carried out their life-saving duties with such astounding courage.

Continuing to drive, I began to reflect upon the question of the definition of "hero" in the Jewish tradition. From the Jewish perspective, is a hero some kind of Superman who behaves in some extraordinarily dramatic fashion? Or is the true hero the person who, day in and day out, does what is expected of him in a faithful and diligent manner, humbly and anonymously, never making the headlines?

My research soon convinced me that the latter definition was the accurate one from a Jewish point of view. He or she, who dutifully and loyally does his or her job, be it in the mundane or the sacred sphere, is the true hero or heroine.

As an example, let me introduce you to a personage who is mentioned in this week's Torah portion, *Vayishlach*, although even if you read the portion carefully, you may not have noticed her name. Her name was Deborah.

Open your Bible with me and turn to *Genesis* 35:8. Jacob, his wives, and their many children have returned to the Land of Israel. They have reached Bethel, Jacob's original starting point. Jacob erected an altar there.

And then we read: "And Deborah, Rebecca's nurse, died and she was buried... under the oak, and it was called the 'Oak of Tears.'"

Who was this woman, never mentioned

by name before? Why did her demise evoke such grief? Why is she important enough to “make it” into the biblical narrative?

Now turn back a few pages with me to *Genesis* 24:59. Here we read that when Rebecca left her birthplace to journey to the Land of Israel and marry Isaac, she took her nurse with her. A nurse with no name, whom we know nothing about until we learn of her death in this week’s Torah portion.

Our rabbis speculate that nurse Deborah was a major part of the entire epic drama of Rebecca’s life with Isaac and Jacob. They suggest that she was the one sent by Rebecca to retrieve Jacob from his long exile.

Our rabbis tell us, too, that she was nurse to Rebecca’s many grandchildren who shed those many tears under the old oak tree.

Jewish mystical sources even aver that nurse Deborah was reincarnated into the much later Deborah, who was a Judge and Prophet in Israel!

Deborah is an excellent example of someone who “just did her job”, regularly and consistently, and who had an impact upon three generations of major biblical characters, including a matriarch, two patriarchs, and the forbearers of the 12 tribes.

She exemplifies the type of person that the Talmud refers to when it asks: “Who deserves a place in the world to come,” and answers: “He who slips in silently and slips out silently.”

Rabbi Akiva, one of the great Jewish heroes and sages, taught us a similar lesson. At a critical juncture in his life, he was inspired by the fact that a stone is impenetrable by ordinary means. But when a gentle waterfall drips upon stone for hundreds of years, it succeeds in boring a hole in stone. Quiet consistency and persistence are the true

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ingredients of heroism and strength.

In the Bible, as in all of life, there are major figures who work behind the scenes but who are indispensable to the important events of history. They are unheralded and often anonymous. They are real heroes too.

In the words of the poet John Keats, they are the children “of silence and slow time”. They help us see the truth in that poet’s exquisite words:

“Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard

Are sweeter.” ■



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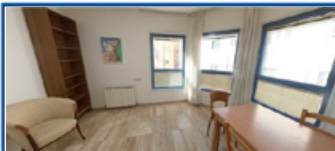
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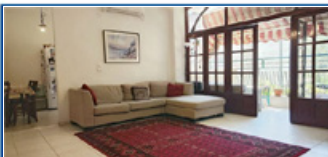
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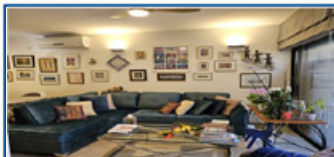
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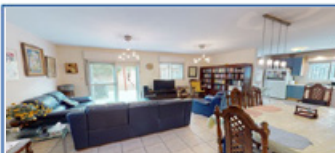
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לעילוי נשמות

פנחס בן יעקב אשר וגולדה בת ישראל דוד איז ע"ה ועזריאל בן אריה לייב ומעניה בת יצחק שרטור ע"ה

Collective Responsibility

By any standards it was a shocking episode. Jacob had settled on the outskirts of the town of Shechem, ruled by Hamor. Dina, Jacob's daughter, goes out to see the town. Shechem, Hamor's son, sees her, abducts and rapes her, and then falls in love with her and wants to marry her. He begs his father, "Take this girl as a wife for me" (Gen. 34:4).

Jacob hears about this and keeps quiet, but his sons are furious. She must be rescued, and the people must be punished. Hamor and his son come to visit the family and ask them to give consent to the marriage. Jacob's sons pretend to take the offer seriously. We will settle among you, they say, and intermarry, on condition that all your males are circumcised. Hamor and Shechem bring back the proposal to the people of the town, who agree.

On the third day after the circumcision, when the pain is at its height and the men incapacitated, Simon and Levi, Dina's brothers, enter the town and kill every single male (Gen. 34:26).

It was a terrible retribution. Jacob rebukes his sons:

"You have brought trouble on me - you have made me odious to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and Perizzites. I am few in number, and if they join forces and attack me, I and my household will be destroyed." *Gen. 34:30*

But Simon and Levi reply:

"Should he have treated our sister like a prostitute?" *Gen. 34:31*

There is a hint in the text that Simon and Levi were justified in what they did. Unusually the Torah adds, three times, an authorial comment on the moral gravity of the situation:

Yaakov's sons, having heard what had

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be לעילוי נשמת our beloved
Sharon Horowitz a"h
on her 50th Yahrtzeit
on the first night of Chanukah**

**Though her life was short, her impact
on all who knew her was great!**

*Mina and Howard Millendorf
Sharon, Shlomo, Eliot,
Amiad, and Yagel Rabinowitz*

happened, came back from the field. They were shocked and furious, for Shechem had committed an outrage in Israel by sleeping with Yaakov's daughter. Such a thing cannot be done! *Gen. 34:7*

The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and spoiled the city, because they had defiled their sister. *Gen. 34:27*

Yet Jacob condemns their action, and although he says no more at the time, it remains burning in his mind. Many years and fifteen chapters later, on his death-bed, he curses the two brothers for their behaviour:

Shimon and Levi are brothers; weapons of violence their wares. Let me never join their council, nor my honour be of their assembly. For in their anger they killed men; at their whim they hamstrung oxen. Cursed be their anger, for it is most fierce, and their fury, for it is most cruel. I will divide them up in Yaakov, and scatter them in Israel. *Gen. 49:5-7*

Who was right in this argument? Maimonides vindicates the brothers. In his law code, the Mishneh Torah, he explains that the establishment of justice and the rule of law is one of the seven Laws of Noah, binding on all humanity:

And how are the Gentiles commanded to establish law courts? They are required to establish judges and officers in every area of habitation to rule in accordance with the enforcement of the other six commands, to warn the citizenry concerning these laws and to punish any transgressor with death by the sword. And it is on this basis that all the people of Shechem were guilty of death (at the hands of Simon and Levi, sons of Jacob): because Shechem (their Prince) stole (and raped) Dina, which they saw and



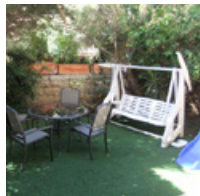
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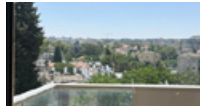
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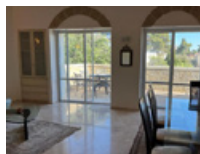
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knew about, but did not bring him to justice... *Maimonides. Laws of Kings, 9, 14*

According to Maimonides, there is a principle of collective responsibility. The inhabitants of Shechem, knowing that their prince had committed a crime and failing to bring him to court, were collectively guilty of injustice.

Nachmanides disagrees. The Noahide command to institute justice is a positive obligation to establish laws, courts and judges, but there is no principle of collective responsibility, nor is there liability to death for failure to implement the command. Nor could there be, for if Simon and Levi were justified, as Maimonides argues, why did Jacob criticise them at the time and later curse them on his death bed?

The argument between them is unresolved, just as it was between Jacob and his sons. We know that there is a principle of collective responsibility in Jewish law: *Kol Yisrael arevin zeh bazeh*, “All Jews are sureties for one another.” But is this specific to Judaism? Is it because of the peculiar nature of Jewish law, namely that it flows from a covenant between God and the Israelites at Mount Sinai, at which the people pledged themselves individually and

collectively to keep the law and to ensure that it was kept?

Maimonides, unlike Nachmanides, seems to be saying that collective responsibility is a feature of all societies. We are responsible not only for our own conduct but for those around us, amongst whom we live. Or perhaps this flows not from the concept of society but simply from the nature of moral obligation. If X is wrong, then not only must I not do it. I must, if I can, stop others from doing it, and if I fail to do so, then I share in the guilt. We would call this nowadays the guilt of the bystander. Here is how the Talmud puts it:

Rav and R. Chanina, R. Yochanan and R. Habiba taught [the following]: Whoever can forbid his household [to commit a sin] but does not, is seized for [the sins of] his household; [if he can forbid] his fellow citizens, he is seized for [the sins of] his fellow citizens; if the whole world, he is seized for [the sins of] the whole world. *Shabbat 54b*

Clearly, however, the issue is a complex one that needs nuance. There is a difference between a perpetrator and a bystander. It is one thing to commit a crime, another to witness someone committing a crime and failing to prevent it. We might hold a bystander guilty, but not in the same degree. The Talmud uses the phrase “is seized.” This may mean that he is morally guilty. He can be called to account. He may be punished by “the heavenly court” in this world or the next. It does not mean that he can be summoned to court and sentenced for criminal negligence.

The issue famously arose in connection with the German people and the Holocaust. The philosopher Karl Jaspers made a distinction between the moral guilt of the perpetrators and what he called the

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metaphysical guilt of the bystanders:

There exists a solidarity among men as human beings that makes each co-responsible for every wrong and every injustice in the world, especially if a crime is committed in his presence or with his knowledge. If I fail to do whatever I can to prevent them, I too am guilty. If I was present at the murder of others without risking my life to prevent it, I feel guilty in a way not adequately conceivable either legally, politically, or morally. That I live after such a thing has happened weighs upon me as indelible guilt.¹

So there is real guilt, but, says Jaspers, it cannot be reduced to legal categories. Simon and Levi may have been right in thinking that the men of Shechem were guilty of doing nothing when their prince abducted and assaulted Dina, but that does not mean that they were entitled to execute summary justice by killing all the males. Jacob was right in seeing this as a brutal assault. In this case, Nachmanides' position seems more compelling than that of Maimonides.

One of Israel's most profound moralists, the late Yeshayahu Leibowitz (1903-1994), wrote that though there may have been an ethical justification for what Simon and Levi did, "there is also an ethical postulate which is not itself a matter of rationalisation and which calls forth a curse upon all these justified and valid considerations."² There may, he says, be actions which can be vindicated but are nevertheless accursed. That is what

Jacob meant when he cursed his sons.

Collective responsibility is one thing. Collective punishment is another.

Around the Shabbat Table

What do you think the debate between Ramban and Rambam can teach us about the complexities of decision-making in Jewish history?

Looking back at the stories we have read so far in Sefer Bereishit, what are some other instances of collective responsibility?

How do you see the notion of '*Kol Yisrael arevin zeh bazeh*' (all Jews are responsible for one another) playing out in modern and diverse Jewish communities? ■

These weekly teachings from **Rabbi Sacks** zt"l are part of his 'Covenant & Conversation' series on the weekly Torah teaching. With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel. Visit www.RabbiSacks.org for more.

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1. Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, Trans. E. B. Ashton. New York: Fordham University Press 2000, 26.

2. Yeshayahu Leibowitz, *After Kibiyeh: Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State* 1953-4, <http://www.leibowitz.co.il/leibarticles.asp?id=85>.



PROBING

THE PROPHETS

BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER

Faculty, OU Israel Center

Rabbi Winkler's popular Jewish History lectures can be viewed by visiting the OU Israel Video archive: <https://www.ouisrael.org/video-library>

Although this morning's parasha describes the long-awaited reunion and rapprochement between Eisav and Ya'akov, it also indicates that there seems to have been very little subsequent relations between the two. Yes. They did part amicably.....but they part and except for the cooperative burial of their father Yitzchak, we never read any experience that they shared. It is this very point that leads to the prophecy of Ovadya, the shortest book of nevu'ah in the Tanach and the one that makes up this week's haftarah. By the time that Ovadya offered his prophetic message, Edom, the nation of Eisav, had no positive relations with Israel and exhibited no brotherly love toward Jacob's descendants. In fact, they had become an enemy of the Israelite people (as I pointed out in my previous article for Parashat Toledot) and the navi's prediction of the harsh punishments that would befall Edom is, in no small part, due to the fact that Edom WAS a brother and should have reflected that relationship in their behavior toward Israel.

Indeed, the enmity displayed by Edom to Yisrael was so intense that they became the very symbol of every enemy of Israel, something to which Ovad'ya hints when, while speaking of Edom, he includes the punishments awaiting "all the nations" who opposed Hashem's chosen people. Additionally, it is interesting to note that when we study the prophecies of Yirmiyahu, Amos and Yechezkel, we find that the name "Edom" is often used as a general term for

the foes of Israel-even those who, according to some commentaries, tormented Israel during the second Temple when the nation of Edom no longer existed!

Perhaps this division between the nations should not have been unexpected, given that the blessing of Yitzchak to Eisav stated that the two future nations would never rule at the same time but would, rather, dominate or be dominated by the other. In light of this, we understand more fully why Edom became the symbol of all Israel's enemies, for the success of Israel would only come with the weakening, and eventual destruction, of "Edom".

Ovadya, however, does not suffice relaying a nevu'ah of the punishment that would be meted out to Edom. In the final psukim of his Sefer, he offers powerful words to all of the "Edoms" throughout history – to all of Israel's enemies. "Ki karov Yom Hashem al kol hagoyim", G-d's day of reckoning of those nations is approaching, Ovadya warns, when He will repay their wickedness by punishing them with the same evil that they visited upon Israel. But he then tells Israel these comforting words: "Uv'har Tziyon t'h'yeh pleita..", after all your suffering and persecution, know well that those who remain will find refuge on Har Tziyon, in Jerusalem. These prophetic words have been realized in our very time. The remnants, the survivors of the worst of all evils, found refuge and built new lives IN TZIYON!! IN "ZION"!!!

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Many years ago I heard a well-known story told about the great Chafetz Chayim, Rav Yisrael Meir Kagen, who passed away in 1933. In his final year, the Nazi party had grown in power and the Chafetz Chayim expressed his concern. One of his students asked what would happen to the Jews and the Chafetz Chayim responded prophetically: "uv'har Tziyon t'h'yeh pleita", the future Jewish survival would be found in Tziyon.

As we face to Edom of today we are reminded of how we have enemies that face us in every generation. But we should also be aware that, in a few days, we will mark G-d's victory over the Edom that the Chashmona'im faced. How fitting, therefore, that our annual readings has us hear Ovadya's words only a week or two before Chanuka so that we be reminded that "V'hayeta LaSham Ham'lucha"- that ultimately,

Hashem alone will judge all of the Edoms as
He reigns over all of mankind..

Which is what we hope to witness in our
own days! ■

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Dear Friends,

In Rabbi Berman's recent Torah Tidbits message, the various challenges that have held us back from offering regular on-site programs at the OU Israel Center in the current circumstances were mentioned. B'Ezrat Hashem we intend to do our best to begin to gradually bring back as many of our beloved shiurim and programs as possible as we work to overcome those challenges in the weeks ahead.

There are now multiple ways to be kept up to date about virtual programs as well as in-person programs (which will be offered on-site at the OU Israel Center and in additional locations). In addition to advertisements for programs here in the pages of Torah Tidbits, we will also send periodic email newsletter updates. We also recently launched the OU Israel Community on WhatsApp, which allows those who join our WhatsApp community to access general program updates, as well as to join specific groups for many of our regular classes and programs.

To join the OU Israel WhatsApp community, enter this link into the browser on your phone:
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To view the updated schedule of all OU Israel Virtual and In-Person Programs, please visit
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We will continue offering two daily chizuk Zoom sessions. To access these sessions:



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*May HaKadosh Baruch Hu watch over and protect our chayalim,
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(בראשית לב:כד)

And he took them and brought them across the stream, and he took across what was his. (Bereshit 32:24).

The Torah tells us that Yaakov transferred his belongings from one side of the stream to the other. Rashi interprets the pasuk as follows:

אֶת־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ: בְּהֵמָה וְהַמְטִלָּלִים; עֶשֶׂה עֲצָמוֹ
כְּגֶשֶׁר נוֹטֵל מִכָּאן וּמִנִּיחַ כָּאן (בראשית רבה):

what was his: *The animals and the movables. He made himself like a bridge* כְּגֶשֶׁר, *taking from here and depositing there. — [from Gen. Rabbah 75:9]*

Yaakov had a great deal of wealth, including cattle, earthenware and other valuables. How was it possible for Yaakov to transfer all of his assets single handedly? Moreover, why does Rashi refer to Yaakov as a “**bridge**”? Maybe a more appropriate description would be an assembly line? What are we to understand from the depiction of a **bridge**?

Rabbi Yisachar Shlomo Teichtel, the author of the famous Zionist work “Em Habanim Semecha”, lived during the Holocaust. He was a Satmar Hassid who later turned into a Zionist and wrote several

sefarim in which he expresses the importance and significance of Eretz Yisrael. In his sefer Mishna Sachir שכיר – Rav Teichtel addresses the question raised above – why Rashi refers to Yaakov as serving as a **bridge**, when describing the way in which he transferred his possessions over the stream.

Rav Teichtel explains as follows. Yaakov valued everything he received from Hashem. Yaakov worked hard in the house of Lavan and wanted to secure his fortune so it would not fall into Esav's hands. Yaakov was successful, because he served as a bridge. A bridge has one foot on each end to support it. Although Yaakov was in Chutz La'aretz for twenty-two years while residing at the house of Lavan, he always maintained one foot in Eretz Yisrael. He yearned to return and never felt settled outside of Israel. It is this connection to Eretz Yisrael that protected Yaakov's property.

Rav Teichtel states that in Europe many Jews felt comfortable and did not desire to return to Israel. When they had both feet in *galut*, their property was taken from them by Esav. To protect our possessions, we need to have one foot in Israel. Always remembering that our heart is in Jerusalem.

Today, after 2000 years in *galut* we are privileged to be able to set both feet in Israel. Although we may still have challenges with our neighbors, as with Yaakov, we believe we will be protected in Eretz

Yisrael. May all world Jewry serve as a bridge and maintain at least one leg in Israel, yearning to be here and defending our country from physical and verbal assaults. May we be blessed with the bracha Yaakov gave to his grandchildren לרב וידגו הארץ – בקרב הארץ – may we be able to populate the country and live in peace and harmony.

Perhaps the reference to a “bridge” can also mean that we each need to build bridges to close the gap between us – so we can be a unified people in our promised Land. No matter our *hashkafa* or political views, we need to respect each other. May we each build and serve as a bridge connecting ourselves to Eretz Yisrael and to Am Yisrael. ■

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An Ox and a Donkey

Yaakov Avinu sends messengers with gifts to appease Eisav before their fateful meeting. The message he instructs them to deliver begs an interpretation. “I have been living with Lavan . . . and I have acquired an ox and a donkey.” (*Bereisheet* 32:5-6) This is rather strange, the text expresses the animals in the singular, one ox, one donkey. Further, what is the significance of including these particular animals in his communication with Eisav?

The Brisker Rav explains that the mention of the animals is essentially connected to the previous detail, “I have been living with Lavan.” Yaakov Avinu is emphasizing that he was not influenced by Lavan in any way, just as someone living in a barn would not be influenced by the animals surrounding him. Here, Yaakov Avinu is imparting a direct message. We must always be very clear concerning what can influence us. What will we allow to impress us and what will we deem beneath our dignity?

In another vein, we find quite an enigmatic assertion in the *midrash Bereisheet Rabbah* 75. “Ox” symbolizes Yosef who Moshe Rabbeinu and Yaakov Avinu compared to an ox in their brachot, “donkey” symbolizes Yissachar, who Yaakov Avinu compared to a donkey. What

does this mean?

In *Noam Elimelech*, Rav Elimelech of Lizhensk explains that Yaakov was simultaneously addressing Eisav and G-d. When he said “*Le’Eisav*,” he was drawing Esav’s attention to the physical flocks that he possessed, emphasizing that his father’s blessings were not fulfilled, since the animals derive neither from “the dew of the heavens,” nor “the fat of the land.” When he said “*La’Adoni*,” Yaakov was instructing the angels to implore Hashem for mercy in the merit of these two great sons.

Shem Mishmuel offers a further insight. He teaches that the ox, Yosef, countered the negative force of Eisav and the donkey, Yissachar, countered the negative force of Yishmael. Eisav combined these two forces by marrying Yishmael’s daughter. The ox as we know, is the primary example in the Talmud signifying killing and damage. Yosef Hatzadik symbolizes the positive strength of an ox as he overcame his lustful temptations. The impure donkey epitomizes one who is drawn to physicality and the temptations of *olam hazeh*. The greatest counterforce to this negative energy is the power of Torah study, represented by the tribe of Yissachar. Yaakov Avinu felt confident that the *zechut* of these two tribes would help him prevail over his brother Eisav.

Chazal teach us that Torah study and acts of kindness are the keys to usher in the final redemption. Yissachar is the model of Torah

study, and Yosef Hatzadik is the model of chesed as he supported his family in Egypt. In the cosmic meeting with Eisav, Yaakov Avinu is teaching us that we must activate the merit of the "ox" and the "donkey" to vanquish the destructive evil of Eisav and Yishmael, may it come soon in our days. ■

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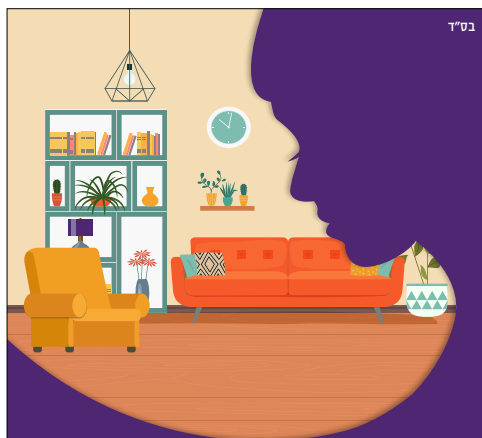
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Teshuva* (Mosaica 2021)

Yud Tes Kislev: A Little Less, A Little More

In the times of the Alter Rebbe, Reb Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the *Baal haTanya*, a newly married man was spending his days learning in *kollel* when he became drawn to the path of *Chassidus*. His in-laws were *misnagdim*, and opposed his new-found *derech*. This serious young man was quite bright, had ‘great potential’, and had been carefully selected by his *shver* as an appropriate match. His newfound spiritual pursuits didn’t fit the mold of his family’s expectations. In time, his father-in-law became more and more irritated and impatient with the changes in his behavior and did his best to apply even more pressure. The young man began to dedicate more of his time to davening with contemplative kavanah. He would also attend late night Chassidic gatherings, where he would join the enthusiastic singing and even make *leChaims* on *mashkeh*. All of this detracted, in the estimation of his father-in-law, from the man’s focus, seriousness, learning time and religious accomplishments.

After months of pent up frustration, the father-in-law finally had enough. Fuming, made his way to the Baal HaTanya to complain. Bursting into his office, the man verbally accosted the Rebbe over his

son-in-law’s compromised learning schedule and apparent *bitul Torah*.

The Alter Rebbe smiled and responded: “Please rest assured: your son-in-law is not learning a lesser quantity of Torah than before. However, consider the leap in quality. Previously, he would learn something to impress ‘the *shver* and *shvigger*’, you and your wife. Then he would learn something more to gain *kavod*, respect and honor, from your illustrious sons, his brothers-in-law. After that, he’d continue learning Torah so that his own wife would have *nachas*, and then add a little more just to impress his friends. Finally, he would find time to learn a few minutes with elevated intention, just for the sake of the *Ribbono shel Olam*. But now that he has uncovered the depth and beauty of Chassidus, he is no longer learning for you, your family, his wife, or his friends. Now, all the Torah that he is learning is *l’shem Shamayim*, for the sake of Heaven, for Hashem’s honor!

This week is Yud Tes (the 19th of) Kislev, the celebration of the release of the Alter Rebbe from prison. More than just a day that remembers the personal liberation of the Alter Rebbe, Yud Tes Kislev marks

a turning point in Jewish history. Just two years prior, the Alter Rebbe's first publication of *Sefer haTanya* had made many of the previously inaccessible, abstract concepts of Kabbalah and philosophy comprehensible and practically applicable, marking the beginnings of a new era in the spread of Chassidus. Yet this publication also brought fierce opposition. The Alter Rebbe understood his unjust arrest and imprisonment to be part of this spiritual backlash — and his spontaneous exoneration and liberation as a sign that the gates were open to spread the wellsprings of these teachings on an unprecedented scale.

In this way, Yud Tes Kislev is considered “the Rosh Hashanah of Chassidus”, a sort of birthday for this revolutionary movement of spiritual awakening and growth, which, over time, has enabled countless people to access a deeper and more authentic, personal connection to Hashem.

.....

The Rebbe Maharash, zt'l, the fourth rebbe in the Chabad lineage, taught that three things are inevitable: “Someone who drinks will get drunk. Someone who becomes wealthy will lose their *yishuv ha-daas*, their mental clarity. And someone who learns Chassidus will grow and improve.”

One of his *chasidim* heard this and said, “But Rebbe, we see in actuality that plenty of people drink and don't get drunk, plenty of people become wealthy and don't lose their *yishuv ha-daas*, and there are some who learn Chassidus and it doesn't seem to affect them very much!” The Rebbe responded, “Well, that may be true, but it only means they haven't drunk enough, they don't actually have that much wealth,

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and they haven't learned enough Chassidus. Truly, if a person learns a little bit more Chassidus, and then a little more, and a little more, you'll see, in the end that person will grow and improve.”

.....

The Alter Rebbe once explained that by writing the *Tanya* he was providing an opportunity for every reader to enter into *yechidus* with him, to enjoy a private meeting and receive personal guidance, insights and blessings for their own life. On this auspicious day we are invited to enter the study of the Baal haTanya, to sit across the table from the *tzadik* and connect with him. May we be blessed in this 'new year' that all of our learning be elevated and *L'sheim Shamayim*. May we feel an ever deeper personal connection to Hashem, and grow and improve, and share this light with one and all. ■



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

As we find ourselves in *Chodesh Kislev*, it is important to note that many of our *meforshim* often present insights connecting the various *parshiyot* of this time of year, with the festival of *Chanukah*.

Parshat VaYishlach contains within it, the powerful account of *Yaakov Avinu* wrestling with the mysterious *Ish*, on the night before he is to re-engage with his brother *Eisav*. The *pasuk* tells us:

Vivateir Yaakov Levado, VaYaaveik Ish Imo, Ad Alot HaShachar - And Yaakov was alone, and a man wrestled with him, until the light of dawn.

There are many questions and powerful messages that are connected to this verse, but I'd like to specifically address, how could it be, that *Yaakov*, who is traveling with an entourage of more than 400 people and herds of cattle and sheep, is suddenly left alone?

Rashi, quoting the *Gemara* in *Chulin*, says that *Yaakov* had forgotten some small jars or canisters, and he left his entourage to retrieve those jars.

Rabbeinu Bechaya takes this idea a step further. He says our verse could be read or understood slightly differently, *al tikra levado, eleh lekado* - Do not read that *Yaakov* was alone, rather that he went to retrieve a specific jar or canister that he possessed.

What exactly was this specific canister that *Yaakov Avinu* suddenly went to retrieve?

Rebbe Meir Horowitz, the *Imrei Noam of Dzhikov, zy'a*, offers a very novel explanation. The Rebbe explains that this special container was a jar of olive oil, but not just any jar of olive oil.

Noach sent forth a *yonah* - a dove to see if the waters of the flood had subsided. Of course, this *yonah* returned to the *teiva*, with an olive branch in its beak. The olives from the branch that *Noach* received from the dove were made into **pure olive oil**. The oil was given to *Noach's* first born son, *Shem*. *Shem*, otherwise known as *Malchitzedek*, whom the Torah describes as a **Kohein to the Almighty Hashem!** *Malchitzedek/Shem* sealed this little jar of oil and gave it to *Avraham* as a gift. *Avraham*, in turn, handed it over to *Yitzchak* who passed it down to *Yaakov*. **According to our sages, Yaakov forgot some small jars and returned to retrieve them. One of these jars was the oil from the dove that returned to the teiva. Yaakov prophetically hid this oil at the site of the Beit Hamikdash and laid the foundations for the miracle of Chanukah.** This is the oil that originated with the dove, the symbol of peace. The Rebbe concludes that *Noach's* name, which is composed of the letters *nun* and *chet*, is actually an allusion to the words **Nes Chanuka....**

Yaakov Avinu, even as he feels alone, as he is about to encounter his brother *Eisav*, with great trepidation, realizes through his

ruach hakodesh, that he has arrived at the sacred space where the future *Beit HaMikdash* will stand, and he suddenly realizes that he must place that small jar of oil that has been handed down to him, that very jar of oil that *Noach* passed onto *Shem*, and hide it safely away, so that one day, the *Chashmonaim*, will find this oil, and miraculously restore the light of Torah in the world, through the *nes pach hashemen*.


May each of us aspire to emulate *Yaakov Avinu*, to have the capacity in trying times to similarly look inward, and rather than feeling alone, find the ability to see the potential light we might bring forth to the world. May we find the fortitude to push forward and bring forth light and continued goodness into our lives and the lives of others, and for subsequent generations. ■

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GEULAS YISRAEL

BY RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN

Ram, Yeshivat Har Etzion

Battling Esav and Yishma'el

The most nail-biting faceoff in all Sefer Bereshit occurs when Ya'akov returns to Israel to face his enraged brother, still fuming at a 20-year old grievance. As Esav marches toward him with 400 heavily armed mercenaries, Ya'akov is so terrified that, despite his unwavering faith, he takes practical measures to protect himself.

Surprisingly, this potential massacre ends amicably, as Esav generously forgives his brother, and big heartedly grants him entry to Israel. By the time the parsha concludes, not only has Ya'akov entrenched himself in Israel, but Esav has quit the chosen Land. As Rashi comments, Esav, recognizing the enormous task of Jewish history, quietly dismisses himself from the Land and its terrible historical burden. Esav relinquishing the Land of Israel to Ya'akov foreshadows Jewish history.

The same can't be said about Yishma'el. Though he was dismissed by Avraham prior to the akeidah, he never completely disappears. According to Chazal he attended the akeidah, though he remained at the bottom of the mountain. Additionally, as the Torah itself declares, Yishma'el attended Avraham's funeral. The Torah even records Yishma'el's death, further affirming that, unlike Esav, Yishma'el refused to descend from the stage. Unlike Esav, who graciously bowed

out, Yishma'el always makes a comeback. Though Esav and Ya'akov reach an uneasy rapprochement, Yishma'el remains hostile and belligerent.

HISTORICAL PATTERNS

These differing outcomes reflect the different historical trajectories of Esav and Yishma'el. Our historical battle with Esav has taken a very different arc than our struggle with Yishma'el. The nature of our encounter with Western Civilization and Christendom is very different from our struggle with the Arab world and these differences are already evident in the beginning of history.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE BIBLE

From the outset, Christianity maintained an awkward relationship with Judaism. In Christian theology the "original Bible" or the "Old Testament" represents the word of G-d, and its stories are sacred. Christianity could never outright deny that the Jews were G-d's original chosen people meant to inhabit the Land of Israel. Though we were defamed and accused of numerous fictitious crimes, our chosen status could never be ignored. Though we faced persecution and discrimination we were G-d's original children. This always created an uneasy tension about the status of Jews within Christian tradition.

In the modern era, Esav's children once again have partially ceded legitimacy to

Ya'akov's descendants. In 1965 the Catholic church rejected Jewish blame for the crucifixion and acknowledged the common spiritual heritage of Jews and Christians. By condemning antisemitism, a major rapprochement between Jew and Christian was achieved.

In the cultural sphere an equally important rapprochement was unfolding. For the first 1700 years of our exile, we were marginalized by the general culture, derided as an inferior and vile race. During the 19th century, as humanity began to surge into the modern era, Jews were embraced as agents of progress. We took leading roles in the advance of science, technology, arts, culture, and commerce. Recognizing the value of the "Jewish mind", Western civilization gladly offered us an honor and membership within society.

In the modern era, both in the religious and cultural arenas, Esav ceded to Ya'akov, just as he had centuries earlier. Christianity became less hostile and Western civilization embraced us. History repeated itself.

ISLAMIC DENUNCIATION

In the modern era, the Arab world's response to Jews has been far more antagonistic. Unlike Christianity, Islam does not recognize the Bible as sacred. Only the Koran carries authority and only its stories are accredited. The Koran reengineers Biblical stories, converting all major personalities into Muslims and replacing Yishma'el for Yitzchak as the hero of the akeidah. As the original Bible possesses no autonomous value, Jews do not enjoy any special status as God's chosen people. In the same manner that Yishma'el completely dismissed any historical calling for Yitzchak, the Arab world never reached any

ideological or historical rapprochement with our people. Though, throughout history, Islam often "tolerated" Jews, allowing us to live peacefully side-by-side, it never acknowledged any special status for the Jewish people. Now and then, Yishma'el declined any ideological reconciliation.

ARABS AND THE FOUR EMPIRES

There is a second difference between our encounter with Esav and our battle with Yishma'el. This difference can best be appreciated by studying the celebrated story of the "four empires."

The legendary narrative of the four empires surfaces at crucial moments of our history. Chazal discern references to the "four empires" in the creation of the world, in Avraham's covenant of Jewish history or the brit bein habetarim, in Ya'akov's dream of the ladder, in the construction of the Mishkan, and, most prominently, in the fateful dreams of Nevuchadnezzar and Daniel, occurring at the onset of the first exile. Evidently, the story of the four empires is foundational to Jewish history.

Each of these empires rises to glory and achieves world dominance, but also poses moral and religious challenges to humanity. If their corrupt cultural values aren't defeated, humanity will suffer moral decline. As the Jewish people are the guardians of moral conscience and religious spirit, we are destined to battle against these empires. By defeating these threats, we protect the world from religious malfunction.

For example, Greek culture, generally viewed as the third of four empires, delivered great potential to human thought and human development. However, their morally decayed value system would,

potentially, infect humanity with religious distortion. By defeating the Greeks during Chanukah, we protected humanity from moral corrosion.

Our struggle with these four empires is one of the central sagas of Jewish history: the nation of Hashem protecting humanity from moral and religious ruin.

Surprisingly the list of four empires doesn't typically include Islam. Though the four empires are never explicitly delineated, Chazal and most Rishonim compiled a list, and most of them omit Islam from the roster. Conventionally the four include: Bavel, Persia, Greece, and Rome, which refers to Western Civilization, Christianity or both. The Ibn Ezra is exceptional in identifying Islam as the fourth empire, but his position remains a minority opinion.

Evidently, as Islam doesn't occupy the list of four empires, our struggle with the Arab world centers upon a different issue. Our struggle with Islam isn't part of our broader ideological and cultural struggle with the four empires. Our battle with Islam is not part of the larger effort to defeat ideologically dangerous ideas. It is something far more particularly Jewish.

In his comments to Bereishit (21:10), Rashi remarks that our core struggle with Yishma'el surrounds the Land of Israel. Esav craved the rights and privileges of the first born, but readily ceded entry to, and ownership of Israel. By contrast, Yishma'el is disinterested in the title of first born, but aggressively committed to retaining control over the Land of Israel.

Evidently, this is the distinct struggle between Judaism and Islam. Though Esav obsessed about the title of first born, from

the moment he granted Ya'akov entry to Israel, he was never fixated upon evicting Ya'akov from Israel. When Haman devised his Persia-based genocide, the last thing on his mind was expelling Jews from Israel. Even when the Romans destroyed the Mikdash, they had little interest in completely banishing Jews from the Land of Israel. In the modern era, Esav has actually assisted our return to Israel. Christian fundamentalists remain the strongest supporters of our return to Israel. Then as now, Esav challenges our status, but not our rights to Israel.

The Arab world has never made peace with Jewish presence in the Land of Hashem. They understand that divine mission can only be realized in this land, and throughout history, have fought ferociously and fanatically to preclude us from setting this Land.

Though it seems that we have defeated the four empires and their cultural challenges, the battle with Yishma'el rages on. We daven to Hashem to defeat Yishma'el and affirm His promise to our Avot to deliver His chosen Land to their grandchildren. ■

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SETTING *up the* CHANUKIYA

One should prepare his Chanukiya well in advance of lighting time, so that there will not be a delay in lighting at the proper time. Especially so on Friday because things get hectic as Shabbat approaches. (And especially NOT SO for Motza"Sh lighting - no preparation for lighting after Shabbat may be done on Shabbat).

Some have the custom of setting up their Chanukiya in the morning for the evening (this goes for every day – except Shabbat, of course). This not only serves the practical purpose, as above, but it also commemorates the practice in the

Beit HaMikdash called Hatavat HaNeirot, whereby the Kohen (Gadol) tended the Menora and prepared it in the morning for kindling in late afternoon. Since our lighting on Chanukah directly commemorates the lighting of the Menora in the Beit HaMikdash, this suggestion provides a nice “added touch” to the mitzva and symbolism.

AL HANISIM is added to every Amida and Birkat HaMazon throughout Chanukah. There is no reference to Chanukah in BRACHA MEI'EIN SHALOSH (a.k.a. AL HAMICHYA).

Forgetting AL HANISIM does NOT invalidate either the Amida or Birkat HaMazon.

That means that neither is to be repeated because of the omission.

However, if one realizes the omission before the end of the Amida, AL HANISIM can be said right before YIHYU L'RATZON, with the modified introduction, below. In Birkat HaMazon, an omitted AL HANISIM becomes a HARACHAMAN, right before HARACHAMANHU Y'ZAKEINU, as follows (there are variant texts for this)...

הַרְחֵמְךָ הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה לָנוּ נִסִּים וְנִפְלְאוֹת בְּשֵׁם
שְׁעֵשִׂיתָ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בְּיָמֵינוּ הָהֵם בְּזֶמֶן הַזֶּה, בְּיָמֵינוּ
מִתְתִּיחָהוּ...

BRACHOT *before* LIGHTING

Brachot should be recited BEFORE beginning to light the candles. This complies with the general rule for Brachot of Mitzva, that they be recited immediately before performance of the mitzva, if possible. This means, that on the first night, wait until all three brachot are said before lighting the candle. And, even on the eighth night, don't start lighting the candles until you finish both brachot.

(Some hold that this applies to the first b'racha - the mitzva b'racha, but not necessarily to the other b'rachot. Check with your Rav if you are not sure which opinion to follow.)

PLACEMENT *of the* CANDLES

Opinions differ, but a common practice is to place the first candle (or oil cup) in the right side of the Chanukiya. If one lights at

the doorpost, then the first candle should be closest to the doorpost, even if it is the left side of the Chanukiya. From the second night on, the custom (one of the customs) is to place the candles (or all) from right to left, and to light it, left to right.

At the doorpost, one adds it from the doorpost out, and lights it starting with the candle closest to the doorpost.

ESSENCE *and* HIDUR

The essential performance of the mitzva of Chanukah is the lighting of a single candle each night. The custom that we follow of increasing the number of candles each night is a HIDUR MITZVA (enhancement of the mitzva).

It is because the first candle you light fulfills the mitzva, that the b'rachot should be said before any lighting.

One practice that has developed because of the distinction between the first candle and the others, is to begin reciting/singing HANEIROT HALALU after the first candle is lit, while lighting the others. Alternatively, one can wait until the lighting is done to say HANEIROT HALALU. Stick to family practice, unless good reason to switch.

RIGHT *after* LIGHTING

One should not just light the Chanukah candles (and sing Maoz Tzur) and then go on to business as usual, but rather one should look at the candles for a while, ponder G-d's miracles, spend some time with the family talking about the message of Chanukah

and how it relates to our time, play a little dreidel, sing a song or two, have a special Chanukah snack, have some Chanukah fun. And most importantly, the learning of TORAH should be part of lighting. It is recommended to learn some Torah, share a Dvar Torah, have a family shiur... right after candle lighting (or sometime in the evening).

The decrees of the Greeks included a ban on learning Torah. Our celebrating Chanukah marks our freedom from Greek oppression, including the ability to learn Torah in public without fear. So let's do just that!

INDOORS/ OUTDOORS

The original place for lighting and displaying of the Chanukiya was outdoors at the entrance to one's home or courtyard.

Over many generations in exile, where lighting outdoors was inconvenient (weather-wise) to say the least, and often dangerous ("neighbors"), the practice evolved to light indoors.

When lighting inside the home – for whatever reason - the one place that the Chanukiya should not be placed is where the Shabbat candles usually are. They need to be in an eye-catching, attention-grabbing location so they can serve their function of Publicizing the Miracles. Many people who have come to Israel, still light inside, at the window, as they had been doing in their countries of origin. Others have gone back

to the original practice of lighting outdoors, which is common in Israel - especially in Jerusalem.

When lighting outdoors, the candles are usually protected from getting blown out by being placed inside a specially made box.

WHEN TO LIGHT Weeknights

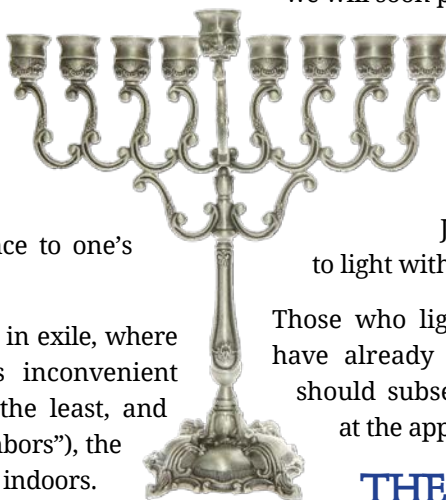
There are two opinions as to when is the ideal time to light Chanukah lights during the week (i.e. except for Friday and Motza"Sh, when Shabbat affects the timing, as we will soon present).

Minhag Yerushalayim (which many, but not everyone in Jerusalem follow – and some outside Jerusalem do follow) is to light with the setting of the sun.

Those who light with sunset should have already davened Mincha, and should subsequently daven Maariv at the appropriate time.

THE OTHER OPINION

The "rest of the Jewish world" lights when the "light of the sun has left the sky", i.e.



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UNTIL WHEN?

Candles must burn at least a half hour after **צאת הכוכבים**. This was the original (time of the Gemara) time period after dark that people were still around outdoors and became the definition of the time range for **PIRSUMEI NISA**, publicizing the miracle.

Although in our day, people are out later than this time, the halacha only requires the half hour after stars-out.

However, it is recommended that one use longer candles or more oil to extend this time (somewhat), in recognition of the expansion of the current-day Pirsumei Nisa time-frame. We would further suggest that one's candles should stay lit at least a half hour after the latest stars-out time, namely Rabbeinu Tam time. This is only a recommendation, not in any way meant to be a halachic ruling.

HOW EARLY *can one* LIGHT?

When necessary, one may light as early as **PLAG MINCHA** (1¼ halachic hours before sunset). This is by no means preferable, but if circumstances are such that you have to

light early - leaving town, and the like, then **PLAG** is the earliest.

LIGHTING *for* שבת

It is preferable to daven Mincha before lighting Chanukah candles, but one should not miss out on a minyan to daven before lighting. Chanukah candles should be lit

BEFORE Shabbat candles - even if different people are lighting each. Count on 5-10 minutes before the posted Shabbat lighting time; adjust according to your household's experience.

IN JERUSALEM...

Some follow the practice of delaying Shabbat candle lighting for 20 minutes and lighting Chanukah candles right before Shabbat candles.

For other cities where candle lighting is 30 min. before sunset one should ask his/her local Rav.

HAVDALAH *and* CANDLE LIGHTING

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Chanukah CANDLE LIGHTING

KAVANA: One should have in mind to fulfill the Rabbinic Mitzva (with Torah backing) of **NER CHANUKAH** plus the **HIDUR MITZVA** of the extra candles (each night after the first).

One should acknowledge G-d and thank Him for the Chanukah miracles in particular, and for all His miracles and kindnesses in general.



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר (שֶׁל)
חֲנֻכָּה.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁעָשָׂה
נִסִּים לְאַבֹּתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזֶמַן הַזֶּה.

On the first night add:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַחֲיָנוּ וְקִיָּמָנוּ וְהַגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן
הַזֶּה

הַנִּרְוֹת הָלְלוּ אֶנוּ מַדְלִיקִין, עַל הַנִּסִּים וְעַל הַנִּפְלְאוֹת וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת
וְעַל הַמַּלְחָמוֹת, שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאַבֹּתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזֶמַן הַזֶּה, עַל יָדֵי
כֹּהֲנֶיךָ הַקְּדוֹשִׁים. וְכָל שְׁמוֹנֵת יָמֵי חֲנֻכָּה, הַנִּרְוֹת הָלְלוּ קִדְּשָׁהּ, וְאִין
לָנוּ רְשׁוֹת לְהִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בָּהֶן, אֲלָא לְרְאוּתָן בְּלִבָּד, כְּדִי לְהוֹדוֹת וּלְהַלֵּל
לְשִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל, עַל נִסֶּיךָ וְעַל נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ וְעַל יְשׁוּעָתְךָ



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HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

BY REBBETZIN DR. ADINA
SHMIDMAN



The Divine Spark

HAFTORAH: OVADIAH 1:1-21

The book of Ovadiah consists of only one perek, a total of twenty one pesukim. Ovadiah, a righteous convert, shares the demise of the powerful nation of Edom. He closes his prophecy with a graphic verse, describing the ultimate downfall of this once mighty nation. *וְהָיָה בֵּית יַעֲקֹב אֵשׁ וּבֵית יִסְרָאֵל לְהֵבֶה וּבֵית עֵשָׂו לְקֶשֶׁת וְדִלְקוּ בָהֶם וְאֶכְלוּם וְלֹא יִהְיֶה שְׂרִיד לְבֵית דָּבָר וְיֵשׁוּ כִּי ה' דָּבָר and the House of Yaakov shall become a fire, and the House of Yosef as a flame and the House of Eisav as straw, and they will blaze up among them and consume them; and there shall be none remaining to the House of Eisav for Hashem has spoken.*

What a dramatic end to the House of Eisav, consumed through flames in a Divine conflagration! And what sparks this fire? It is the House of Yosef that lights the tinder. But why is the tribe of Yosef singled out as the spark that triggers the blaze? Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch observes that in Tanach, the House of Yosef almost always refers to those among the Jewish people who have sought to estrange themselves from the Torah and be acculturated among the nations of the world. It is this group, says Rav Hirsch, who will kindle the ultimate fire of justice. How could this be, that these Jews who have distanced themselves will be the flame for the fire?

The answer can be found in the relationship between Ovadiah and Edom, descendents of Eisav. Rashi, quoting the Gemara in Sanhedrin asks how is it that this prophet merits to deliver the message of Edom's fall? The answer is that Ovadiah lived among two evil doers, Achav and Izevel, and did not learn from their evil ways. It is he that merits to deliver the message of destruction to Eisav who lived among two righteous people, Yitzchok and Rivka, and did not learn from their positive ways.

Retaining a Jewish spark in a secular world is a remarkable accomplishment. There are many people today whose Judaism is a source of pride and strength despite the internal push and external pull to be absorbed into the surrounding culture. This genuine embrace of our heritage is inspirational, seeing how a person can retain the sense of being “pintele Yid”, holding on to the holy spark of Yiddishkeit.

All it takes is a spark to start a fire. May the holy fire continue to burn until the day when we see the fulfillment of Ovadiah's prophecy when Hashem will light the fire of justice *וְהָיְתָה לָהּ הַמְּלִיכָה, and the kingdom will be to Hashem.* ■

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TOWARDS MEANINGFUL SHABBOS

BY REBBETZIN ZEMIRA OZAROWSKI
Director of OU Israel L'Ayla Women's Initiative



Lecha Dodi

A friend of mine who lives in Shuva, a yishuv right on the border of Azza, described her experience on Shabbat Simchat Torah. Her community was saved in miraculous ways and the terrorists did not succeed in entering the gate of the yishuv. But as you can imagine it was an extremely traumatic experience, sitting in their mamad all day, hearing lots of booms, and not knowing what was going to happen next. But one thing that she said really stands out in my mind. She said that what saved her from being completely traumatized and unable to function now, is the fact that she didn't look at the news that Shabbos. She turned on her phone to get the instructions from the security people but she didn't look at anything else. Those who did are still having nightmares, as you can imagine how horrifying it must be to sit five minutes away from where the atrocities were occurring, reading the details as they are happening. Placing her faith in Hashem and allowing the prohibitions of Shabbos to safeguard her, kept her mental health intact.

Though this is obviously a very extreme example and one we hope never to encounter, we face this challenge on a much less extreme level every single Shabbos. Do we spend our time on Shabbos thinking about all of the issues and problems we need to take care of in our homes or workplace or do we shut that out

and let the calm of Shabbos come over us?

Rav Eliyahu Munk in his book *Olam HaTefillot* explains that this is exactly what we are singing about in Lecha Dodi. Lecha Dodi, which was written by Rav Shlomo ben Moshe HaLevi Elkabetz in the 1500's and has been universally accepted as the song we use to welcome in the Shabbos. We reach out to Hashem (our דוד – beloved) to greet the Shabbos (the kallah) together with us. What are we doing in essence when we greet the Shabbos? We are sending a message to ourselves – leave behind the stress and the pressures of the week and relax and place our faith in Hashem...Shabbos has arrived.

Rav Munk writes very beautifully – “At the start of Shabbos, whoever leaves behind himself, his world, his aspirations and desires, who stops thinking about what he accomplished and what he didn't and about what he gained and what he lost in the past week, and leaves all of that at the feet of HaKadosh Baruch Hu with the feeling that he has completed all of his obligations, and he doesn't leave room for even one thought about his weekday affairs for 24 hours...for him, Shabbos is truly עולם הברא, a real taste of the happiness that is waiting for us in Olam HaBa”.

This is our goal for Shabbos, and it is certainly not an easy one to achieve. But if we take a few minutes as we daven Lecha Dodi to try and remember that goal, then we are one step closer to accomplishing it. Throughout the stanzas of Lecha Dodi, we see this

message over and over again, where we are telling ourselves – Shabbos is here, it's time to get rid of all of our weekday worries.

We start with the words זכור ודבור בדיבור אחד. When giving over the Aseret HaDibrot, Hashem said the words יום השבת לקדשו at the same time that He said the words זכור את יום השבת לקדשו. How is that possible? How can one being say two different words at the same time? Rav Munk writes that the message is that just like Hashem can simultaneously represent two different ideas, He expects the same from us. He expects us, who are totally engrossed in worldly-affairs and are completely physical beings, to be able to at the same time manage to bring in the Shabbos with complete focus and to be able to concentrate 100% on our relationship with Hashem and fulfilling His will.

היא מקור הברכה...סוף מעשה במחשבה תחילה – We remind ourselves that Shabbos is the source of all bracha. Though Hashem created Shabbos last, at the end of creation, it was first in His plans – the whole goal of creation was to create Shabbos to give man a weekly reminder of what his spiritual/ethical role is in this world.

קומי צאי מתוך ההפכה, רב לך שבת העמק – Get up and go out of this upside down world, you've had enough time sitting in the valley of tears.

What's true for the individual is true for the nation as a whole, as well. Rav Munk writes – “Just like all individual mourning and pain recedes because of the Shabbos and the Shabbos brings comfort and hope to each individual, so too, the Shabbos turns thoughts of national pain and mourning to thoughts of comfort and hope”. We see this reflected in the last few stanzas of Lecha Dodi.

התנערי מעפרי קומי...על יד בן ישי בית הלחמי

Shake yourself off and get up from the dust as we arrive closer to the redemption

Wake up, wake up for your light and salvation has arrived

– לא תבושו ולא תכלמי...ונבנתה עיר על תלה – We send a message to ourselves as a nation – don't worry about everything that is happening to us on a national level – we don't need to be ashamed because we can have bitachon that everything will work out ok and Yerushalayim will be rebuilt soon.

– והיו למשיסה שאסין ורחקו כל מבעליך – Even though things seem bleak and our enemies are attacking us, we should know and trust that this is only temporary and Hashem will make sure that our enemies are punished and destroyed.

מין ושמאל תפרוצי...על יד איש בן פרצי נשמחה – We will grow and spread as a nation and we will eventually celebrate the arrival of Mashiach.

Once we've gotten the message to leave our worries behind and use our time on Shabbos to reconnect with our purpose in this world, we are ready to truly welcome the Shabbos. We turn towards the door and bow towards the Shabbos to welcome in our precious guest and then turn back again towards the Aron HaKodesh.

May we take this message to heart and especially during this very difficult time, find the ability to escape the pain and sadness of what's going on for at least the 24 hours of Shabbos, and find comfort and hope through the Shabbos. As Rav Munk writes – “Every national occurrence, the suffering, the pain, the worries, and the despair all take a step back in the face of the cheerful majestic Shabbos”. ■



RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER

EDITOR, TORAH TIDBITS



Quality Over Quantity

The Torah requires that *only* olive oil be used for the lighting of the Menorah. Any other type of oil is forbidden to be used in Temple's lighting.

When the Maccabees miraculously lit the Menorah in the Temple, some opinions say that all the olive oil burned the first night; there was no remaining oil. New oil replenished the Menorah each night.

If this was the case, then what was lit on the following nights therefore was *not* natural olive oil pressed from olives. The oil that filled the Menorah the remaining seven nights was, so to speak, 'miracle oil' replenished miraculously by God.

The legendary Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik provocatively asks: How could any other type of oil be used? 'Miracle oil' is not *kosher* for use in the Menorah; only natural olive oil can be used!

Reb Chaim explains that the oil from the first night was actually **not** fully consumed. On each day of the eight days only an eighth of the oil burned. Indeed the miracle was that the very *essence* of the oil was altered, and the oil had changed its composition. Now, only a fraction of the oil was needed to fuel the flame for an entire day. The

oil poured in the Menorah the first night became more potent so that the Menorah miraculously burned all eight nights.

This means that the miracle of the oil was not of **quantity** but of **quality**.

Instead of the quantity of the oil increasing, it was the nature, the essence, the quality of the oil that "increased" by changing. This meant that only one-eighth of the oil

burned through the entirety of each night, for all eight nights.

Reb Chaim's teaching carries the beautiful message that as Jews we emphasize *quality over quantity*. Our teacher Moshe himself highlights this point: "It is not because you are the most numerous of peoples that the Lord set His heart on you and chose you - indeed *you are the smallest of peoples*" (Deuteronomy 7:7).

Chanukah emphasizes the power of the few to overcome the many, as articulated in the *Al Hanisim* prayer, "The many into the hands of the few." A small group of Maccabee soldiers were victorious in overcoming a massive army. A small cruse of oil fueled the Menorah for eight consecutive days.

In other words, our greatness is not found in our quantity but in our *quality*. Our



determination to do good, our dedication to kindness and devotion to morality has empowered us with unique strength. Being small in numbers lends itself to creating a sense of importance and singularity in the group. The realization that there is a sense of urgency and responsibility in one's actions is enhanced by the comprehension that one is part of a very small group, and therefore every individual counts enormously in the fate and success of the group.

In the mystical teachings of the *Kabbalah* oil symbolizes Torah wisdom. Much like the oil that fuels the flame, the Torah fuels our people. The Greeks tried to defile the oil, they tried to destroy our loving devotion to the Torah. They attempted to erode our very essence and darken the pristine light found at our core.

But the pure light of the Jewish soul can never be snuffed out. Its flame will endure with a potency that continues to shine bright for the world.

(Cited by Harav Shlomo Yosef Zevin, The Festival in Halacha, vol 2 p. 57) ■

Rabbi Goldscheider is the author of the newly published book 'Torah United' (OU Press), featuring divrei Torah on the weekly parasha from Rav Kook, Rabbi Solovetichik, and the Chassidic Masters.

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The Challenges of Evacuation

Since the beginning of the war, a large number of families have been evacuated from their homes in the South and the North, in order to protect them and keep them safely away from the fighting and deadly rocket attacks. The government is paying for them to be housed in hotels in safer localities, such as Jerusalem. While this proves how much we are concerned with preserving life and taking care of our citizens, it does present a unique set of challenges.

This became very obvious to PUAH, when a representative of the OU was visiting such a group and taking care of their needs and requests. He asked what they wanted in terms of programming, and the women immediately answered that they wanted a class from PUAH. We were very happy to oblige, of course.

Rabbi Lior Segev, one of PUAH's Rabbis and counselors, presented some of the halachic questions and challenges that we are dealing with since the beginning of the war, including some of the issues that we discussed here recently. Mrs. Ofira Hachen-Kerner spoke with the women about their specific situation. Ofira is a psychotherapist, studied in PUAH and is one of the women who answer PUAH's Hotline for Emotional Support.

The session was an opportunity for

the women to both share their own frustrations and complications, as well as to receive some support and practical advice.

The women spoke about the difficulty of an entire family, many with young children, living together in one hotel room, and the toll that this has on their marriage. The couples find it extremely difficult to find time to be alone and build their marriage. This is at a time when they are suffering from the trauma of what they saw, experienced and felt, during the horrific attacks on their homes and our country and people. They are concerned for the future and it appears that they will be in this situation for quite some time.

In other circumstances, the couple would be able to console each other and give each other support. But this is not always possible while living in the same room with their children.

Ofira was able to allow them to voice their concerns and to give them some good practical advice. Much of what she said was directed to their particular case, but some of it is relevant to many of us.

More on this next time. ■

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Yehuda Bessner
Chapter Director
Jerusalem

Embracing Our Fears

In this week's Parsha, we encounter an unexpected side of Yaakov- a patriarch and leader, grappling with an intense emotion – fear. The Torah emphasizes this fear, even using the term “**פחד**” (exceedingly) to describe Yaakov's state explicitly.

As Yaakov prepares to confront his brother Esav, the Torah provides a detailed account of his approach: dividing his camp, sending gifts, and davening to Hashem. However, when he finally decides to go he ends up attempting to sidestep the confrontation and seems to turn back in his way. He is abruptly stopped by a mysterious figure who engages him in a night-long wrestling match, ensuring he faces his brother head-on despite the immense fear he was feeling.

This theme is seen in other places throughout Tanach, notably with Moshe on his way to Egypt and Yonah with the whale, where Hashem intervenes when the protagonist nearly succumbs to their fear. Clearly, the Torah is imparting on us this concept of not simply waiting for fears to dissipate but rather to confront them directly. Furthermore, this is exactly what Rabbi Sacks insightfully notes that “courage does not mean having no fear. It means having fear but overcoming it.”

For example, what makes our soldiers so brave and so holy is not because they are fearless, it's rather specifically because they are indeed afraid, but yet have the courage to fight and protect us despite any risks involved; being invincible would not be heroic.

As we navigate our own fears, let's embrace courage, explicitly recognizing that it's not about the absence of our fears but about facing them. Good Shabbos!



Victor-Eliyahu Aboody
11th grade
Jerusalem

Spiritual and Physical Readiness: Yaakov's Approach to Dealing with Esav

In Parshat Vayishlach the Torah describes Yaakov Avinu's preparation for his encounter with Esav. The mefarshim offer various insights into Yaakov's preparation.

Rashi explains that Yaakov prepared in three main ways for his encounter with Esav. He used Tefila, gifts and readiness for battle in order to be properly equipped to handle any situation that might arise. He made sure to cover both the spiritual and physical aspects in his preparation.

The Or Hachaim notes that Yaakov's prayers were not solely for his victory, rather he prayed for the safety and peace of all his family. He recognized that this was his ultimate goal, as he did not seek conflict with his brother Esav.

The Netziv points out the emotional preparation of Yaakov. Yaakov spent the previous night alone wrestling with an angel. We can see that Yaakov had his own spiritual struggles he ultimately overcame to help him in his potential conflict with Esav.

These words of wisdom from the great mefarshim can teach us many practical lessons for our lives right now! The mefarshim explain what steps we need to take in times of conflict and what our goals are. From a physical perspective we must be ready to fight with gevura and protect Am Yisrael with strength and courage. On the spiritual side we must pray for the safety and peace of our nation. We must also be giborim as it says in Pirkei Avot: "אִיזְהוּ גִבּוֹר הַכּוֹבֵשׁ אֶת יָצְרוֹ" - Who is a hero? One who overcomes his Yetzer.

I pray for all of Am Yisrael to be able to continue playing their unique roles in this struggle and to bring Hashem's will into the world. Shabbat Shalom. ■

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Yoni thanks Hashem for having the opportunity of having Tziporah in his life, to learn of her caring, patience and happiness, to overcome her challenges. May Tziporah's Neshama be a light onto the world, in a time of darkness, and may her Neshama shine to Gan Eden. Yoni misses Tziporah with tears in his eyes, as Hashem gave him a gift, a crown jewel, now he returns her to Hashem.

With thanks and Toda. Love, Yoni

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