



BS"D

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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON VAYISHLACH - 5764

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From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND [ryfrand@torah.org]
"RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas VaYishlach

The Battle With Eisav's Angel Always Keeps Changing

In this week's parsha we learn of the encounter between Yaakov Avinu [our father] and an Angel. Yaakov fought with this Angel the entire night until the morning, when the Angel finally gave up. Our Sages say that this Angel was the guardian angel of Eisav.

The Torah quotes an interesting dialogue between Yaakov and the Angel. The Angel asked to be released because it was morning and he had to go back to heaven. Yaakov responded that he would not release the Angel until he gave Yaakov a blessing. The Angel asked Yaakov what his name was and, when Yaakov answered, then told him that he would no longer be known as Yaakov, he would from here on be called Yisrael. Then Yaakov turned the tables, and asked the Angel what his name was. The Angel responded, "Why are you asking me what my name is?"

This is a very strange dialogue, to say the least. The Angel's response was not "I do not need to tell you my name" or "I am not allowed to tell you my name." Nor was it "I do not have a name." The Angel merely turned the tables and asked Yaakov, "How will you benefit from knowing my name?"

Why does Yaakov want to know his name? And what does the Guardian Angel of Eisav mean when he says "Why are you asking my name?"

Rashi alludes to these questions. Rashi explains the Angel's response as "we Angels have no set names -- our names are dependent on the current mission on which we are being sent."

This answer, however, does not fully suffice. The Angel in question DID have a definite mission. He must have had a name associated with that

mission. We in fact know who he was. He was Sama-el, the archangel of Eisav. We continue to deal with him up until this very day. He has one function -- he is the instigator against the Jewish people. He is the embodiment of the Satan. He has one task in which he has been engaged in throughout the millennia. So why did he refuse to reveal his name to Yaakov? What did he mean when he asked, "Why are you asking my name?"

I once heard a very relevant interpretation of this dialogue from Rav Chaim Dov Keller, the Rosh Yeshiva in Telshe of Chicago. The name of something defines it. Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch compares the Hebrew word for 'name' (shem) with the Hebrew word for 'there' (sham). A name defines an object. It tells us where it is and of what its essence consists.

Yaakov told the Angel "We have had a battle and I know that this will be an ongoing battle. Explain your essence to me. What are you all about? Let me know your 'name.'" Yaakov was looking for the key to pass on to his children and grandchildren throughout the generations -- information regarding how to deal with the archangel of Eisav in this ongoing struggle. "Tell me the nature of our fight," Yaakov asked.

The Angel's answer to this question was "it does not help to know my name, because I am not just one thing that you will have to conquer." The Angel alluded to the fact that throughout the generations he would be changing. Sometimes he would be Hellenism. Sometimes he would be Socialism. Sometimes he would be Communism. All the tests and all the philosophies and all the battles that we have had to fight throughout the generations are embodied in this one Angel. He could in fact not define his essence for Yaakov because the nature of his essence (which represents our struggle with Eisav) keeps changing. Sometimes it pushes us from one direction, sometimes it pushes us from the opposite direction. It is always a different fight.

There is a dispute in the Talmud [Chullin 91a] whether the Angel appeared to Yaakov like an idolater or like a Torah scholar. Which is it? A Torah scholar looks a lot different than an idolater! What did he look like?

The answer is that he could be both. There is no one definition and there is no one battle plan. We can never say that we have conquered the archangel of Eisav because he can always rear his ugly head in a totally different manifestation in the future.

When we look back 60 years ago, Normandy Beach was an awfully busy place. Today, there is nothing there but graves. Today the battle field is no longer at Normandy. In the middle 1960s the busiest airport in the world was not O'Hare (Chicago). It was De Nang (Viet Nam). Now, perhaps there are not even planes landing in De Nang anymore. The field of battle keeps changing. There is no point in fighting old battles. We always have to be alert for the new battle.

This is the archangel of Eisav. "It does not help for me to tell you my name. There is no battle plan. I cannot tell you this is who I am because I am ever changing."

"May you remove the Satan from before us and from behind us" [Evening Prayer Liturgy]. Sometimes the Satan steps in front of us and prevents us from doing Mitzvos. Sometimes the Satan appears in back of us and pushes us to do Mitzvos. That can also be the Satan. He has no strict definition as to who he is. He does not fit into easy definitions. He has no 'name'. The battle with the Satan which is the battle with the Yetzer Hara (evil inclination), which is the battle with the archangel of Eisav, is an ever changing battle.

Yaakov Questions His Ability To Take Revenge Against Shechem

The Medrash says that when Dena was violated by the people of Shechem, Yaakov decided not to do anything until his sons returned from the field. He kept silent until they came back. The Medrash cites this as an example of the phrase in Mishlei "and a man of understanding

will remain silent" [Mishlei 11:12]. The fact that Yaakov Avinu did not react was because wise men know to be quiet.

Rav Schwab offers an interesting interpretation of this Medrash. Why didn't Yaakov Avinu react? The verse [pasuk] says "A G-d of Vengeance is Hashem" [Tehillim 94:1]. The Talmud states [Brochos 33a] "great is vengeance, because it was placed between two names of G-d." Rav Schwab interprets this to mean that the license and ability to take revenge is something that remains in G-d's domain. It is not up to us.

Our Sages say that we should engage in all types of mitzvos even without the purest of intentions [Sotah 22b]. This applies to learning, to giving charity, to all types of observance. Despite this, when it comes to one area of life a person must be of pure intent. That is the area of vengeance and zealotry.

One who wishes to be zealous and take up the battle for the Master of the World, must be certain that his intentions are pure and he has no personal ax to grind. That is why G-d surrounds vengeance with His Name (in the previously quoted pasuk "Kel Nekamos HaShem").

It is very rare for man to be given the license to take revenge, because man is typically unable to do so with pure motivation. We are not pure of heart enough.

When Yaakov Avinu heard that his daughter was violated, he did not react. He knew that if would react, it would perhaps be because he held this violation to be a personal affront against himself. The Gemara says that Yaakov had gone to Shechem and made coins for them. He set up a mercantile system for them. He set up bathhouses. He put Shechem on the map. What did the people of Shechem do in return? They took his only daughter and violated her. Consequently, he was not sure that his reactions would be solely for the sake of heaven and therefore refrained from taking revenge.

The brothers returned. They reacted because "an abomination has been done in Israel" [Bereshis 34:7]. Their objection was not framed in terms of the fact that it was their sister, but because objectively the act itself was a despicable act. Therefore their reaction was more pure of heart. Yaakov, the man of truth, who questioned his own motives, could not bring himself to take revenge. To him, the Medrash applied the accolade, "the man of wisdom will keep quiet."

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These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 395, Free Will vs. Hashgocha Pratis. Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> <<http://www.yadyechiel.org/>> for further information. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> Project Genesis, Inc. learn@torah.org



http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2002/parsha/rsac_vayishlach.html
TorahWeb [from last year]

RABBI YONASAN SACKS

The Challenge of Bitachon

At the beginning of Parshas Vayishlach, the Torah recounts the meeting between Yaakov Avinu and Eisav Harasha. The Torah tells us that Yaakov's initial response to the impending meeting was (32:7), "vayira Yaakov meod vayetzer lo", Yaakov experienced great fear and anguish. Under normal circumstances, this reaction would be understandable. However, in last week's parsha, Hashem promised Yaakov, "unshmarticha bechol asher telech" ("I will guard you wherever you go"). How could Yaakov Avinu be so fearful if Hashem had promised him he would emerge victorious? The Gemara in Berachos (4b) tells us that Yaakov was concerned "shema yigrom hacheit", perhaps sin would cause Hashem's promise to be rescinded.

The Rambam, in his introduction to his commentary on the Mishna, points out the following difficulty. Later, the Gemara Berachos (7a) tells us that any promise Hashem makes for that which is good, even if it is conditional, will never be rescinded. Hashem's promise that he would protect Yaakov was one for the good, and therefore could never be retracted; why then was Yaakov fearful that his sins would cancel the promise? The Rambam answers that this comment in the Berachos depends on whether the communication took place between Hashem and a prophet privately or whether the prophecy was meant to be relayed to others. If the prophecy is private, there is no guarantee that Hashem will not retract it. If, however, it is to be relayed to others, it will not be rescinded. As such, Yaakov was justified in his fear – Hashem's communication was to him alone, and could therefore be rescinded.

The Meshech Chochma in Parshas Vayera points out that Avraham and Sara had seemingly similar reactions to the news that they would soon be blessed with a child. The Torah describes Avraham's reaction as "vayitzchak", and Sara's as "vatitzchak". Why, then was Sara criticized for laughing and Avraham not criticized? The Targum translates the two terms quite differently. Avraham's laughter is translated as "vechadi", he rejoiced. Sara's laughter is translated as "vecheichas", she laughed. The Meshech Chochma suggests that since Hashem told Avraham the news in private, there was no guarantee it would actually happen. However, once he was commanded to tell Sara, this prophecy had the status of a promise that would not be retracted, and hence Sara's laughter was inappropriate.

The Rambam in the seventh of the Shemona Perakim and in the Moreh Nevuchim discusses the concept of nevuah in general, and specifically one who receives it. The Rambam quotes three possible understandings of the qualifications of a navi. The philosophers who do not follow the Torah assume that anyone can receive nevuah if they perfect themselves. This is incorrect. The general populace assumes that Hashem picks random people to be nevi'im, regardless of their character. This understanding is also incorrect. The correct understanding is that preparation is necessary, but insufficient. Certainly, one cannot receive nevuah without being spiritually fit. However, even once a person has perfected himself, there is no guarantee he will receive nevuah. What does perfection mean? Can a navi never make a mistake in his personal life, lest he lose his nevuah? The Rambam brings several examples of neviim who sinned yet retained their ability to receive prophecy that prove that this is not the case. One of these examples is Yaakov Avinu who received nevuah despite his sin – his trepidation of the encounter with Esav.

There seems to be a contradiction within the Rambam. In the introduction to the commentary on the Mishna, he says that Yaakov Avinu was justified in his fear. Yet here he says that Yaakov Avinu sinned relative to his stature. How can one resolve this contradiction?

Rav Elchanan Wasserman hy"d, in his explanation of aggadeta (5) at the end of his Kovetz Ha'aros, quotes a comment of the Vilna Gaon in Chapter 14 of Mishlei. The Gaon quotes the verse in Tehillim (118:9)

"Tov lachasos bahAshem, mivtoach bindivim" ("it is better to trust in Hashem than in nobles"). The Gaon is bothered by the seemingly obvious nature of this verse – of course our bitachon is in Hashem! The Gaon understands the two similar, but distinct, terms used in the verse: bitachon and chisayon. What is the difference between the two, between belief and reliance? Bitachon, says the Gaon, is when someone gives you an absolute promise and you believe that the promise will come true. Chisayon is when you believe something will happen even if there was never any promise to that effect. Placing one's trust in Hashem, even when there is no guarantee He will grant that which one wants, is far superior than placing one's trust in the absolute promises of a human being. Rav Elchanan writes that this is the way to resolve the contradiction within the Rambam. Yaakov Avinu had legitimate cause for concern – his sins could have caused Hashem's promise to be rescinded because the promise was given in private. Nevertheless, even if there was no explicit promise, he should have relied on Hashem. A person must trust in Hashem even without guarantees as to the outcome. This lesson of Yaakov Avinu serves as a model for our behavior and character. The Meshech Chochma points out that Yaakov Avinu led a life filled with much suffering. The way Hashem appeared to Yaakov was different than the way He appeared to Avraham and Yitzchak; he appeared to Yaakov at night, outside of Eretz Yisrael. Even in the heart of darkness and despair, in the dire straits of galus, one can still experience the presence of the shechina.

The Gemara in Berachos tells us that each forefather instituted a different prayer – Avraham instituted Shacharis, Yitzchak instituted Mincha, and Yaakov instituted Maariv. The tefilla at night was the one instituted by Yaakov, because his life was one of trials, fears, and anguish, yet he still had trust in Hashem.

How can a person experience nevuah even in chutz laaretz? On the verse at the beginning of sefer Yechezkel, "hayo haya d'var Hashem el Yechezkel ben Buzi HaKohen", Rashi, commenting on the double language of "hayo haya", says that although he was now in chutz laaretz, Yechezkel was already a navi when he was in Eretz Yisrael, and therefore could also be a navi in chutz laaretz. One can not initially become a navi in chutz laaretz, but the experience of nevuah in Eretz Yisrael serves to sustain nevuah, even in chutz laaretz.

The Meshech Chochma explains that a person can survive in galus by retaining a connection with the Torah and values of Eretz Yisrael. Yaakov Avinu instituted the tefilla of Maariv, which the Gemara says commemorates the sacrifice of the fats and limbs in the Beis HaMikdash. These are unique in that they can be brought at night, but only if their original sacrifice was brought during the day. This is the experience of galus – one can still experience the shechina if one links oneself to Eretz Yisrael, much like one can bring the fats and limbs if they are linked to a daytime sacrifice.

We now are experiencing, in a dire way, the darkness of galus, especially in light of the recent events in Eretz Yisrael. May our bitachon and chisayon in Hashem serve as our source of strength as we await the geula sheleima bimeheira biyameinu.

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From: RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY [rmk@torah.org] Sent: December 11, 2003 To: drasha@torah.org Subject: Drasha Vayishlach

No News is Jews News

by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Yaakov's family faced a tremendous crisis. While passing through the city of Shechem, Dena, their sister was attacked and was violated by Shechem, the son of King Chamor, who bore the same name as the city. Shechem later claimed that he desperately wanted to marry her! No one

in the entire city brought the prince to justice and Yaakov's sons were not going to ignore that behavior.

They were not ready for open warfare either, and so they developed a ruse. They claimed that they were ready to form a harmonious relationship with the entire population of the city of Shechem. "We will give our daughters to you, and take your daughters to ourselves; we will dwell with you, and become a single people" (Braishis 34:16). However, there was one condition. Every male of Shechem had to circumcise. Yaakov's children insisted that it would be a disgrace for the daughters of Abraham to marry uncircumcised men. Upon direction from King Chamor and Prince Shechem the entire town agreed, and three days later, when the people of Shechem were in painful recuperation from their surgery, Yaakov's children avenged Dina's honor. Despite Yaakov's consternation, they attacked the male population and wiped them out.

The question is simple: Why ask the people of Shechem to circumcise? If Yaakov's children wanted to attack them, why go through a process of converting them? They should have asked them to fast for three days. That would have made them even weaker. They could have asked them to hand over all their weapons. Why ask them to do an act is so blatantly Jewish?

On September 30, 2000, the word intafada was almost unknown to the average American. And then the riots began. On one of the first days of what has now been over three years of unceasing violence, against innocent Israelis, The New York Times, Associated Press and other major media outlets published a photo of a young man who looked terrified, bloodied and battered. There was an Israeli soldier in the background brandishing a billy-club. The caption in everyone of the papers that carried the photo identified the teen as an innocent Palestinian victim of the riots -- with the clear implication that the Israeli soldier was the one who beat him. The world was in shock and outrage at the sight of the poor teen, blood oozing from his temple crouching beneath the club-wielding Israeli policeman. Letters of protest and sympathy poured in from the genteel readers of the gentile world.

The victim's true identity was soon revealed. Dr. Aaron Grossman wrote the NY Times that the picture of the Israeli soldier and the Palestinian on the Temple Mount was indeed not a Palestinian. The battered boy was actually his son, Tuvia Grossman, a Yeshiva student from Chicago. He, and two of his friends, were pulled from their taxicab by a mob of Palestinian Arabs, and were severely beaten and stabbed. The Israeli soldier wielding the club was actually attempting to protect Tuvia from the vicious mob.

All of a sudden the outrage ceased, the brutal attack was almost ignored and a correction buried somewhere deep amongst "all the news that is fit to print" re-identified Tuvia Grossman as "an American student in Israel." It hardly mentioned that he was an innocent Jew who was nearly lynched by Arabs. This blatant hypocrisy in news coverage incidentally help launch a media watchdog named Honest Reporting.com.

Rav Yonasan Eibeschutz, zt"l, explains that Yaakov's children knew something that was as relevant in Biblical times as it is in today's "New York" times. Yaakov's sons knew the secret of society. Have them circumcised. Make them Jews. Then you can do whatever you want with them and no one will say a word. You can wipe out an entire city - as long as it is not a gentile city. If Shechem had remained a gentile city had the people not circumcised according the laws of Avraham then Yaakov's children would have been condemned by the entire world. But Yaakov's children knew better. They made sure that the Shechemites, went through a Jewish circumcision. Shechem now was a Jewish city; and when a Jewish city is destroyed, the story becomes as irrelevant as an American student attacked by a Palestinian mob in Yerushalayim! Unfortunately it is that simple and that old.

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky is the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Toras Chaim at South Shore and the author of the Parsha Parable series Drasha, Copyright © 2003 by Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and Torah.org. Drasha is the e-mail edition of FaxHomily, a Project of the Henry and Myrtle Hirsch Foundation. Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky is the Associate Dean of the Yeshiva of South Shore, <http://www.yoss.org/>. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> Project Genesis, Inc. learn@torah.org

From: RABBIWEIN@jewishdestiny.com Sent: December 11, 2003
Subject: Rabbi Wein's Weekly Columns
Parsha Archive December 12, 2003 VAYISHLACH There are certain confrontations in life that are seemingly unavoidable. Yakov flees from his parents' home in order to avoid confronting Eisav over the matter of the birthright that Yakov purchased from Eisav and the blessings that Yitzchak bestowed on Yakov. But after twenty years of separation and avoidance of Eisav, Yakov now confronts Eisav, not knowing what Eisav's response to Yakov's gifts and flattery will be. But now Yakov knows that there is no escaping the confrontation. He therefore steels himself against it with gifts to Eisav, with prayer, and even with preparations for conflict. Eisav cannot be permanently finessed. He demands answers and policies and Yakov cannot ignore him.

In the Torah reading of Vayishlach, Yakov successfully disarms Eisav by showering him with gifts and compliments. He does not really have a serious discussion with him about their outstanding differences. Yakov is convinced that Eisav will react negatively to airing all of their differences out in the open. Therefore, Yakov employs diverse tactics to really avoid Eisav once more. Eisav knows that he is being had but chooses to let the matter rest temporarily. In the long history of the Jewish people, Yakov has consistently attempted to avoid dealing directly with Eisav. Whether Eisav too, in the guise of a Roman Emperor or Christian Pope or German Kaiser or Russian Czar or Commissar, Yakov always attempted to appease Eisav and not confront him. This was always the political policy of the Jewish community and our survival is certainly indicative of its soundness. But, over the years, an Eisav in a different guise has evolved, one who will not be put off with gifts and blandishments, one who demands the confrontation that Yakov dreads and postpones. This Eisav may be entitled "modernity".

It is the modern world of democracy and freedom, of new ideas and constantly advancing technology, of not only freedom of religion but freedom from religion as well. What does Yakov have to say to this new Eisav? The main problem in Jewish life over the past two centuries is exactly that - how does Judaism, the Jewish people, the individual Jew, confront the problems raised by modernity? There is a section of traditional Jewry which, until today emulates the tactics of our father Yakov and avoids confrontation with the modern world. It simply attempts to shut that world out from its life and society. This approach has met with varying degrees of success but has not been universally adopted, even in the Orthodox Jewish world. At the other end of the spectrum there has been an attempt by a section of Jewry to embrace and include the ideas of modernity and even the life style and attitudes of the modern world into its Jewish life. This trend has also experienced many failures and problems and has many times been overwhelmed by the modern world to the detriment of its Jewish component.

There are now and there have been till now, many attempts to find a middle ground between traditional Judaism and the ideas of modernity and behavior of the modern world. But, the truth be said, no universally successful formula for confronting the modern world has as yet been formulated by the descendants of Yakov. Meanwhile, the modern world and its ideas are ripping gaping holes in the fabric and population of the

Jewish people. Not everyone can and/or should divorce one's self from the modern world swirling about us. And, again, not everyone can successfully reconcile a Torah life-style and commitment to the realities of the modern world. One thing, though, is clear and that is that the traditional Torah way of life should be given priority in Jewish affairs, both public and private. David Ben Gurion came to see Rabbi A.Y. Karelits (Chazon Ish) in the beginning years of the State of Israel. He asked the venerable rabbi, "How shall we live together in our new state? Who should give way to whom?" Rabbi Karelits responded by saying that the Talmud posits a case where two camels meet on a narrow road. One is laden with cargo and the other is not. The Talmud's decision is that the loaded camel has the right of way. The traditional, even isolationist, world of Jewry is laden with 3,400 years of Judaism and Jewish life. It certainly is entitled to appreciation, recognition and support, if not even to the right of way.

Shabat Shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein

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From: RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN's Parsha List [parsha@ohrtorahstone.org.il] Sent: December 10, 2003

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Vayishlach (Genesis 32:4-36:43) By Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel - This week's Torah portion records the mysterious and mystical encounter between Jacob and an anonymous assailant, an adversary who Jacob overcomes and from whom he receives a blessing as well as a new name: Yisrael. And this nocturnal struggle leads into Jacob-Israel's meeting with his brother Esau, from whom Jacob takes his leave and goes to live in Sukkot. Who is this anonymous wrestling partner? What has he to do with Esau? And why the introduction of a place with the very same name of our Festival of redemption, Sukkot? The first appearance of Sukkot at this point in time must be more than mere coincidence!

We have already seen how Mother Rebecca was anxious to get both the spiritual birthright (bekhorah) and the material blessing (brakhah) for her son Jacob; she was not in favor of Isaac's initial intent to divide between the spiritual and the material, to give the birthright to Jacob and the blessing to Esau. Rebecca understood that the two realms of the religious and the physical dare not be split apart in a neo-platonic rendering to Caesar what is Caesar's and to G-d what is G-d's".

No, thought Rebecca, everything must be G-d's, and so the material must protect and provide for the spiritual and thereby become sanctified by the spiritual. The Torah voice of Jacob must be buttressed and strengthened by the hand of Esau if Torah is truly to overtake the world. But in order to effectuate this, she had to convince Isaac that the naive, whole-hearted, tent-dwelling, Torah-studying Jacob was capable of adopting the more aggressive hands of Esau if the situation warranted it - and this she succeeds in doing when Jacob masquerades as Esau. Jacob receives the blessing!

Undoubtedly, however, there exists a serious, even existential danger when the spiritual Jacob adopts the physical prowess of Esau; the material may over-run the spiritual, the excitement of the army may completely overwhelm the bet midrash, the Esaurian hands may become the masters of - rather than the handmaidens to - the voice of Jacob. This is an especial possibility in the case of Jacob, who knows that his father Isaac favors his aggressive son Esau, who feels that the more Esau-like he becomes, the more likely it will be that he will receive his father's affection. And so Jacob spends twenty years with his uncle Laban, waxes rich and powerful, out-manuevers the master maneuverer,

out-tricks the master trickster, even dreams of spotted, speckled and striped cattle. In short, the hands of Esau have overtaken the voice of Jacob!

Finally, Jacob returns to his ancestral land and family mission. An angel had come to him in a dream, had pointed out to him the massive change in his personality, instructed him to "go home" (Genesis 31:11-13). He leaves his materialistic uncle, instructs his messengers to give an atonement of his offering "blessing" (Genesis 32:21) to his brother Esau, and crosses the River Jabbok, passing into the land of Israel. "And Jacob remained alone, and a man wrestled with him until the rising of the morning star" (Genesis 32:25). Who was this "man"? The classical Rabbinic interpretation is that he was the "spirit or power of Esau;" Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch suggests that he was the Esau within Jacob, those powerful hands of Esau which had so completely overwhelmed the voice - and Divine essence - of Jacob. Jacob overcame this power of Esau, and so returned to his true, pristine self.

But the actual verses of the Torah suggest something else: "And Jacob called the name of the place (of the struggle) Peniel 'because I have seen G-d face to face and my soul has been preserved'" (Genesis 32:31). Does this not sound as though the anonymous assailant is none other than G-d Himself?

I would submit that both interpretations are true. In the first instance, Jacob is battling with the Esau within himself, exorcizing the hands of Esau which had overtaken his personality. And until and unless he succeeded in returning to his true self, to his G-d given essential identity, he would not succeed in finding his own G-d. During all the years of his sojourn with Laban, Jacob recognizes the G-d of his father and his grandfather, but not his own G-d, who he so desperately wished to discover in the oath he made in Beth El ("If G-d will be my Lord" Genesis 28:20). Indeed, Jacob - as so many of us - is engaged in a dual struggle, with himself and with his G-d. Once he succeeds in reclaiming his own personality he will likewise succeed in discovering his own G-d.

Hence, he is named Yisrael, "because you have struggled with G-d and with men (yourself, Esau within yourself), and you have overcome" (Genesis 32:29). And he receives a blessing from G-d, perhaps the very same blessing he had taken by deception from his father and was now returning to Esau; but since he must return Isaac's blessing to Esau, he now requests the blessing from G-d. This time, however, the hands of Esau would be a mere handmaiden rather than a master. And after he meets the flesh and blood Esau, after he tells him that "I saw your face as one sees the face of G-d" (Genesis 33:10), and after he returns his blessing to him (Genesis 33:11), he is finally able to erect an altar named "G-d the Lord of Yisrael" (Genesis 33:20); Jacob has found his own G-d at last. His struggle vis a vis G-d is also successfully concluded.

Sukkot is the Festival of redemption, celebrating our entry into the land of Israel (the four species are fruits of the Promised Land) and the tabernacle symbolizing the Holy Temple, as we recite in our Grace After Meals throughout the Festival, "May the Merciful one re-establish for us the fallen Tabernacle of David". Sukkot is also one of the three Pilgrim Festivals, when all the Israelites are expected to come to the Holy Temple and see - and be seen by - G-d. Is it not fitting that, after Jacob has become Yisrael, vanquished the Esau with himself and seen his own G-d face to face, he arrives at a place called Sukkot, Tabernacles. The personal redemption of Yisrael our Patriarch mirrors the ultimate national redemption of Yisrael our people. Shabbat Shalom.

You can find Rabbi Riskin's parshiot on the web at: <http://www.ohrtorahstone.org.il/parsha/index.htm>

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From: Yeshivat Har Etzion Office [office@etzion.org.il] Sent: December 10, 2003 Re: Based on a sicha by Harav Michael Rosensweig SICHOT64 -08: Parashat Vayishlach Yeshivat Har Etzion Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash (Vbm) Student Summaries Of Sichot Of The Roshei Yeshiva Parashat Vayishlach Special Guest Sicha: Perspective in Idealism Based on a sicha by HARAV MICHAEL ROSENSWEIG Adapted by Dov Karoll

Following the rape of Dina (chapter 34), the Torah presents a disagreement between Yaakov and his sons, particularly Shimon and Levi, on how to respond to the offer of Shekhem and Chamor. At first glance, it seems that Shimon and Levi, the younger generation, take the principled, idealistic response, not tolerating the wrong done to their sister. They wish to restore their family structure and to bring justice to evildoers. Yaakov Avinu, on the other hand, seems to take a pragmatic approach, expressing concern about how the surrounding nations will react to their actions. This is evidenced in the verses themselves. The Torah tells us that Yaakov's initial response

was silence: Yaakov heard that he [Shekhem] had defiled his [Yaakov's] daughter Dina, but since his sons were in the field with the cattle, he [Yaakov] kept silent until they came home. (34:5) His sons, on the other hand, immediately return from the field, and are very upset about the outrage that was done:

Meanwhile Yaakov's sons, having heard the news, came in from the field, and the men were distressed and angry, because he [Chamor] had committed an outrage in Israel by lying with Yaakov's daughter - a thing not to be done... (34:7) This disagreement applies not only to their initial reactions, but also to their perspectives on the aftermath of the event.

Yaakov said to Shimon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me, making me odious among the inhabitants of the land... My men are few in number, so that if they unite against me and attack me, I and my house will be destroyed!" They [Shimon and Levi] responded: "Should our sister be defiled and treated like a harlot?" (34:30-31)

The impression one gets from reading these verses is that Shimon and Levi are maintaining higher ideals. But how can it be that Yaakov Avinu, the "select among the patriarchs" (Midrash Sekhel Tov Bereishit 33), trades in his values for pragmatism? Far be it from us to say that Yaakov Avinu sacrificed his principles out of concern for what might happen diplomatically.

Regarding the question of whether the actions of Shimon and Levi were halakhically justified, there is a dispute between the Rambam and the Ramban. The Rambam (Hilkhos Melakhim 9:14) explains that the last of the seven Noahide laws, *dinim*, civil law, requires the setting up of courts in every district to adjudicate cases regarding violation of the other six laws. Furthermore, he explains that any violation of any of the seven laws, including this last one, is punishable by death. It is for this reason that the people of Shekhem deserved to be killed: they knew that Shekhem kidnapped Dina and did not bring him to trial. This approach seemingly vindicates Shimon and Levi. But it leaves a very serious question that the Radvaz raises on the spot (s.v. *u-mippenei*):

If this claim is correct, why did Yaakov reprimand his sons, saying "You have brought trouble on me," given that they were acting in accordance with the law? One can answer that since they [the people of Shekhem] had accepted the command of [berit] *mila*, circumcision, they were considered to be converts, and one who converts is considered like a new person. Many [other] things

have been said to answer this question, but I will not discuss it at length.

The Radvaz's approach is similar to the Ramban's. The Ramban (34:13, s.v. va-ya'anu) offers a different explanation for the requirement of setting up courts, and, correspondingly, offers a different perspective on the actions of Shimon and Levi.

The Ramban explains that the command to set up courts is not limited to adjudicating the six other commandments. Rather, it demands setting up courts to judge a whole range of issues, parallel to, or perhaps including, the corpus of civil law mandated by Halakha, codified today in the section of the Shulchan Arukh known as Choshen Mishpat. However, despite his more expansive explanation of the Noachide mitzva of setting up courts, the Ramban claims that its violation is not a capital offense. Yaakov rebuked and eventually cursed his sons for having done injustice to the people of Shekhem, for having taken advantage of them.

According to the Ramban's approach, we can understand Yaakov's critique and reproach. But how can we understand Yaakov's rebuke according to the Ramban's approach?

Let us turn back to the verses. At the end of his life, Yaakov again speaks out against Shimon and Levi's actions in Shekhem: Shimon and Levi are brothers; their weapons are tools of injustice. Let not my person be included in their council; let not my being be counted in their assembly; for when angry they slayed men, and when pleased they maimed oxen. (49:5-6)

It is noteworthy that the Torah refers to Yaakov in this section as Yisrael. The use of this name indicates that Yaakov is representing the Jewish national view, making it clear that this is not merely Yaakov's own view, but one approved by the Torah.

Yaakov, at the end of his life, rebukes Shimon and Levi for their inappropriate actions. This is beyond the silence of Yaakov when he first heard of the incident, where they took action while he did not. This is after the fact, and not merely at the moment, when he may have had pragmatic concerns. Yaakov apparently saw the actions of Shimon and Levi as problematic not merely because the surrounding nations might gang up against the small family, but rather for some more basic reason. But, according to the Ramban, what is this reason?

To answer this, let us return to the Torah's description of the dialogue between Chamor and Shekhem on one side, and Yaakov and his sons on the other (Bereishit 34:8-17). Yaakov's sons listen to the proposal made by Shekhem and Chamor, and then they make their offer. But the Torah tells us that their response was done "with guile" (13). The Torah immediately gives a justification for this approach, "because he [Shekhem] had defiled their sister Dina." Nonetheless, there is clearly some trickery going on here.

Not only that. After the plan is made, Chamor and Shekhem decide to act on it. When they present it to the people of the city, they describe the family of Yaakov as follows: "These are upstanding, peaceable people" (21). There is apparently great potential for kiddush ha-Shem here, for sanctifying G-d's name, as the people of Shekhem are thinking of joining the family of "shelemim" that is headed by Yaakov Avinu. While Yaakov did not suggest this plan himself, it seems that once it has been suggested, there is potential for great kiddush ha-Shem. What happened in the end?

The people of Shekhem made themselves vulnerable to the family of Yaakov, and they took advantage of this. This is a tremendous chillul ha-Shem, desecration of G-d's name, and this is what Yaakov is upset about. Let us examine his response to their action again:

You have brought trouble on me, making me odious among the inhabitants of the land, in the eyes of the Canaanites and the Perizzites. (34:30)

Yaakov is upset because they have made him look bad in the eyes of the surrounding people. And if Yaakov looks bad, this is a serious problem, given that Yaakov represents G-d. Thus, even according to the Ramban, who believes that according to the letter of the law Shimon and Levi were justified in their action, they

failed on the matter of kiddush and chillul ha-Shem. When Yaakov did not react as they did, both at first and at the end, it was certainly not out of a lack of conviction or idealism, but rather it was out of a broader, more developed perspective.

[This sicha was delivered on leil Shabbat, Parashat Vayishlach 5763 (2002), during a visit to Yeshivat Har Etzion.]

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A Pain In The Neck VaYishlach

"And Esau ran towards him (Yaakov) and embraced him and fell on his neck

and kissed him (=

VaYiSHaKeiHU) and they cried" (Bereishit 33:4).

The Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 78:9) offers two apparently conflicting explanations for the unusual dots inserted above the word VaYiSHaKeiHU in Torah scrolls. Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar taught that at (only) that moment Esau's pity was aroused and he kissed Yaakov wholeheartedly. That was why they cried. Rabbi Yanai taught that Esau wasn't coming to kiss Yaakov, but to bite his neck - a play on the word VaYiSHaKeiHU which has the same pronunciation if written with the Hebrew letter Kaf instead of Kuf. A miracle occurred and Yaakov's neck turned into marble, blunting the wicked Esau's teeth. Consequently, Yaakov cried because his neck hurt and Esau cried because he had severe toothache.

Why, asks Amos Wittenberg, did Esau specifically bite Yaakov's neck? Couldn't Esau simply instruct the 400 men with him (Bereishit 33:1) to attack Yaakov?

Earlier, we have learnt that after Yaakov took the firstborn's blessing, Esau remarked: "Vayomer Hachi Kara SHemo Yaakov Vayakveini ..." = "And he (Esau) said: Isn't he truly named Yaakov (YaAKoV)! He has supplanted me (AKaV) twice. First he took my birthright, and now he has taken my blessing! ..." (Bereishit 27:36). Esau now understood the value of the firstborn's blessing: it meant becoming the third patriarch in the chain begun by Avraham and Yitzchak, and inheriting their blessings.

The neck links the brain to the heart and contains the vital bodily connections for life. Esau sought to attack Yaakov's neck with his teeth (in Hebrew SHINayim) to challenge Yaakov's right to found the Israelite nation which assures its continuity through "VeSHINantam Levanecha" = "And you shall teach them to your children" (Devarim 6:7). Esau hurt himself in this attack but Yaakov also suffered a pain in the neck.

Then, for just an instant, Esau realised that Yaakov was actually the rightful heir to Avraham and Yitzchak. Yaakov had not stolen the birthright, but Esau had sold it for a bowl of soup, showing he did not value it (Bereishit 25:29-34). Of course Yaakov would still have fed him the soup even if Esau had refused to sell the birthright! Esau knew that Yaakov was a righteous man. At that moment, Esau sought to retract his statement above "Vayomer Hachi Kara SHemo Yaakov Vayakveini ...", and he kissed Yaakov wholeheartedly (VaYiSHaKeiHU). Since Esau momentarily went back on his words, the dots alert us that VaYiSHaKeiHU backwards (i.e. Vav, Hey, Kuf, SHin, Yud, Vav) is an acronym for "Vayomer Hachi Kara SHemo Yaakov Vayakveini"!

In conclusion, we have reconciled the views of Rabbi Yanai and Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar by understanding that Esau's primary intention was to bite Yaakov's neck. After biting him and blunting his teeth, Esau repented for a moment and then kissed Yaakov with love (Eitz Yosef on the Midrash).

From: ohr@ohr.edu To: weekly@ohr.edu Subject: Torah Weekly - Parshat Vayishlach TORAH WEEKLY - For the week ending 13 December 2003 / 18 Kislev 5764 - from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu

As Thin As Air "And Yaakov sent angels before him to Esav, his brother..."

Seeing is believing, but there is far more to see in this world than meets the human eye. Take the air that surrounds you, for example. The air seems empty enough, but take a not-so-powerful microscope and you'll be amazed at how the emptiness of the air teems with all manner of minute particles.

And if you could go further than that, beyond the microscopic, if you'd go beyond the limits of human vision itself, you'd be even more amazed - and not a little frightened.

The fact is that we are all of us surrounded by myriad incorporeal spiritual beings. Some of these beings are benevolent and others, well, let's just say, they're less than benevolent.

"And Yaakov sent angels before him to Esav, his brother...." Why does the Torah include the phrase "before him"? Ostensibly, the sentence could have equally well been "And Yaakov sent angels to Esav, his brother."

The Mishna (Avot Chapter 4) tells us that if we do even one mitzvah we acquire for ourselves a defending angel, and if we do one transgression we acquire a prosecuting angel. The mitzvah itself creates that spiritual entity (so inadequately translated into English by the word "angel"). Every mitzvah literally, begets a holy angel.

As in the world beneath, so too it is in the world above.

A defense lawyer will do everything he can to show off his client in a good light, and similarly the angel born of a mitzvah pleads for his "client" before G-d's throne in the Heavenly Assizes. This angel tries his hardest to advance his client's welfare, not only spiritually but materially too. This angel is really more like a son pleading on behalf of his father, for like a son, he was created by his "father."

Rabbi Yosef Karo, the "Bet Yosef", author of the Shulchan Aruch, the standard compendium of Jewish law, would regularly learn the entire six orders of the Mishna by heart. It is well known that, as a result of this prodigious achievement, an angel would come and learn Torah with him. The book "Magid Meisharim" (lit. The Speaker of Straight Things) details what the angel taught him and more. This book is still readily available to this day.

The Shelah Hakadosh in his commentary on Tractate Shavuot recounts an amazing story. One Shavuot, he and nine other sages stayed up all night on both nights of Shavuot and they witnessed how the angel spoke with the Beit Yosef. It started speaking as follows: "I am the Mishna speaking in your throat..."

The name of that angel was "Mishna", since that was the mitzvah that gave it life.

At the end of this lengthy testimony, all ten Sages, including Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz (the composer of the famous Shabbat song Lecha Dodi that is sung in synagogues every Friday night, the world over) signed an authentication of what they had seen and heard.

"And Yaakov sent angels before him to Esav, his brother..."

Yaakov didn't want to employ the services of those angels who stand before G-d's throne. He sent only angels that were the offspring of his good deeds, the ones that were "before him."

- Source: Lev Eliyahu

Written and compiled by RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

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Subj: Vayishlach-Torah Essay-The Mystery of Yaakov's Pachim Ketanim Date: Dec 9, 2003
From: MICHAEL HOENIG, Esq. <MHoening@herzfeld-rubin.com>
THE MYSTERY OF YAAKOV'S SMALL JARS (PACHIM KETANIM)
MICHAEL HOENIG

I. Introduction: An Obscurity Amidst Drama? Parshas Vayishlach [Gen. 32:3 to 36:43] captivates the serious Torah reader by recounting a number of momentous events in the life of the Patriarch Yaakov. The sensitive reader is enthralled by pulsating drama and tensions aplenty as dramatic developments unfold one after the other with heart-stopping impact. Yaakov's emotions are literally stretched towards a number of potentially catastrophic breaking points to which lesser men might easily succumb. His faith, wisdom and understanding in the face of adversity teach us something about the arts of perseverance, survival and ultimate triumph - both material and spiritual. The Parsha whisks us along at seemingly breathtaking speed as Yaakov returns to the Holy Land after decades of vexatious sojourn with his father-in-law Lavan. Yaakov's peace overture to his brother Eisav, who earlier wanted to kill him, evokes Eisav's march with 400 men upon Yaakov's family and entourage. News of this threat unleashes outright dread, prompting Yaakov to take desperate measures so that some will survive when the deadly attack comes. Laboriously, Yaakov ferries all his possessions across the ford Jabbok. Then, at a vulnerable moment alone in the depth of night, Yaakov triumphs as he wrestles with Sar Eisav until scant seconds before sunrise. Yaakov is wounded and limps but is blessed by his mysterious, apparitional adversary [32:26, 29]. His name is changed from the relatively diminutive one given at birth to the majestic "Yisrael" [32:28; 35:10]. The Parsha then speeds us through Yaakov's emotional reunion with his murderous brother where the two embrace and weep. Next, the Parsha shifts gears and recounts the rape and sodomy of Yaakov's daughter, Dinah, who is taken captive by the prince of Shechem but later rescued when, after guileful negotiations, two of her brothers wreak summary vengeance upon all the men of the city and despoil their property [34:1 to 29]. Yaakov emotionally berates his vengeful sons for causing odium against him among other inhabitants of the land who might band together and seek to exterminate his house [34:30]. Yaakov also has significant spiritual experiences in purifying his family after the Shechem episode [35:2]; building an altar [35:7]; presiding over the funeral of his mother's nurse Deborah [35:8]; and communing with Hashem who blesses him [35:9-13]. Monumental disaster strikes Yaakov on the road when his beloved wife Rachel, undergoing difficult labor, dies during the birth of his son Binyamin [35:17-20]. And, when his father Yitzchak dies, Yaakov presides at yet another funeral of a loved one. The Parsha's tumultuous events bristle with plot and subplot, challenge and triumph, crime and punishment, emotional highs and lows, life and death, physical birth and spiritual renewal. The very serious reader pores exactly over the Torah text, consults the commentaries, ponders the ramifications and meaning of each event, indeed, probes the significance of each sentence, word and perhaps even each letter. When the Parsha dazzles with so much rich and intriguing material -- a "natural" source for further study and research -- it is possible to overlook an obscure, almost-hidden reference that nevertheless also should be probed. This essay attempts to do that. Every sliver of Torah reference, however thin or slight it may seem, however remote it may appear, must be explored. The relative obscurity focused upon here -- the incident of Yaakov's "pachim ketanim" -- seems mysterious on the surface. If we can solve the apparent mystery, perhaps other vistas of meaning will be opened. Perhaps, we will come to a better understanding of Yaakov, of his interrelationship with the more dramatic events of the Parsha, of his symbolic stature across the expanse of time; indeed, of our own role as inheritors and carriers of his legacy. II. Uncovering the Mystery Amidst the Parsha's array of tensions one curious, seemingly slight event might go unnoticed. Torah text hardly alludes to it and only by the very barest of implications. In fact, were it not for a five-word sentence in Rashi [32:34] along with his citation to the Gemara in Chulin, most of us might never even have considered it at all. Yet, the near hidden event not only places Yaakov in an extremely vulnerable position but also sets the stage for his cosmic battle with Sar Eisav. In a sense, then, one can say that the curious occurrence probed here was a trigger for Yaakov's very metamorphosis into Yisrael. A. Setting the Stage As may be seen, the mystery deepens even as the plot thickens. Let us set the stage so that the obscurity can come forward front and center. Yaakov has returned to the Holy Land escorted by angels [32:1, Rashi]. His departure from Lavan was sparked by a Divine message: "Now arise, go out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred" [31:13]. Under these promising circumstances, Yaakov has reason to be optimistic that Eisav's hatred has abated and a peaceful return is augured. Yaakov dispatches messengers to his brother in Seir/Edom but they return with foreboding news: Eisav is marching towards Yaakov with 400 men [32:6]. In the very next posuk, the Bible minces no words about Yaakov's reaction: "Then Yaakov feared greatly and was distressed..." (Vayira Yaakov Meod Vayetzer Lo) [32:7]. Yaakov is not merely fearful; he is greatly afraid (Vayira Meod) and is also distressed (Vayetzer Lo). The news of Eisav's march with 400 men triggers such morbid dread that Yaakov divides his entourage and wealth into two camps so that Eisav's successful attack on one will allow the other to escape [32:7, 8]. Yaakov desperately prays for divine salvation, (Hatzileni Na Miyad Achi ...) [32:11], and formulates a strategy of appeasing Eisav with substantial gifts [32:13 to 21]. Yaakov's plan includes massive and laborious logistics at night. There is the lodging of the camp [32:21]. Then there is the ferrying of his wives, eleven children, and vast numbers of cattle, flocks, camels, donkeys and physical possessions across the river or brook Jabbok [32:22 to 23]. Some idea of what this super-human effort entailed may be gleaned from the droves of animals Yaakov set aside as a gift for Eisav [32:10 to 16] -- a fraction of his wealth. The passing over the body of water is mentioned twice. First Yaakov takes his wives and children and passes the ford Jabbok (Vayavor Es Maavar Yabbok) [32:22]. Then the Torah tells us that Yaakov "took them, and made them pass the brook, and he made pass that which was his." (Vayikachem Vayavirem Es Hanachal Vayaver Es Asher Lo) [32:23]. Rashi advises that Yaakov acted as a ferry-man taking persons, cattle and movables from one side of the Jabbok and setting them down on the other [32:23, Rashi]. The exact sequence of events invites some dispute among the

commentators. Rashi suggests that the role of a ferry-man prompted repeated crossings [32:23, Rashi]. Ramban advises that Yaakov assembled his wives and children at the riverbank; crossed over himself to see if the water was high; returned and took them all across at one time; and afterward crossed again with all his camp, possessions and wealth [32:23 Ramban]. On a later posuk, Ramban suggests that the Torah's description of the crossings, read simply and literally (Ve Al Derech Hapeshat), could mean that Yaakov crossed first with his family, then returned and effected the remaining transfers by commanding all to go ahead of him, thereby leaving himself alone [32:25, Ramban]. Eben Ezra agrees that Yaakov crossed alone, then transported his family and then later returned to see if anything was left [32:23 Eben Ezra]. Seforno interprets the Torah verses to mean that Yaakov commanded all to precede him [32:24, Seforno] and then remained alone to direct further proceedings so that nothing would be left in the camp, [32:25, Seforno]. Rashbam says that Yaakov transported everything so that nothing further was left to pass, thereby remaining alone, his desire being to follow after them to escape via a different route in order to evade an encounter with Eisav [32:25, Rashbam]. Baal Haturim says several crossings were involved but that the river split and passage was made on the dry river bed [32:24]. B. Identifying the Mystery Whatever the exact sequence of events, the Torah is clear that, at some point, Yaakov "was left alone" (Vayivasser Yaakov Levado) [32:25]. Then ensued the titanic nighttime struggle between Yaakov and Sar Eisav with triumphant results whose consequences transcend time itself. Now we are ready to identify the mystery we seek to resolve here. On the words "And Yaakov was left alone" (Vayivasser Yaakov Levado) [32:35], Rashi says tersely: "He had forgotten some small jars and he returned for them" (Shachach Pachim Ketanim Vechazar Aleihem) [32:35, Rashi]. As authority for this statement, Rashi cites page 91 of the Gemara in Chulin. Sifsei Chachomim explains Rashi's reference to the Pachim Ketanim by noting that the Torah already had stated earlier that Yaakov "made pass that which was his" (Vayaaver Es Asher Lo) [32:23]. This means that Yaakov returned only for some unimportant articles, i.e., the small jars [32:25, Sifsei Chachomim, n.2]. Indeed, it may not mean "small jars" specifically, but rather, unimportant vessels since these are called "jars" (Ve Lav Davka Pachim Ela Kelim Sheain Chashuvim Nikraim Pachim) [32:25, Id.]. According to Rashi and others, then, Yaakov engages in a most curious, if not startling, act. After undoubtedly taxing and strenuous ferrying of persons, animals and possessions back and forth across the river Jabbok, under conditions of dreadful fear and distress, in the dead of night, Yaakov again crosses the river to retrieve some small jars, unimportant vessels of seemingly little value. On the surface, it simply doesn't make sense. He should be fatigued; he is fearful; yet he risks another crossing to fetch small jars, thereby leaving his family and entourage alone with a river between them. Moreover, it not only is a personally foreboding time; it is deep night -- a particularly threatening and perilous period for Tzaddikim alone, as the Gemara abundantly makes clear in several places. Evil forces lurk to test those such as Yaakov. Indeed, it seems clear from the commentators that Sar Eisav waited precisely for such a vulnerable moment to pounce. Interestingly, Yedei Moshe explains that the language, "and Yaakov was left alone" (Vayivasser Yaakov Levado), means that he was then bereft of his usual angelic escort. [Yedei Moshe, Genesis Midrash Rabbah, Parsha 77, Sec. 1]. According to this commentary, it seems that the Patriarch was constantly under the guard of two angels, one pair to escort him outside the Holy Land and one pair within. When Yaakov recrossed the Jabbok to retrieve the Pachim Ketanim, the angelic escort with jurisdiction within the Holy Land did not cross with him since the river was a boundary. The prior escort was absent having safely delivered their charge earlier. Thus, Yaakov, Midrashically speaking, was truly "left alone" -- a very dangerous moment. Surely, this is a most incongruous, inauspicious time to go and retrieve unimportant, small jars. Why would Yaakov, a man of abundant wealth, be so consumed as to go and fetch the vessels in the dead of night? Why the compulsion? Surely little jars are replaceable. Indeed, the mystery deepens exponentially when one considers the strange text of the very source Rashi cites for the Pachim Ketanim quest, the Talmud in Chulin [at p. 91]. In explaining the words, "and Yaakov was left alone," the Gemara advises, via Rabbi Eleazar, that Yaakov remained there alone regarding the retrieval of the small jars. From this we learn, says Rabbi Eleazar, that for righteous persons (Tzaddikim), their property is more dear to them than the physical safety of their bodies. Why so dear? Because, the Gemara continues, Tzaddikim do not stretch out their hands for purposes of embezzlement or robbery. (Amar Rabbi Eleazar, Shenishtayer Al Pachim Ketanim: Mikan, Letzaddikim SheChaviv Mamonom Yoser Migufam; Vechol Kach Loma; Lefi Sheayn Poshtin Yedeihen Bagezel) [Chulin, p. 91a]. On the surface, the Gemara text Rashi cites seems as curious and problematical as the entire Pachim Ketanim episode itself. Not only is Yaakov's action in the dead of night overtly precarious but the Sages even learn a basic lesson from it, i.e., that Tzaddikim value their property more dearly than their own safety, indeed, their very lives. And why? Because Tzaddikim do not acquire their property or wealth through embezzlement, robbery or sinful exploits. The Talmud's premise seems troublesome from a variety of perspectives. First, if Rabbi Eleazar is correct that the small jars in Yaakov's case were more dear to him than his life, then why did Yaakov leave them behind? As items of property literally more cherished than the safety of life and limb, they clearly should have been included with the bulk of important property Yaakov transported in the earlier ferrying efforts. After all, the posuk clearly tells us, "he made pass that which was his" (Vayaaver Es Asher Lo) [32:23], a verse universally interpreted to mean transport of all his significant possessions. If of esteemed significance they clearly should not have been left behind. Neither Torah text nor established commentary explains the reasons why they were forgotten -- a highly strange circumstance. On the contrary, the commentator's emphasis seems to be otherwise. Thus, if indeed, as Rashi suggests, they were objects of insignificant value so as to be omitted in the transport, how can Rabbi Eleazar reasonably posit that they were dearer to Yaakov than his own life and limb? Second, Rabbi Eleazar's extension of Yaakov's individual behavior into a lesson applicable to Tzaddikim generally challenges one's rational line of thought. Tzaddikim surely understand, as does the general community, that safety of life is precious virtually above all. Religiously speaking, one must take extraordinary efforts and precautions to preserve life

-- not place it in jeopardy. Safety of life and limb is so sacred, even stringent Sabbath laws may be violated in its preservation (Pikuach Nefesh). Only a person's duty to avoid three extraordinarily grave sins would countenance the voluntary loss of one's life instead (idolatry, murder and extreme sexual immorality). And, in numerous recitals elsewhere, the Gemara counsels extensively on how citizens must take steps to preserve their existence, avoid perilous circumstances and care for their health and well being. How is it possible that Tzaddikim generally are assumed to risk overtly jeopardous and injurious behavior for the sake of mere articles of property, let alone insignificant trinkets? Should not the opposite be the case? Third, Rabbi Eleazar's stated reason for the assumption also seems mind-boggling, i.e., that protection of even inconsequential property is expected to imperil a Tzaddik's life since such property was not derived by embezzlement or robbery but was earned honestly. Of course, Tzaddikim do not embezzle or rob. That is a given. To a Tzaddik, *gezel* is totally beyond the pale. It simply is not an alternative. All property, bar none, must come to the Tzaddik honestly. Thus, how can the mere fact that his wealth may be hard-earned, rather than achieved immorally, itself be a cause for life-threatening behavior? How can a Tzaddik's course of conduct be dictated by not partaking in a forbidden alternative? The Tzaddik does not compare his honest efforts to the unthinkable. Indeed, the Tzaddik's outlook is dictated by fear of heaven (Yiras Shomayim), love of the Lord (Ahavas Hashem), pursuit of Mitzvos and faith in Hashem's beneficence (Emunah). The Tzaddik surely deems himself wealthy by being content with what has been allotted. (Ezehu Ashir Hasameach BeChelko). Each of the foregoing driving forces decidedly is inconsistent with slavish devotion to pursuit of insignificant articles of property upon peril of ultimate disaster. Fourth, the Gemara in question focuses solely upon Tzaddikim as persons who will risk all for meager property acquired without embezzlement or robbery (*gezel*). Rabbi Eleazar, in fact, derives from Yaakov, a supreme Tzaddik, a lesson for Tzaddikim generally. But the limited focus on Tzaddikim alone seems problematical. Common experience tells us that even ordinary citizens, non-Tzaddikim, also may engage in risky behavior to preserve inconsequential items. Further, many upstanding persons, who clearly do not rise to the level of Tzaddikim, also assiduously forbear from committing *gezel*. The possessions of such honest persons may be equally hard-earned. Why should Rabbi Eleazar's principle apply only to Tzaddikim and not to all persons who happen to eschew dishonest dealings? In sum, therefore, Rashi's terse description of Yaakov's Pachim Ketanim scenario raises fundamental questions about the affluent Patriarch's actions on the fateful night of his struggle with Sar Eisav. Why did he do it? What was his purpose? Why the seeming compulsion to engage potentially ruinous danger head-on over some jars of little value? And what does the Gemara in Chulin really purport to teach? What was Rabbi Eleazar's intent in deriving and expounding a general assertion for Tzaddikim from Yaakov's startling behavior? What lessons can we learn for our time from the brief, mysterious episode as pithily recounted by our Sages? In the next sections, the writer attempts to unravel the mystery, to answer some of the questions. The attempt is to stimulate readers to study more closely an event likely to be little noticed amidst the grandeur of other developments in Parshas Vayishlach. In considering Torah nothing must be overlooked. Does the Pachim Ketanim experience relate to the other events? Does it simply hang in air by itself? Is it a mere oddity? Or is there some connection with what we already know about Yaakov? The premise advanced here is that the Pachim Ketanim episode indeed has major significance. The Torah text, in fact, supplies some dramatic clues. Torah commentary provides additional information. Cautiously, we can attempt to construct not only an understandable rationale for Yaakov's extraordinary conduct but also a glorious and sublime lesson for the sensitive Torah student of this era. We will see that Yaakov's purpose was intensely lofty -- worthy of a supreme Tzaddik. In developing the thesis by heightened focus upon the Patriarch's action, intent and motive, we may gain further insight into the impact of Rabbi Eleazar's teaching. It will become evident that Yaakov not only was an exceptional role model but that his fundamentally reverent conduct truly catalyzed the confrontation with Sar Eisav. Yaakov's stature, his towering and powerful madraga at that precise moment when he was "left alone" (Vayivasser Yaakov Levado), actually helped qualify him as supremely ready for the monumental challenge. The Pachim Ketanim episode, among other notable traits, ennobled Yaakov to struggle with Sar Eisav, to prevail and to achieve a transcendent metamorphosis. (Lo Yaakov Yemair od Shimcha Ki Im Yisrael Ki Sarisa Im Elokim Veim Anashim Vatuachal) [32:28]. III. Resolving the Mystery Several plausible explanations appear to answer the foregoing questions. They stand individually but are not mutually exclusive. Viewed in tandem or cumulatively, they seem to weave together a fabric of righteousness that not only makes Yaakov's behavior understandable but reflects a level of saintliness which sharpens the focus of the Gemara in Chulin. The explanatory ingredients are not esoteric secrets. The telltale clues are discernible. With caution, the following appear to be relevant factors in resolving the mystery.

A. Small Jars; Big Purposes The small jars indeed were articles of little monetary value. No doubt they were not rare. Probably they were mere fungibles, readily replaceable. That seems to be the gist of Rashi's commentary. But intrinsic value to an owner of property is not measured solely in monetary terms. Articles that objectively cost little in the marketplace nevertheless may loom large in the heart, mind and soul of an individual who is emotionally and spiritually attached to them. Not infrequently, tradition, history, sentiment and memory imbue articles with supervening importance. Flags of nations, historic documents, religious relics and family heirlooms are ready examples. But what was it about the objects that galvanized Yaakov into dangerous action? The premise here is that the small jars, the Pachim Ketanim, were objects of cherished value to Yaakov, not because of what they were worth commercially but because of the unique purposes they served, the spiritual symbolism they projected and the holy tasks they effected. Rabbi Eleazar, in fact, uses the word "Chaviv" which can mean valuable in a monetary sense but which preeminently means "dear" or "cherished" [Chulin, at p. 91]. The small jars may have been relatively valueless in economic terms but, to the Tzaddik Yaakov, they were most valuable for non-monetary reasons. But why would the Pachim Ketanim exert such a hold on Yaakov? The answering clues virtually

jump at us from prior Torah text. In Parshas Vayetze, Yaakov is on the road to Charan [28:10]. He is escaping from Eisav's revenge. He is alone. He comes to Mount Moriah, rests his head upon a stone and dreams a momentous dream [28:11 to 15]. He awakens with awe declaring the place fearful and none other than the House of the Lord and the gate of heaven [28:16 to 17]. He rises early the next morning and what does he do? He takes the stone upon which his head rested and sets it up as a pillar (Vayikach Es Haeven ... Vayasev Osah Matzevah) [28:18]. Then he performs a sanctifying, consecrating and holy act: he pours oil on top of the stone pillar. (Vayitzok Shemen Al Roshah) [28:18]. He names the place and makes a special vow [28:19 to 22]. The text also explicitly mentions Yaakov's all-important act of consecration by oil later in Parshas Vayetze [31:13]. But it is now many years later. Yaakov has worked for the deceitful and vexatious Lavan for decades. The Patriarch now has wives, children and wealth. Hashem tells him to return to the Holy Land [31:3, 13]. Yaakov calls his wives and advises them of a dream in which an angel spoke to him [31:11]. The divine voice identifies itself to him as "the G-d of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and vowed a vow unto me ..." (Anochi Hakel Baissel Asher Moshachta Shom Matzevah) [31:13]. The interested reader will note that Vayetze's first reference to consecration of the pillar by oil uses the language, "he poured oil" (Vayitzok Shemen ...) [28:18], whereas the second reference, in the very voice of Hashem, speaks in terms of Yaakov's "anointing" of the pillar (Asher Moshachta ...) [31:13]. The language change is significant. The first reference describes Yaakov's physical act in the context of other actions. The second is Hashem's description of not only the physical act of pouring the oil but the resultant consequence of that act, i.e., "anointment" (Meshichah). Hashem thus views and confirms the consecration by oil as an act of sanctification, of reverence, of holiness. Yaakov repeats verbatim the divine description as he received it in the extraordinary dream. The Patriarch now knows that his unilateral, sublime act of consecration has been fully acknowledged by Hashem. The utter awe surrounding Yaakov's dream at Mount Moriah, itself a revered place of past history and future destiny, as well as the anointment of the pillar and the Patriarch's special vow, marks that holy occasion as a spectacular stage in his spiritual growth. The impact and aura of the episode upon Yaakov's psyche and soul would be indelibly stamped. That it was recalled and confirmed by Hashem many years later as a sanctifying occasion reinforced the impact. Torah's explicit mention of the anointment incident on two separate occasions in Vayetze is highly significant as textual emphasis. Rashi also says that Yaakov specifically went out of his way to pray there [28:16, Rashi (commenting on "Bais Elokim")]. The location was not only a site for revelation. It was considered to be "the gate of heaven" (Vezeh Shaar Hashomayim) [28:17], which Rashi explains to be a "place of prayer" where "prayers would ascend to heaven." (Mokom Tefilah Laalos Tefilasam Hashamayma) [28:17, Rashi]. The site was exceptional for Yaakov from the standpoint of past, present and future considerations. Rashi also observes on the second Torah reference to anointment of the pillar (Asher Moshachta Shom Matzevah) that the act of consecration "denotes distinction and eminence just as when one is anointed king one is raised to eminence"; thus, too, Yaakov poured oil on top of the pillar "that it might be anointed to be an altar." (L'Ribooy Ugedulah Kenishmach Lemalchus, Kach Vayitzok Shemen Al Roshah - Lihiyos Meshuchah Lemizbayach) [31:13, Rashi]. Accordingly, Yaakov's act of anointment was a pious act of consecrating, not only a holy place but a place of prayer, a unique revelation experience, and an altar (Mizbayach). The latter is an extremely important circumstance as well. Why? Because Yaakov also erects and dedicates other altars -- even after the Pachim Ketanim episode. Thus, he builds an altar after his confrontation with Eisav upon arrival at the outskirts of Shechem (Vayatzev Shom Mizbayach) [33:19]. He also is commanded by Hashem to go to Beth-el and make an altar following the Dinah episode (Veassav Shom Mizbayach) [35:1]. He purifies his family, notifies them he will make an altar at Beth-el (Ve Eheshe Shom Mizbayach) [35:3]; and in fact builds one there (Vayiven Shom Mizbayach) [35:7]. Although Torah does not say that these various altars were consecrated or anointed with oil, there is strong implication that they were. Another significant experience after the Pachim Ketanim episode also involves Yaakov's explicit use of oil for purposes of consecration [35:14]. Hashem appears to Yaakov, blesses him, declares his name to be Yisrael, enjoins him to be fruitful and multiply; predicts that he and his progeny will be a nation and an assembly of nations from which kings will issue; and promises him possession of the Holy Land [35:9 to 13]. What did Yaakov do to commemorate this divine communion? He set up a pillar of stone at the site and "poured out a libation thereon, and he poured oil thereon." (Vayatzev Yaakov Matzevah ... Matzeves Even Vayasech Aleha Nesech Vayitzok Aleha Shemen) [35:14]. Once again, consecration by oil is a holy act of sanctification. Another exceptional event is memorialized by anointment.² We see, then, repeated occasions during Yaakov's spiritual growth -- indeed, holy personal encounters with Hashem -- where the Patriarch commemorates the event and/or location with oil-anointed pillars and altars. The act of sanctification is Yaakov's devotional recognition of the exceptional events. It is woven into the very fabric of his religious experiences. Consecration is an act of virtual second nature. The momentous occasions occur both before and after the Pachim Ketanim episode. At the time the Pachim Ketanim are to be retrieved, the earlier experiences cannot possibly be forgotten. Moreover, the future experiences can be intuited by the Patriarch through revelatory prowess (Ruach Hakodesh). Based on past experience, Yaakov inevitably knows that future occasions will call for further acts of consecration. Now we can move to the agonized moments before Yaakov's risky pursuit of the small jars, the Pachim Ketanim. Yes, they were articles of little monetary value. But they were inescapably valuable to the Tzaddik. They were cherished objects of intense religious significance. Precious utensils used in ritual acts of sublime devotion and prayer, they were dear items of holy consecration. They were instruments of sanctifying his personal dialogues with Hashem. They had transcended the realm of mere property. They had become the Tzaddik's symbolic implements in ways only true Tzaddikim might appreciate. If forgotten on the other bank of the Jabbok they had to be retrieved. The impulse to fetch them would have been overwhelming. Any risk to physical safety had to be borne. The Jabbok had to be crossed even if it meant a perilous confrontation with Sar Eisav. But how may we infer that the Pachim Ketanim truly

were such instruments of holiness? Explicit and implicit references to Yaakov's frequent practice of consecration by oil strongly point in that direction. In addition, however, Torah commentary strongly supports the premise. On the language, "And Yaakov was left alone" (Vayivasser Yaakov Levado), the Daas Zekainim MiBaaley Hatosfos cites Rashi's reference to the quest for the small jars and mentions that an alternate reading of the text for the word "alone" (Levado) could be his "jug" or "pitcher" (Lechado), i.e., Yaakov remained for his jug or pitcher, a container vessel (Al Tikri Levado Ela Lechado) [Daas Zekainim MiBaaley Tosfos on 35:25]. Additionally says the Daas Zekainim commentary, in the common language of olive press factories, they customarily would press out the olive oil and the usual practice would be to hide the oil "in small jars." The commentary explicitly says "Bepachim Ketanim." (Davar Acher, Lashon Beis Habad Shemoshchin Mimenu Shemen Zayis Vederech Hu Lehatznia Shemen Bepachim Ketanim) [35:25, Daas Zekainim MiBaaley Tosfos]. Thus, it clearly was a common practice to store oil in Pachim Ketanim. Additional support for our premise may be gleaned from the Midrash Rabbah dealing with Yaakov's experience at Mount Moriah [Genesis Midrash Rabbah, Vayetze, Parsha 69, Sec. 5]. The Midrash explains that the words, "and [Yaakov] poured oil on the top [of the stone pillar]" (Vayitzok Shemen Al Roshah) was preceded by an exceptional event. What happened? Oil was miraculously supplied to the empty-handed Yaakov by flowing down from heaven until the mouth of the jar was filled. The Midrash explicitly uses the word "Pach." (Vayitzok Shemen Al Roshah. Shufa Lo Min Hashomayim Kemolay Pi Hapach). Thus it is seen that the source of Yaakov's consecrating oil was miraculous, divine providence and that the receiving or storage container was a jar or "Pach." The Midrashic commentary, Pirush Meharzav, elaborates further on the Midrash's language, "Shufa Lo Min Hashomayim," the heavenly flow. The commentator explains the event in terms of Yaakov's empty-handed circumstances while going on foot through the desert. From where did Yaakov obtain the oil used for anointment? The answer is the miraculous flow of oil that filled up the jar to its mouth. The commentator also finds support for the Midrashic statement, "Kemolay Pi Hapach," by reference to an incident regarding the Prophet Samuel in which the Navi "took a jar of oil," etc., and also to a separate explicit reference, "and you shall take the jar of oil and pour it on his head." By application to the parallel language in Vayetze, the Pirush Meharzav reasons that, just as in those Navi references the oil was poured from the jar (Haya Min Hapach), so also a jar was used by Yaakov when he poured the oil on the stone pillar. (Gam Ken Kemo Kan). It seems crystal clear from the foregoing references that, in such Biblical times, oil customarily was contained and transported in small jars (Pachim Ketanim); that oil was used for consecrative, sanctifying and anointing purposes; that Yaakov repeatedly was impelled by significant religious experiences to engage in such holy acts; that, Midrashically speaking, his oil (and perhaps even the jars) were miraculously supplied; and that, when Yaakov anointed the pillar/altar at Mount Moriah, he obviously had been traveling "light" and on foot so any Pachim that he had would have been relatively small (Ketanim). By the time of the Patriarch's crossing of the Jabbok and in anticipation of future consecrative needs, it seems most plausible that Yaakov's Pachim Ketanim had assumed a dear and cherished status among his personal possessions, irrespective of their insignificant monetary value. From a deeper spiritual standpoint, their retrieval would have been vital to a Tzaddik. B. Yaakov's Fiduciary Obligations Immediately after Yaakov's revelation-by-dream at Mount Moriah and his anointment of the pillar/altar, he vows an unusual commitment in language which is the subject of much commentary [28:20 to 21]. Thereafter, he verbally links his anointed pillar, which "shall be G-d's house," to the following pivotal statement: "and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee." (Vechol Asher Titen Li Aasser Aassenu Lach) [28:22]. The empty-handed Patriarch promises a tithe (Maasser) of all he will acquire to service of Hashem. Apart from many technical imperatives concerning tithes (Maaser),³ in common parlance and tradition, tithes also refer to the giving of charity on which the Gemara says: "Give tithes in order that you may become rich." [Shabbat, at p. 119a]. An explicit and forceful Torah commandment, the giving of charity is a powerful mitzvah, an absolute obligation [Devarim 15:8]. The Shulchan Aruch states that every person should give to charity one-tenth of one's earnings and profits [Yoreh Dai'ah 249]. As one modern commentator puts it, "[t]he proper way to fulfill this mitzvah would be for one to keep exact records of his income and the amount given to each charity. One should handle his tzedakah with at least the same diligence as he does his private money matters, if not more." [Rabbi A. Y. Kahan, The Taryag Mitzvos, at p. 283 (1988)]. It is said that one who refrains from contributing his required share of charity displays his lack of faith in Hashem. [Id. at 284]. Yaakov's pledge of a tithe was unequivocal. It was loud and clear. It was not to be merely one-tenth of his profits but of "all that thou shalt give me" (Vechol Asher Titen) [28:22]. The obligation was not half-hearted or grudging. It was an enduring commitment. The Torah verse quoting Yaakov's declaration is most emphatic, using unusual double language: "I will surely give the tenth to you" (Aasser Aasserani Lach) [28:22]. Yaakov means to fulfill his pledge to the letter, to the penny, to the most meager of possessions that Hashem will provide. This is a solemn voluntary commitment -- the ironhard resolve of a supreme Tzaddik. And why not? The pledge follows hard on the heels of a dramatic revelation experienced upon fearful, holy ground. It follows reverent prayer and the intensely spiritual act of anointing a pillar/altar at an awesome site. With his unique faith in Hashem, Yaakov surely cannot ever forget his pledge. It will dominate his thoughts and actions at all times -- even in periods of stress or peril. Strong support exists for the proposition that Yaakov's obligation of Maasser was very much on his mind immediately prior to his retrieval of the Pachim Ketanim. Thus, on the reference, "And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand, a present for Eisav his brother" (VaYolen Sham BaLayla Hahu Vayikach Min Haboh BeYado Mincha L'Eisav Achiv) [32:14], Rashi focuses on the phrase, "and took of that which came to his hand" (Vayikach Min Haboh BeYado). Rashi offers an alternate explanation as follows: "That which a man may take into his possession -- of that which no longer has a sacred character -- for he had set aside the tithe [just as you read at (28:22) ...] Only afterwards did he take the present of what was left after the tithe had been set aside, and this was what he might rightly take into

his own possession." (Davar Acher: Min Haboh BeYado, Min Hachulin, SheNatal Maasser, Kemoh D'at Omer: Aasser Aasserani Lach, VeHadar Lokach Mincha) [Rashi on 32:14]. Torah text then records the details of Yaakov's gifts set aside for Eisav as well as Yaakov's instructions on how the droves of animals should be presented. [32:14-21] Then there follows the crossing(s) of the Jabok [32:23-24] followed by our subject Posuk, "Vayivasser Yaakov Levado." [32:25]. Thus, the foregoing Rashi strongly suggests that when Yaakov set aside droves of animals for Eisav, from the non-sacred ones (Min Hachulin), this act only followed after Yaakov first set aside the Maasser he had vowed earlier. It is understandable, then, that the keshet between Yaakov's discharge of his vow of Maasser and the forgotten Pachim Ketanim is very proximate in time, place and Yaakov's thoughts. Further Midrashic support is provided by Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer, as brought down by Rabbi Elie Munk's Commentary in Kol Hatorah, Vol. I, at p. 439 (Artsroll 1994), on different words in the very same Posuk [32:14]. Thus, on the phrase, "And he lodged there that same night" or, better, "He spent the night there" (Vayolen Sham Balayla Hahu), Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer in essence relates: "Yaakov spent the whole night searching his mind, trying to discover what transgression he might have committed that had caused the new ordeal to be imposed on him. He felt that he had not fulfilled his vow to offer a tithe of all that Hashem will give him (28:22). And so he separated the tithe and then prepared the present for Eisav." [See Rabbi Elie Munk, Kol Hatorah, Vol. I, p. 439 (Artsroll 1994) (citing Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer 36)]. Indisputably, then, the Maasser obligation is uppermost on Yaakov's mind at a time just before he seeks to retrieve the small jars. Rabbi Munk also cites a number of other relevant commentators when explaining Yaakov's earlier vow of Maasser [28:22]. He says: "Yaakov gave us the first example of making a vow in a time of distress, and at that time he instituted the offering of a tithe." [Rabbi Elie Munk, Kol HaTorah, Vol. I, p. 387 (Artsroll 1994) (citing Tanchuma Re'eh)]. Obviously, at the time of the Pachim Ketanim scenario Yaakov also was in a state of great distress. Remembering his vow issued at another such occasion would be totally consistent. Further, Rabbi Munk elaborates how Rabbi Meir answered a heretic's criticizing question, how was it that Yaakov did not tithe his children? The response is that he did -- by consecrating his son Levi to Divine service (not counting Reuven and Yosef, firstborns respectively of Leah and Rachel, who were consecrated to Hashem by birth). [Rabbi Munk Commentary on 28:22, Kol Hatorah, Vol. I, at p. 387 (citing Radak and Rabbah,70)]. Bringing the concept of Yaakov's focus on Maasser perhaps even closer in time to the "Vayivasser Yaakov Levado" episode, Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer in substance adds that: "Yaakov had already been personally reproached for negligence in fulfilling his vow by the angel who had attacked him at night and prevented him from crossing the ford of Yabok (32:23). This negligence was a fault which rendered him vulnerable to his brother's rivalry. And so, he immediately decided to dedicate Levi to the Divine service." [Rabbi Munk Commentary on 28:22, Kol Hatorah, Vol. I, at p. 387 (citing Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer 37)]. From the foregoing sources, we readily see that (1) Midrashic sources suggest that the topic of Yaakov's "negligence" in failing to fulfill his vow to tithe was a subject of reproach and self-correction during Yaakov's interface and struggle with Sar Eisav -- obviously an event immediately juxtaposed with the "Vayivasser Yaakov Levado" time frame and (2) Yaakov's earlier vow of Maasser was a subject of intense introspection, indeed of resolute action, immediately prior to the Pachim Ketanim episode. Based on these sources, the Keshet of the Pachim Ketanim retrieval with the discharge of Maasser is too strong to ignore. Yaakov's earlier vow drives many of his thoughts and actions on that fateful night. Now we can again flash forward to the dreadful period moments before the struggle with Sar Eisav. Threat to life and limb notwithstanding, Yaakov has a religiously fiduciary, solemn obligation to preserve, retrieve and account for all his possessions. His declared duty as a Tzaddik is to tithe all property, to the penny. Objects of low value are not excluded. And when articles such as the Pachim Ketanim have a transcending spiritual connection, with a significant role to play in future consecrations, they are even more dear for the fiduciary purposes of Maasser. It would be unthinkable for the Tzaddik to renege on a pledge emphatically declared amidst the holiest of circumstances. The supreme Tzaddik also realizes that all wealth actually belongs to the Almighty. Hashem is "Koneh Hakol." Psalm 24 advises: "To the Eternal belongs the earth and its fullness." [Verse 1] Man is but a trustee of what has been provided by the Almighty. Because a man's body, life, wisdom and possessions are merely what Hashem has entrusted to him, they must be employed for the benefit of humanity, for good works, in the service of the Eternal, and not for self advantage. Rabbi Akiva said, "Everything is given on pledge" (Hakol Nasun Baeravon) [Pirkei Avos, III, Mishnah 20]. Nothing is given to man unconditionally or outright. It is given on pledge that he will execute his trust faithfully. All persons -- Tzaddikim especially -- have a sacred duty as trustees of divinely-provided possessions to do good, to help those in need or to act in the Lord's service. While in one sense one's property is one's own, on a deeper level it is not. The Sages recognize the qualified nature of ownership. Of four types of men of property described in Pirkei Avos, the saintly man (Chasid) says: "What is mine is yours, and what is yours is your own." (Haomer ... Sheli Sheloch Veshelcha Sheloch, Chasid) [Pirkei Avos V, Mishnah 14]. Yaakov understood all this. It was ingrained in his being. It was reinforced by his solemn pledge of a tithe. Now we can better understand Yaakov's actions in the dead of night. The Pachim Ketanim were most dear possessions. They were cherished in pursuit of the divine plan for mankind. They were objects entrusted to the Patriarch for sacred purposes. They were within his fiduciary obligation to preserve and account. They were reminders of his Emunah and intimate relationship with Hashem. They had to be retrieved whatever the danger. Perhaps now, too, we can better understand what Rabbi Eleazar meant in Chulin, that Tzaddikim hold their honestly-acquired property to be dearer than life and limb. Because they do not stretch out their hands in robbery or use illicit means, it is clear that all possessions come to them purely as gifts of divine providence. All wealth is for the purpose of doing good in some form. Selfish motives are anathema to the true Tzaddik. When entrusted with articles of property, that sacred trust must be preserved though

perils may threaten. The foregoing is supported by Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch's commentary on the posuk, "And Yaakov was left alone" (Vayivasser Yaakov Levado) [32:25]. Rabbi Hirsch quotes Rabbi Eleazar's dictum in Chulin and states: "[T]he righteous ones see even in the smallest value of honestly acquired fortune, something holy, which they may neither squander nor allow to be uselessly wasted, and for the rightful use of which they will be called to account. A million has, for them, only the value of a pin, if it is a question of spending it for G-d-pleasing purposes, and a pin has the value of a million if it is a question of wasting it uselessly. The smallest possession that he has ... is considered by him as a token of G-d's Providence and Goodness, his very smallest possession, a produce of honest sweat and G-d's blessing and hence of invaluable worth." Rabbi S.R. Hirsch, The Pentateuch, Vol. 1, Commentary, verse 25, at p. 503 (Judaica Press, Ltd. 1989 ed.). IV. Little Vessels; Big Lessons From a religious perspective, it is said that the world exists by three things: by the Torah, by divine service or worship, and by deeds of loving kindness. (Al Shloscha Devarim Haolam Omed: Al Hatorah Ve Al Haavodah Ve Al Gemilus Chasadim) [Shimon Hatzaddik, Pirkei Avos, I, Mishna 2]. These aspects of behavior form the foundation of the world. The Torah, the law of the Almighty, specifies conditions of worship (Avodah) which spell out the duties of man towards Hashem, and deeds of loving kindness (Gemilus Chasadim), the duties of man to his fellow man. Remarkably, each of these foundational elements is well reflected in Yaakov's episode with the Pachim Ketanim. Yaakov's actions were guided fully by Torah precepts. The small vessels of oil were instruments of worship of the Almighty, tools of consecration and sanctification of holy sites (Avodah). They were connected to sublime religious experiences and fervent prayer. Although the jars were seemingly inconsequential possessions, they served as a significant medium by which Yaakov's struggle and transformation was effected. The Pachim Ketanim also were inextricably linked by the Patriarch to his own obligation to tithe (Maasser), an act reflective of loving kindness and charity (Gemilus Chasadim). A truly profound lesson may be learned. Small objects of little economic value and small acts of devotional service or good deeds nevertheless may loom large in the context of basic religious forces that guide the world. The foundational elements of Torah-true existence do not depend upon extravagant wealth, exclusive possessions, monetary value or the dictates of the market. Nor do Torah, Avodah and Gemilus Chasadim exclusively rely upon grand gestures, major accomplishments and prominent acts beyond the pale of the ordinary citizen. Small acts of devotional prayer and loving kindness, relatively unimportant to outside eyes, are vital threads in the rich tapestry of the Tzaddik's Torah life. They are a foundation of the world. Thus, the Pachim Ketanim episode and Rabbi Eleazar's derived moral lesson in Chulin may be understood with salient directives for our time. We live in an age of exile (Galus), within a materialistic society in which the pursuit of wealth is a paramount objective. The temptation to acquire possessions by embezzlement, robbery (Gezel), or other illicit means is all-powerful. In our quest for the Tzaddik's path we must forbear from conduct inconsistent with Torah principles. We must keep an eye fixed upon the true nature of wealth, property and possessions (Mammon). All that comes to us belongs to the Almighty (Koneh Hakol). We are but trustees of what has been provided to achieve Torah objectives, to benefit mankind. The true Tzaddik's perspective about worldly possessions, therefore, is vastly different from the society that surrounds us. Yes, we are to enjoy the fruits of honest labors. Yes, we may enjoy worldly comforts if the Almighty graciously bestows that blessing upon us. Yes, property may be held dear and cherished. Yes, property and wealth is to be guarded, secured and retained, just as any trustee's mission would require. And yes, we may have to take risks -- even peril to life and limb -- in effecting that mission of trust, even as to seemingly non-valuable articles. But the discharge of efforts regarding wealth that comes to us must stem from a healthy, wholesome respect for the true and ultimate owner of all -- the Almighty. The true Tzaddik's property is held dear (Chaviv), even upon risk to safety, not because of selfish motives but because each and every dollar is potentially allocable to some worthy objective, its ultimate role in supporting the foundations of worldly existence: Torah, Avodah and Gemilus Chasadim. Thus, what the Gemara in Chulin, initially so difficult to understand, really seems to advise is that Tzaddikim well know their fiduciary obligations as trustees of Hashem's beneficence. In the end, in the Olam HaEmes, they must account punctiliously for each article of property in accordance with the Almighty's law. The true Tzaddik has no viable alternative. V. Conclusion There is no superfluity in Torah. Each event imparts a message, a lesson, a clue to personal improvement. The serious Torah reader strives to understand what is explicitly stated as well as what is implied. Even obscure or relatively minor events involving the Patriarchs are sources and wellsprings of potential improvement. Since we are carriers of their legacy, we must understand their behavior. On the surface Yaakov's episode with the Pachim Ketanim, barely alluded to by text and commentary, seems mysterious. Initially, Rabbi Eleazar's explanatory dictum in Chulin seems unfathomable. Upon closer scrutiny, however, the mystery seems solved. The beauty and ultimate wisdom of the premise is discernible. Yaakov's charge to his descendants to become Tzaddikim is understandable.

ENDNOTES

1. For an essay exploring Yaakov's overture to Eisav, the significance of the 400 men, why that news triggers morbid dread in Yaakov and the ramifications for our time, see M. Hoenig, "The Incident of Eisav's 400 Men" (2003).
2. Yaakov also erects a pillar (Matzevah) upon Rachel's burial site at Beth-lehem but the text does not mention any consecration by oil. Nevertheless, parallels in language with other incidents using the term "matzevah" conceivably raise an implication of an act of sanctification. (Vayatzev Yaakov Matzevah Al Kevurasah Hi Matzeves Kevuras Rachel Ad Hayom) [35:20].
3. The technical laws of Biblical Maasser or tithes are beyond the scope of this essay. Numerous provisions governed tithing of the "first fruits" (Bikkurim) to be presented to the Temple Priest; the "Terumah Gedolah" (about two percent of the harvest) to the Temple Priest; the "Maasser Rishon," the first tithe of the harvest presented to the Levite (who, in turn, gave one-tenth of his receipts to the Priest, i.e., the "Terumat Maasser"); the "Maasser Sheni," or the "second tithe," which was one-tenth of what remained of the harvest, to be taken to Jerusalem

where the farmer ate or sold it during the first, second, fourth and fifth years of the seven-year agricultural Shemita cycle; and the "Maasser Ani" -- a tithe for the poor -- which consisted of the "Maasser Sheni" set aside in the third and sixth years of the cycle which was designated to be given to the needy. Animals also were tithed. Produce which was ripe for tithing but had not been tithed was forbidden to be eaten ("Tevel"), a prohibition applicable even to the Priest.

The rationale of tithing was to support respectfully those involved in the Temple service who devoted themselves exclusively to religious functions and also to support the poor. For more extensive exposition of the rules of tithing, see Sefer Hachinuch; commentators on the various Biblical laws; Rabbi A. Chill, *The Mitzvot: The Commandments and Their Rationale* (Bloch Publ. Co. 1974); Rabbi A. Y. Kahan, *The Taryag Mitzvos* (Keser Torah Publ.

From: Avi Feldblum [mailto:mljewish@shamash.org] Sent: Dec. 02, 2003 To: Mail.Jewish Mailing List on Jewish and Halakhic Issues Subject: mail-jewish Vol. 41 #34 Digest

Mail.Jewish Mailing List Volume 41 Number 34 Produced: Tue Dec 2 22:53:10 US/Eastern 2003

Subjects Discussed In This Issue:

> From: .cp. <chips@eskimo.com> > I was at a wedding Sunday in the West Coast of the USA where they > announced at the beginning of the Chupah that the `minhag hamokom` was > NOT to stand for the groom or bride. sure enough, some East Coasters > (but none of them professional rabbis) knew they knew better and did > stand for groom/bride. From: Carl Singer <casinger@optonline.net> Date: Sun, 30 Nov 2003 11:21:40 -0500 Subject: Standing for bride and groom

I recall stories of people standing / sitting like popcorn as various Rebbaim were called to deliver Sheva Bruchas (apparently one wouldn't want to stand for other than "Their own" Rabbi.) The only agreement was that all stood for Chusen & Kallah.

Two questions:

(1) re: Minhag hamakom -- what is the makom -- the community, the shule, the catering hall? Seriously, one should not be / do different than the "klal" -- but what defines the klal.

I guess, also, as a correlary -- what if there's simply an announcement made at the beginning of the Chupah -- "The bride and groom respectively ask that you not stand up for them." (No mention of Minhag hamakom) -- should one not acquiesce to one's host's wishes.

(2) At what point does one stand from the Chusen / Kallah -- when they first are seen at the back of the hall (about to march in) when they are nearby, when they pull even with your row? This may seem trivial, but nonetheless a question.

Aside -- how did you now they were East Coasters -- were they facing the wrong way :)

Carl Singer

From: Elazar M Teitz <remt@juno.com> Date: Tue, 2 Dec 2003 10:41:46 -0500 Subject: Re: Standing for bride and groom

> (2) At what point does one stand from the Chusen / Kallah -- when they > first are seen at the back of the hall (about to march in) when they > are nearby, when they pull even with your row? This may seem trivial, > but nonetheless a question.

Since the "minhag" of standing for the bride and groom is only about 30 years old, having no source whatever in halachah, I would imagine the answer would be "whatever."

I've heard two ex post facto explanations for standing, neither of which seem logical. (1) Choson domeh l'melech (a groom is compared to a king). However, this is not true until after the chuppah, not on the way to it, when he is halachically not yet a choson. (2) The Mishnah relates that the craftsmen of Yerushalayim stood for those who came bearing bikkurim (first-fruit offering), because of the mitzvah they were about to perform. This reason would only apply to the choson, since only he has the obligation to marry; but has anyone seen people in shul stand for those who come in after them, because they are about to fulfill the mitzvos of tallis and t'fillin? Obviously, the standing for bikkurim bringers was not extended to mitzvos in general.

From: Gershon Dubin <gershon.dubin@juno.com> Date: Tue, 2 Dec 2003 17:09:51 GMT Subject: Standing for bride and groom

Concerning standing for bride and groom at the wedding, this is a fairly new phenomenon.

One observation from Rabbi Reisman is that while it may or not be a minhag worth doing, the obligation to stand when elderly people enter (e.g. grandparents of either bride or groom) is an undisputed requirement mid'Oraisa, much neglected.

Gershon gershon.dubin@juno.com

From: Larry Jassen <ljhomes@windermere.com> Date: 1 Dec 2003 07:50:13 -0000 Subject: Standing for the bride and groom

Now I suppose I attended the same wedding as chips@eskimo.com. This was the first time I or many other long-time members of this particular synagogue have ever heard such a pronouncement prior to the chupah, so one should surmise that the "minhag" was the request of the families and, out of respect to them, such a request should have been honored. Those who did stand - those east coasters who "knew better" - did nothing to ingratiate themselves to the bride and groom or to the parents...especially since the father of the bride is the rabbi of the shul!

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