

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS**

### Covenant & Conversation

**W**hy is Jacob the father of our people, the hero of our faith? We are "the congregation of Jacob", "the children of Israel." Yet it was Abraham who began the Jewish journey, Isaac who was willing to be sacrificed, Joseph who saved his family in the years of famine, Moses who led the people out of Egypt and gave it its laws. It was Joshua who took the people into the Promised land, David who became its greatest king, Solomon who built the Temple, and the prophets through the ages who became the voice of G-d.

The account of Jacob in the Torah seems to fall short of these other lives, at least if we read the text literally. He has tense relationships with his brother Esau, his wives Rachel and Leah, his father-in-law Laban, and with his three eldest children, Reuben, Simon and Levi. There are times when he seems full of fear, others when he acts -- or at least seems to act -- with less than total honesty. In reply to Pharaoh he says of himself, "The days of my life have been few and hard" (Gen. 47:9). This is less than we might expect from a hero of faith.

That is why so much of the image we have of Jacob is filtered through the lens of midrash -- the oral tradition preserved by the sages. In this tradition, Jacob is all good, Esau all bad. It had to be this way -- so argued R. Zvi Hirsch Chajes in his essay on the nature of midrashic interpretation -- because otherwise we would find it hard to draw from the biblical text a clear sense of right and wrong, good and bad. The Torah is an exceptionally subtle book, and subtle books tend to be misunderstood. So the oral tradition made it simpler: black and white instead of shades of grey.

Yet perhaps, even without midrash, we can find an answer -- and the best way of so doing is to think of the idea of a journey.

Judaism is about faith as a journey. It begins with the journey of Abraham and Sarah, leaving behind their "land, birthplace and father's house" and travelling to an unknown destination, "the land I will show you."

The Jewish people is defined by another journey in a different age: the journey of Moses and the Israelites from Egypt across the desert to the Promised Land.

That journey becomes a litany in the parsha of Massei: "They left X and they camped in Y. They left Y

and they camped in Z." To be a Jew is to move, to travel, and only rarely, if ever, to settle down. Moses warns the people of the danger of settling down and taking the status quo for granted, even in Israel itself: "When you have children and grandchildren, and have been established in the land for a long time, you might become decadent" (Deut. 4:25).

Hence the rules that Israel must always remember its past, never forget its years of slavery in Egypt, never forget on Sukkot that our ancestors once lived in temporary dwellings, never forget that it does not own the land -- it belongs to G-d -- and we are merely there as G-d's gerim ve-toshavim, "strangers and sojourners" (Lev. 25:23).

Why so? Because to be a Jew means not to be fully at home in the world. To be a Jew means to live within the tension between heaven and earth, creation and revelation, the world that is and the world we are called on to make; between exile and home, and between the universality of the human condition and the particularity of Jewish identity. Jews don't stand still except when standing before G-d. The universe, from galaxies to subatomic particles, is in constant motion, and so is the Jewish soul.

We are, we believe, an unstable combination of dust of the earth and breath of G-d, and this calls on us constantly to make decisions, choices, that will make us grow to be as big as our ideals, or, if we choose wrongly, make us shrivel into small, petulant creatures obsessed by trivia. Life as a journey means striving each day to be greater than we were the day before, individually and collectively.

If the concept of a journey is a central metaphor of Jewish life, what in this regard is the difference between Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

Abraham's life is framed by two journeys both of which use the phrase Lech lecha, "undertake a journey", once in Genesis 12 when he was told to leave his land and father's house, the other in Gen. 22:2 at the binding of Isaac when he was told, "Take your son, the only one you love -- Isaac -- and go [lech lecha] to



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the region of Moriah."

What is so moving about Abraham is that he goes, immediately and without question, despite the fact that both journeys are wrenching in human terms. In the first he has to leave his father. In the second he has to let go of his son. He has to say goodbye to the past and risk saying farewell to the future. Abraham is pure faith. He loves G-d and trusts Him absolutely. Not everyone can achieve that kind of faith. It is almost superhuman.

Isaac is the opposite. It is as if Abraham, knowing the emotional sacrifices he has had to make, knowing too the trauma Isaac must have felt at the binding, seeks to protect his son as far as lies within his power. He makes sure that Isaac does not leave the Holy Land (see Gen. 24:6 -- that is why Abraham does not let him travel to find a wife). Isaac's one journey (to the land of the Philistines, in Gen. 26) is limited and local. Isaac's life is a brief respite from the nomadic existence Abraham and Jacob both experience.

Jacob is different again. What makes him unique is that he has his most intense encounters with G-d -- they are the most dramatic in the whole book of Genesis -- in the midst of the journey, alone, at night, far from home, fleeing from one danger to the next, from Esau to Laban on the outward journey, from Laban to Esau on his homecoming.

In the midst of the first he has the blazing epiphany of the ladder stretching from earth to heaven, with angels ascending and descending, moving him to say on waking, "G-d is truly in this place but I did not know it... This must be G-d's house and this the gate to heaven" (28:16-17). None of the other patriarchs, not even Moses, has a vision quite like this.

On the second, in our parsha, he has the haunting, enigmatic wrestling match with the man/angel/G-d, which leaves him limping but permanently transformed -- the only person in the Torah to receive from G-d an entirely new name, Israel, which may mean, "one who has wrestled with G-d and man" or "one who has become a prince [sar] before G-d".

What is fascinating is that Jacob's meetings with angels are described by the same verb 'p-g-sh', (Gen. 28:11, and 32:2) which means "a chance

encounter", as if they took Jacob by surprise, which clearly they did. Jacob's most spiritual moments are ones he did not plan. He was thinking of other things, about what he was leaving behind and what lay ahead of him. He was, as it were, "surprised by G-d."

Jacob is someone with whom we can identify. Not everyone can aspire to the loving faith and total trust of an Abraham, or to the seclusion of an Isaac. But Jacob is someone we understand. We can feel his fear, understand his pain at the tensions in his family, and sympathise with his deep longing for a life of quietude and peace (the sages say about the opening words of next week's parsha that "Jacob longed to live at peace, but was immediately thrust into the troubles of Joseph").

The point is not just that Jacob is the most human of the patriarchs but rather that at the depths of his despair he is lifted to the greatest heights of spirituality. He is the man who encounters angels. He is the person surprised by G-d. He is the one who, at the very moments he feels most alone, discovers that he is not alone, that G-d is with him, that he is accompanied by angels.

Jacob's message defines Jewish existence. It is our destiny to travel. We are the restless people. Rare and brief have been our interludes of peace. But at the dark of night we have found ourselves lifted by a force of faith we did not know we had, surrounded by angels we did not know were there. If we walk in the way of Jacob, we too may find ourselves surprised by G-d. ©2016 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

**RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## Shabbat Shalom

"So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. And Jacob journeyed to Succot, and built himself a home..." [Gen. 33:16-17]

What is Jewish continuity? How might it be attained? Jewish organizations have spent many years and millions of dollars in search of answers to these questions. And with good reason: how can we expect Jewish identity to exist in three generations without Jewish continuity now? I believe that an answer can be gleaned much more quickly—and inexpensively—through an examination of the lives of Jacob and Esau, where we will discover the secret to Jewish continuity.

Jacob finally returns to his ancestral home after an absence of twenty years. Understandably, Jacob is terrified of his brother's potential reaction and so, in preparation, Jacob sends messengers ahead with exact instructions how to address Esau. Informed of the impending approach of Esau's army of four hundred men, he divides his household into two camps, in order to be prepared for the worst.

But what actually happens defies Jacob's expectations: Esau is overjoyed and thrilled to see him. The past is the past: "And Esau ran to meet [Yaakov],

and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him, and they wept" [ibid. 33:4].

The two sons of Isaac emotionally reunite in an embrace of peace, love and hope. The future of Jewish history was set to take a radical step in a new direction. Nevertheless, Jacob prefers a cool reconciliation, delicately refusing Esau's offer to travel together. Jacob feels the need to traverse a different path and, at his behest, the brothers separate once again. Jacob's reticence to requite Esau's warmth is striking. Why refuse his twin brother's gracious offer? Jacob's decision has important implications for our generation.

There are positive characteristics of Esau to be found in many Jews across the diaspora. Many are assertive, self-made people who weep when they meet a long-lost Jewish brother from Ethiopia or Russia. They have respect for their parents and grandparents, tending to their physical needs and even reciting the traditional mourner's Kaddish. Financial support and solidarity missions to the State of Israel, combined with their vocal commitment to Jewry and Israel, reflect a highly developed sense of Abrahamic (Jewish) identity. Similarly, Esau feels Abrahamic identity with every fiber of his being.

But when it comes to commitment to Abrahamic (Jewish) continuity, the willingness to secure a Jewish future, many of our Jewish siblings are, like Esau, sadly found to be wanting. Undoubtedly, one of the most important factors in keeping us "a people apart", and preventing total Jewish assimilation into the majority culture, has been our unique laws of kashrut. Like Esau, however, the overwhelming majority of diaspora Jewry has tragically sold its birthright for a cheeseburger.

Esau's name means fully-made, complete. He exists in the present tense. He has no commitment to past or future. He wants the freedom of the hunt and the ability to follow the scent wherever it takes him. He is emotional about his identity, but he is not willing to make sacrifices for its continuity. It is on the surface, as an external cloak that is only skin-deep. That is why it doesn't take more than a skin-covering for Jacob to enter his father's tent and take on the character of Esau. Indeed, Esau is even called Edom, red, after the external color of the lentil soup for which he sold his birthright.

And what is true for a bowl of soup is true for his choice of wives, as he marries Hittite women, causing his parents to feel a "bitterness of spirit" [ibid. 26:35]. No wonder! The decision of many modern Jews to "marry out" has, according to the 2013 Pew Research Center report, reached an American average of 58%! The "bitterness of spirit" continues to be felt in many families throughout the diaspora. As the Pew report shows, those who marry out and continue to profess a strong Jewish identity are not able to commit to Jewish continuity. Perhaps Esau even mouthed the

argument I've heard from those I've tried to dissuade from marrying out. "But she has a Jewish name!" "She even looks Jewish!" Esau may have said, "Her name is Yehudit!" [literally, a Jewess, from Judah]. "She has a wonderful fragrance!" [Basmat means perfume] [ibid. v. 34].

On the other hand, Jacob's name, Yaakov, is a future-tense verb. Jacob is constantly planning for the future, anticipating what he must do to perpetuate the birthright. Similarly, if we are to attain Jewish continuity, we must internalize two crucial lessons from the example of Jacob and Esau: 1) never sell one's birthright for any price; and 2) guaranteeing a Jewish future means planning strategically with an eye towards the long-term, sacrificing short-term gains in order to demonstrate a commitment to continuing the legacy and lifestyle of Abraham and Sarah. ©2016 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

**RABBI BEREL WEIN**

## Wein Online

**T**he prophet of Israel, describing what can unfortunately be characterized as the usual situation in Jewish life, states that it is comparable to one who flees from the lion and finds one's self in the embrace of a bear. Our father Jacob, who barely escapes from the treachery of Lavan, soon finds himself confronted by the deadly mob of his brother Eisav.

Jacob, in his confrontation with Lavan, chooses the option of flight as he removes himself from the territory controlled by Lavan and his sons. But this option of flight is no longer possible in his contest with Eisav. Jacob is in his own land, the land of his ancestors, the land promised to him personally by G-d Himself, to be his rightful residence. As such, Jacob has nowhere to run.

As taught to us by Midrash and quoted by Rashi, his only options were to stand and fight, to buy Eisav off with monetary tribute, and/or to pray. The option of fleeing does not enter the equation in any fashion. This is perhaps the basis for the well-known Talmudic dictum severely limiting the right of a Jew to leave the Land of Israel cavalierly.

Polish Jewish history, from biblical times to the present, shows us that exile from the Land of Israel on a collective basis never occurred voluntarily. The most mobile, wandering people in the history of civilization never left their homeland of their own volition. In this they were following the example of their father Jacob, who never considered fleeing from the Land of Israel in order to avoid the long expected and dreaded confrontation with his aggressive and volatile brother.

In our long and winding road of exile, over the past two millennia, when one country closed down for us because of economic, social or religious reasons, the Jewish people moved on elsewhere. But as we

have discovered, we have run out of places to go in the world. There are no new undiscovered continents on the face of the globe, no seemingly safe havens left for escape.

This is part of the reason for the establishment of the State of Israel and its phenomenal growth and inexplicable stability. Even though it has been provoked by errors of policy and with concessions to its neighbors, it is as though the Jewish people, like their ancestor Jacob, declared that this is where they will make their stand.

Prayer is a constant in current Israeli life, even for those who do not deem themselves to be observant of Jewish law and tradition. But in spite of all of the troubles, problems, and the myriad challenges that living in our country poses, flight in a collective sense is a nonexistent possibility.

Unable to defeat us militarily or economically, even though diplomatically they have wounded us severely, our enemies openly declare their intent to make us leave our homeland. But that is a very unrealistic policy. The children of Jacob, in the state that bears his name, certainly will follow his example until it finally it brings quieter times and better relations. ©2016 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com)

#### **RABBI AVI WEISS**

## **Shabbat Forshpeis**

**O**ne of the most powerful images in the Torah is that of Yaakov (Jacob) struggling with a mysterious being (ish) before his anxiously awaited meeting with his brother Esav (Esau). (Genesis 32:25) The term used to denote this struggle is va-ye'avek.

Rashi first gives a literal reason as to the use of this term. He points out that the word va-ye'avek comes from the word avak-dust. While wrestling, dust physically rises from the ground.

Physical confrontations have always been a part of our national psyche. Throughout history our enemies would try to destroy us. In fact, Ramban points out that when the enemy cannot prevail, they attack our children, which is exactly what the ish striking Jacob's loins symbolizes. The power of this Ramban came to fore in the early 70's in the town of Maalot, when terrorists targeted children in order to bring us down. Still, in the end, like Yaakov of old, we prevail.

Rashi offers a second suggestion. The word avak interchanges with havak-embrace. According to this interpretation the Torah does not record a physical confrontation; rather a meeting of embrace between Yaakov and the ish.

In reacting to this interpretation, Ketav Sofer, Rabbi Avraham Sofer of the 19th century (son of the Hatam Sofer) explains that this idea has resonated powerfully throughout history. There are times when the ish, representative of the outside world, would try to openly approach the Jew with the intent of convincing us to assimilate.

Not only did this concern apply in the times of the Ketav Sofer, but it resonates strongly today. The soul of the Jewish people is at far greater risk than its body; and without a soul, we will lose our direction and identity.

Ketav Sofer emphasizes that the struggle between Yaakov and the ish concludes with the Torah's description of Yaakov limping as the sun rose. (Genesis 32:32) Precisely when the sun is glowing, and the darkness of oppression diminishes, Jacob, the Jew, can spiritually limp and is in spiritual jeopardy.

Of course in our times, we pray that there be no darkness of exile. But in a society of freedom other challenges surface. For example, throughout Jewish history, whenever the darkness of anti-Semitism prevailed, the marriage of non-Jews to Jews was verboten. In America today we are so free that non-Jews are marrying us in droves.

Hence the challenge for our times: We must re-focus our priorities solely from Jewish defense to Jewish spirituality, to radically re-prioritize communal resources and funding from the physical to the spiritual sphere.

The ish's embrace of Yaakov warns us that while combating anti-Semitism is an important objective, the effort must be part of a far larger goal-the stirring and reawakening of Jewish spiritual consciousness. ©2016 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

#### **ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT**

## **Monetary Sensitivity**

*Translated for the Encyclopedia Talmudit by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss*

**R**ighteous people refrain from being tempted to commit robbery. Thus Yaakov crossed the river Yabok in this week's Sedra just to retrieve small jars that he had inadvertently left there. Our forefathers' actions predict the actions of future generations (maaseh Avot siman l'banim). The Torah therefore is also sensitive to the monetary needs of its people when there is a chance of loss of money so that one is not placed in a position where he/she might be tempted to steal.

This sensitivity is paramount in various situations. To cite a few- a Kohen when viewing the status of a Negah" (blemish) in one's house ,first instructs the owner to remove all the utensils from the

home before he pronounces his judgement whether it is Tamei (defiled) or not, for the Kohen is concerned that the person should not suffer undo financial hardship for should he declare the nega tamei, all the utensils in the house would be Tamei as well. Likewise, in the Holy Temple, the utensils used were not made of expensive metals in order not to spend frivolously the money of the people. Examples of this are the "kalpi" (the markers) -used on Yom Kippur to designate which goat was sacrificed and which was to be killed -was made from wood not gold or silver, and also the mouth piece of the Shofar and the basket that carried the incense were all made from silver and not the more expensive gold.

Additionally when the Torah instructs a person to offer a sacrifice it does not use the language "everything that he has (kol asher yesh lo) but rather "from all that he has (mekol asher yesh lo-Vayikra 27;28) indicating one should not spend above his means (k'fi missat yado -Devarim16;10) and should not designate for Mitzvot more than one fifth of his wealth.

Yet there are times that we do insist on quality and the more expensive. The axiom that portrays this is- "There is no poverty amongst wealth (ein aniyut binkom ashirut). As an example, we don't use utensils in the Beit Hamikdash which is "cheap" but rather implements which show wealth and royalty. Therefore in the Temple they did not repair broken utensils but rather replaced them, and the morning Tamid (the first sacrifice of the day) was poured from a golden utensil.

In conclusion therefore, it would seem that whether or not expensive utensils were used was based on the discretion of the sages as they weighed and considered issues such as loss, honor of the service and need. ©2016 Rabbi M. Weiss and *Encyclopedia Talmudit*

### RABBI YITZCHOK ADLERSTEIN

## Be'eros

**T**herefore the Bnei Yisrael are not to eat the displaced sinew on the hip-socket to this day, because he struck Yaakov's hip-socket on the displaced sinew.

The text is unclear concerning the location and extent of Yaakov's injury. Just how did the angel attack Yaakov? Was the injury bilateral, or only to a single hip? These questions are subject to a dispute in the gemara. (Chulin 90B-91A)

R. Yehuda maintains that the malach (appearing either in the guise of an idolater or a Torah scholar) stood to Yaakov's right, and struck him only on that side. The sinew that is forbidden to us in commemoration of that struggles is therefore only the one on the right side of the animal.

The Chachamim, on the other hand, argue that the malach approached Yaakov from behind, and struck him on both sides. The sinews of both the right

and left of the animal are therefore forbidden.

The two positions are sourced in the events of the evening. Where did the malach stand? How did that affect the struggle, and Yaakov's injury. But we also understand that such details are not casual. Nothing in the lives of the avos is casual. From the details that the Torah records about these giants we can read the larger story of the Jewish experience. As Ramban demonstrates, events in their lives propagated through time, and determined conditions and events in the lives of their descendants. If we look for the greater message in the struggle between Yaakov and the malach, we are certain to find it.

According to Chazal, the malach was none other than the yetzer hora, also known as the Angel of Death, aka as the Guardian Angel of Esav. The all night battle led to no one claiming victory. As the incident ripples across time, this would mean that Yaakov would not be defeated by his major enemy. Jewish faith would continue unblemished

This hostile malach would not take no for an answer. If it could not bring Yaakov down, it would at least seek to leave its mark on some of Yaakov's descendants. Here, saro shel Esav had some success. There would be times in history that at least some of Yaakov's offspring would fall prey to the blandishments of the yetzer hora.

We can divide the Torah's mitzvos into two large groups -- mitzvos between man and his fellow man, and mitzvos between man and G-d. These are the two chief areas upon which all Jewish life stands. They took the form of the two tablets at Sinai. The first group of the Ten Commandments -- the right tablet -- governed the relationship between man and G-d; the left tablet described expectations concerning man's treatment of other men. (When the would-be convert asked Hillel to teach him the entire Torah while "standing on one foot," he meant all of the Torah dealing with interpersonal mitzvos. That is why Hillel could answer, "What is distasteful to you, do not do to your fellow.")

Looking back at the events of the long evening, the malach could approvingly summarize the battle: "You have striven with Elokim and with people, and prevailed."(Bereishis 32:29) In other words, Yaakov's commitment and faith remained fully intact, both vis-a-vis G-d and man. The malach did manage to dislocate the hip-socket sinew. In the course of history, there would be some Jews who would not remain steadfast in their performance of mitzvos.

In modern times, we have seen these casualties. We have witnessed the wholesale abandonment of major parts of the Torah. The worst part of this unfaithfulness concerned the mitzvos between man and G-d. Astonishingly, even among those Jews, commitment to fellow Jews remained strong. These "non-practicing" Jews continued their

charitable giving, and continued assuming responsibility for Jews in need around the globe. This is what R. Yehuda meant by localizing the damage to the right sinew, i.e., the part of Torah that deals with mitzvos between man and Hashem. The left side remained unimpaired.

The Chachamim demur. Looks are deceiving, they argue. It may seem that these Jews remain strong and steadfast in their observance of at least a good part of the Torah. But it cannot be as good as it looks. Mitzvos are intertwined. When people let go of significant parts of the Torah, their emunah and yiras Hashem must suffer in the process. Without that emunah, none of their other observance has a firm foundation. Their performance of the interpersonal mitzvos is laudable while it lasts -- but the long-term outlook is bleak. Without emunah and yiras Shomayim, the vestiges of their observance are without foundation. Changed circumstances and conditions will easily cause them to drop those observances. Their behavior in interpersonal areas may look strong from the outside, but it must be weak from within.

This is why the Chachamim insist that Yaakov was hurt by blows from the rear, and on both sides. Standing in front of Yaakov, one cannot see the damage. Still involved in the interpersonal life of the Jewish people, they seem to be fine, upstanding Jews, despite having discarded many mitzvos. From behind, however, that is in a place hidden from view and a time when no one observes, they are entirely compromised - without a single leg to stand on. (Based on Be'er Yosef, Bereishis 32:26-33) ©2013 Rabbi Y. Adlerstein and torah.org

**RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER**

## Weekly Dvar

In this week's Parsha, Vayishlach, we find Yaakov crossing the Jordan River with his family, and going back for some small earthenware jugs that he forgot (Talmud: Chulin 91). Why would a wealthy man such as Yaakov have to go back for a few jugs? One answer, according to Rabbi Shraga Simmons, is that Yaakov lived with the understanding that whatever possessions G-d gave him were for a purpose. As such, the jugs were as precious as jewels. To Yaakov, the fact that they were inexpensive didn't matter. Rabbi Eziel Tauber explains this with the following metaphor: If we were thirsty and asked a friend to bring us water, if they bring a paper cup filled with water, we would drink the water and throw out the cup. But now let's say we were wandering in the desert dying of thirst. If we were to lift our eyes to Heaven and say, "G-d, I'm dying, please make a miracle and send water!!" and behold, a hand reaches down from Heaven and gives us water in a paper cup. We would certainly drink the water... But what about the cup? We wouldn't throw it away -- a cup from Heaven is a great souvenir! Because G-d could

have sent us the water any way He wanted, like making it rain, or created a well, or simply pouring the water into our mouth. The fact that G-d handed us a paper cup tells us that He not only wanted us to have the water, He wanted us to have the cup too.

We're only expected to work with the tools G-d provides, and whatever He provides is precisely what we need. Whether or not the eventual goal is completed is only in G-d's hands. This idea of having everything we need is emphasized again in our Parsha, when after 20 years apart, Yaakov is reunited with his twin brother Esav. In describing their state of affairs, Esav says, "I have a lot;" and Yaakov says, "I have everything". (33:9-11) The difference is subtle, but in fact speaks volumes. Esav is saying "I have a lot..." but I sure could use more, whereas Yaakov is saying, "According to my part in G-d's grand eternal plan, I have everything -- exactly what I need." If we look at every possession (even little jugs) and situation as a special gift from G-d, the puzzle of life becomes truly meaningful, and more importantly, complete. ©2013 Rabbi S. Ressler & LeLamed, Inc.

**RABBI DOVID SIEGEL**

## Haftorah

This week's haftorah reveals to us the true nature of Edom, descendents of Eisav, and displays her two-sided character. It teaches us to recognize Edom's perpetual hatred for the Jewish people and never to trust her friendship. Although there may be moments when Edom displays true brotherhood we must always be wary of these situations and never establish any close association with her.

The haftorah opens with a moving description of a plot acted out against Edom, descendents of Eisav. The prophet Ovadiah says, "How was Eisav pillaged, his hidden treasures sought out? To the borders they sent you(Eisav), all of your allies enticed you: then they were able to overtake you." (1:6) These particular passages refer to an historic moment when the surrounding allies of Edom pretended to rush to her assistance in her war against a powerful neighbor. The allies accompanied Edom all the way to the end of her borders and then abandoned her, leaving her entire country unprotected. They returned inside her country and invaded the entire Edom, now in a most vulnerable state. The prophet draws our attention to this specific episode to demonstrate the unique character of Edom's "brotherhood." Historically speaking, although Edom always appeared politically as a true ally this relationship was only superficial and when the opportunity arose she would typically turn against her loyal "friends" and leave them stranded. This time, her allies gave her a taste of her own medicine and, after luring Edom into war they turned on her and pillaged her entire country.

This two faced nature of Eisav was, in fact, the

undertone of our Jewish nation's sad experiences throughout the Roman Empire, largely composed of the descendents of Eisav. To demonstrate this, the prophet Ovadiah focuses on a specific aspect of the Roman era, the role the Edomites played in the destruction of the second Temple. Ovadiah says, "On the day the nations took the Jewish people captive, and entered the Jewish gates casting lots over Yerushalayim, you were also amongst them." (1:11) In truth, the war against Yerushalayim belonged to the Romans but Edom could not stand idly by and therefore gladly participated in the destruction of the walls of the Bais Hamikdash. The Malbim (ad loc.) reminds us that these descendents of Edom were actually alleged Jewish converts who were accepted during the reign of Herod. Initially these Edomites gave the impression of sincerity and were warmly welcomed by the Jewish people. But, as could have been predicted, Edom could not be trusted and when the Jews were down, these "converts" rallied against their own Jewish "brethren" and readily assisted in destroying them.

This two faced nature expressed itself even in the earlier Babylonian exile when Eisav's descendents offered their assistance in driving the final nails into the Jewish coffin. The Prophet Ovadiah says, "And don't stand by the crossroads to finish off refugees." (1:14) The Yalkut Shimoni (549) explains that this passage refers to the cunning strategy of the Edomites during our first exile. They would station themselves a short distance behind the Babylonian army and wait in ambush for the Jewish refugees. They reasoned, "If the Jews win we'll say we're here to help them and if the Babylonians win we'll help them kill the remaining Jews." Again we are reminded of the unique "brotherhood" of Edom. Due to their two-faced character, they could easily pass for true brothers awaiting to help the Jews in their time of distress. But, in truth, this disguise only provided them a perfect opportunity to eradicate any trace of the Jewish people, should the situation arise.

Edom's pattern of "brotherhood" traces itself all the way back to Edom's predecessor, Eisav. In this week's sedra, (Torah portion) we read that Eisav ran towards his brother Yaakov to embrace him. Although Eisav had been Yaakov's arch enemy from birth, it seems that he had undergone a sincere change of attitude. Yaakov had sent an elaborate present to Eisav as a gesture of true friendship and, for the first time in their lives, a sense of friendship and brotherhood developed. The Torah relates that in response to this gift, "Eisav ran to his brother, embraced him, and "kissed" him. (Bereishis 32:4) However, Chazal note the mysterious dots which appear in the Torah above the word "kissed" and reveal that Eisav did not truly intend to kiss his brother. In actuality, he attempted to bite him, but was unsuccessful in his endeavor. His perpetual hatred was so deep that even in this true

moment of friendship he could not subdue his innermost feelings and found himself compelled to express them. In explanation of this, Rashi (ad loc) quotes the classic statement of Rav Shimon Bar Yochai, "It is a set principle that Eisav hates Yaakov." This warns us never to lose sight of Eisav's inner hatred and even when true gestures of "friendship" are displayed never to overlook what lies beneath the surface.

Edom, the present day Eisav will never be our true friend and we must always be wary of her association with us. We should never become too closely related to her and must always remember her true character. This deep seeded hatred remains throughout the generations until the final day when, as Ovadiah says, "The saviors will rise from Mount Zion to judge the (inhabitants of Eisav's) mountain and then the perfect reign will belong to Hashem. (1:21) © 2013 Rabbi D. Siegel and torah.org

#### RABBI DANIEL TRAVIS

### Integrity

"**W**hen his [Yosef's] brothers realized that their father loved him more than he loved the other children, they began to hate him. They could not say a peaceful word to him." (Bereshith 37:4)

Although these words are not complimentary to Yaakov's children, there was a very positive side to their actions. Yaakov's sons certainly entertained ill feelings toward Yosef, yet truthfulness was so much part of them that it did not allow them to say anything to Yosef that was contrary to the thoughts they bore in their hearts. (Rashi on Bereshith 37:4) This level is called tamim (perfect), and indicates that there is no contradiction between one's inner feelings and one's external actions—that one's actions are in perfect harmony with the feelings in one's heart.

It is often difficult to harmonize one's heart and one's actions; therefore this praise is reserved only for the truly righteous. (Rabbeinu Bachyeh on Bereshith 37:4) King Dovid described this behavior when he wrote, "Speak truth in your heart." (Tehillim 15:2) This level of truthfulness is very exalted indeed, and is found only among those who truly fear G-d. (Bava Bathra 88a)

Nevertheless, there are times when it is better not to speak the truth that is in one's heart in order to spare another person from embarrassment. After all, King Dovid said, "Speak truth in your heart." He didn't say, "Speak the truth that is in your heart." Rav Safra and Rava once took a walk together outside the city limits. As they were walking they met Mar Zutra on his way to visit the city. Mar Zutra, mistakenly thinking that Rav Safra and Rava had come especially to greet him, told them that they should not have troubled themselves to do so. Rav Safra responded that they had not been aware that Mar Zutra was on his way to

town; they were simply out walking, and had not intended to greet him. (Chulin 94b)

Rava was of the opinion that under such circumstances it would have been better not to "speak the truth in one's heart," but rather to keep quiet. Since Rav Safra and Rava had not known that Mar Zutra was approaching the city, if they remained silent and let Mar Zutra assume that they had come to meet him they would not have been deceiving him. They would just have been leaving him to his own assumptions—if anything he would have "tricked" himself. Since it would embarrass Mar Zutra to know that they had not come to greet him, Rava felt that they should not have informed him. ©2011 Rabbi D. Travis & torah.org

### **RABBI ARNOLD LUSTIGER**

## **I Have a Dream**

**A**s the Chumash describes the respective dreams of the Sar Hamashkim and Sar Ha'ofim, an enigmatic medrash appears on the phrase: *vayahalmu halom sheneihem*. Rashi, quoting this medrash, explains that not only did each have a dream, but that each dreamt the interpretation of the other's dream as well. As confirmation to this surprising inference, the Sar Ha'ofim, later in the narrative, was able to discern that Joseph's interpretation of the Sar Hamashkim's dream was sound (*vayar sar ha'ofim ki tov patar*). Unless he had already been clued in, the Sar Ha'ofim's checkered baking career alone provided insufficient credentials to appreciate Joseph's talents in dream interpretation.

The medrash seems to inject a jarringly illogical detail into an otherwise straightforward story. If each of the two servants knew the interpretation of the other's dream, why didn't they simply tell each other before Yosef visited their prison cells?

Let's briefly reconstruct the scene for a moment. Each servant wakes up in the morning with a profoundly troubling dream that cries out for explanation. Yet, neither says: "if you listen to my dream, I'll listen to yours," for if they had, each would certainly have revealed the interpretation to the other. Instead, they are so self-absorbed in their respective depressions that neither bothers to ask what his colleague's dream was about. Their egotistical natures preclude consideration of the other. "My dream bothers me—don't bother me with yours."

With this added facet to the narrative, we can resolve a famous difficulty on Rashi's comment at the end of the Parsha. Yosef was punished with two added years of imprisonment, "because Yosef trusted that the Sar Hamashkim would represent him [favorably to Par'oh]". This passage in Rashi inevitably confronts us with the role of *hishtadlut*—what was wrong with asking the Sar Hamashkim for a word of intercession with the king? In light of the above, we can obviate this philosophical question. There indeed is nothing wrong

with *hishtadlut per se*. However, the courtesy of returning a favor is almost beyond the realm of possibility for a person who is so self-centered. Joseph pinning his hopes on the egocentric Sar Hamashkim indeed suggests a lack of *emunah*.

In this vein, a verse is quoted in the final Rashi in the parsha: "Happy is the man who has made Hashem his trust, and has not turned to the arrogant". One who displays arrogance has a self-centered personality with no room for empathy. The Sar Hamashkim was emblematic of this destructive character trait. Indeed, according to Rashi, the entire Egyptian nation could be characterized by this same attribute of arrogance.

In a derashah delivered in 1954, the Rav expands on a closely related theme. He suggests that the non-Jewish world in general cannot tolerate the trial of suffering. A good example is Germany's behavior as a nation post World War I. In response to hyperinflation and defeat in a world war, it systematically exterminated 20 million people. Indeed, this phenomenon is personified in Esau. When Esau was hungry, he forces Jacob to pour soup down his throat (Rashi on Genesis 25:30). Esau was ready to sell his birthright and discard all that is sacred in the face of hunger. On the other hand, when confronted with the trial of suffering, the Jewish people have fared very well. A Jew does not spill blood when he is hungry. When he is hungry, he senses the hunger of his fellow; when he is cold, he feels his brother's discomfort.

When we experience personal crisis, our prayers for resolution are communal. The petitionary blessings in *Shemoneh Esrei* are in the first person plural. We ask for *refua*, "*betoch sh'ar holei Yisrael*," and we pray to be granted solace, "*betoch sh'ar avelei tzion viyerushalayim*." An individual's travails cannot be disassociated from *Klal Yisrael's*. Praying for oneself alone reflects the arrogance and egotism of the Sar Hamashkim. ©2003 Rabbi A. Lustiger and *The AishDas Society*

