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From: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> to ravfrand
Rabbi Frand on Parshas VaYishlach

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #571, Bowing To a Person. Good Shabbos!

The Significance of the Name Succos

The verse says, "Then Yaakov went to Succos and built himself a house, and for his livestock he made shelters (Succos), therefore he called the name of the place Succos" [Bereshis 33:17]. Many commentaries question the need for the Torah to say that Yaakov called the name of the place Succos, after the huts he made for his animals. This would seem to be a rather insignificant detail and, in fact, an insignificant reason to name the place Succos. This is hardly on par with naming a place "Beth El" [the House of G-d] to commemorate Yaakov's encounter with the Almighty for all generations.

The Chida on Parshas Vayishlach quotes an answer that originally appears in the Or HaChaim's commentary on Torah. They both suggest that Yaakov named the location Succos because what he did there was revolutionary. This was the first time in the history of mankind that anyone constructed shelters for their animals. People had been grazing cattle since time immemorial, but this was the first time that anyone thought it was important to protect their animals from the elements — the heat, the cold, the wind, and the rain. Yaakov taught us that not only must one have compassion for human beings, one must have compassion for animals as well.

Like many things in life, this can be carried to an extreme, as we unfortunately find today. Today's society sometimes goes to the opposite extreme of being more concerned with the protection of animals than with the protection of human beings. However, the basic idea that it is appropriate to have mercy on animals is a proper one. Yaakov wanted to establish this idea for mankind, and he did that by naming the place after his act of building Succos [huts] for his livestock.

This fits in well with the pasuk in next week's parsha, when Yaakov sends Yosef to visit his brothers. Yaakov tells Yosef: "Go now, look into the welfare of your brothers and the welfare of the flock" [Bereshis 37:14].

Chazal state that a person must show appreciation towards his animals.

Animals provide sustenance for their owners; therefore the owners must take

care of them as well. The first person to teach us this idea was Yaakov Avinu.

Sending A Delegate From the Previous Generation

This week's parsha records the death of Rivka's nursemaid, Devorah: "Devorah, the wet nurse of Rebecca died and she was buried below Beth-El, below the Allon, and he named it, Allon-bachuth" [Bereshis 35:8]. Rashi wonders what Rivka's nanny was doing in Yaakov's household, such that Yaakov should wind up burying her. The Medrash states that Devorah was 133 years old at the time of her death. Rashi states that Rivka had sent her old nursemaid to Yaakov in fulfillment of her promise to him that she would send word to him when it was time to come home from Padan Aram [Bereshis 27:45]. Devorah died on the journey back home after having carried out this mission.

Rashi's words are very difficult to comprehend. Why would Rivka choose this elderly woman to journey on this long trip to carry out such a mission? Could she not find a more appropriate messenger to send word to her son that it was time to come home?

Rav Dov Weinberger makes a beautiful comment on this Rashi. Yaakov was most reluctant to leave the house of Yitzchak and Rivka. Rivka insisted that he must leave. But Yaakov protested: "What will be with my spirituality? How can I leave this holy household and survive in the house of Lavan the crook?" Rivka promised "I will take you back and I will restore to you what you lost spiritually in the years you were away."

To accomplish such a mission, one cannot send a young kid. On such a mission, one must send a "great grandmother." To restore the idea of what the House of Yitzchak was like in Yaakov's mind, it was necessary to send someone from the older generation. The person who grew up in yesteryear presents an untarnished image. They come from the "old home." Unlike the "younger generation," they represent "the way it is supposed to be." Many times we will meet a person, not from our generation and not even from the generation of our parents, but someone from two generations ago. It is sometimes worthwhile just to observe how an old Jew acts. He witnessed what things were like "when times were spiritually correct."

Those old enough to remember Rav Ruderman saw a connection to the glory of what European Jewry was in its prime. He corresponded with the Ohr Sameach. He saw the Chofetz Chaim. He sat on Reb Chaim Soloveitchik's lap. He took walks with Reb Chaim Ozer. His reactions were Torah reactions. He knew instinctively what Yiddishkeit [Judaism] was all about. When Rivka wanted to spiritually retrieve Yaakov from the house of Lavan, she had no choice but to send a delegate who represented the previous generation.

The Chofetz Chaim lived to be a very old man. He died when he was 93 years old. At the end of his life, he wanted to travel to Eretz Yisrael and spend the last days of his life in the Holy Land. He wanted to study the laws of Kodshim and the Temple Sacrifice there. As a Kohen, he hoped he would merit to witness the coming of Moshiach and to participate in the Divine Service in the rebuilt Beis HaMikdash.

He felt that he was an old frail man and could not contribute much more to European Jewry and therefore wanted to "retire" to the Holy Land. He took counsel with Rav Chaim Ozer, the (much younger) leader of European Jewry at the time. Rav Chaim Ozer advised him not to leave Europe. He told him "Even if you cannot be in the Yeshiva any more and you cannot give Torah lectures any more and even if you cannot write any more because of your age -- still, if you remain, people will be able to see what a Jew is supposed to look like."

This can be compared to children sitting at their parents' table. Many times they misbehave. But when their grandpa (Opa/Zeida/Saba) is sitting at the table, the behavior is different. When a member of the previous generation is there, a bit of awe and respect is present as well.

This was Rav Chaim Ozer's message to the Chofez Chaim, and this explains Rivka's choice of messenger to retrieve her son Yaakov back from Padan Aram.

This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. 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/> for further information. Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD RavFrand, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. To support Project Genesis - Torah.org, please visit <http://www.torah.org/support/>

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Endangering One's Life

Rabbi Michael Taubes

When Yaakov davens to Hashem prior to his expected confrontation with his brother Eisav, he admits that he has been unworthy of all the kindness which Hashem bestowed upon him up to that point (Bereishit 32:11). Although this is the simple meaning of the intent of Yaakov's remark, Rashi here offers a slightly different interpretation of this Pasuk (s.v. kotonti). He says that Yaakov really stated that he was unworthy not of Hashem's kindness, meaning that because Hashem had already been so kind to him for so long, he feared that his merits were thereby diminished and that he perhaps would not deserve any further kindness at that time.

This interpretation is based upon a statement of the Gemara in Shabbos where this Pasuk is used to support an interesting law. The Gemara says that a person should never stand in a dangerous place and rely on the fact that he will be protected though a miracle, because perhaps that miracle will not happen, and, even if it does, it will cause his merits to be "used up" or diminished, and he will thus not be worthy of additional help and protection in the future, when he may need it even more. To prove this point, the Gemara cites our Pasuk, suggesting that even Yaakov Avinu feared that his merits had been diminished by the kindness bestowed upon him previously by Hashem, perhaps undeservedly, and that he thus would not benefit from Hashem's protection and kindness now, when he may need it most.

Based on the above, it is not surprising that Chazal prohibited many activities which they considered to be dangerous to a person's life or health. Indeed, the Gemara in Chulin concludes, after some discussion, that chamira s'chanta m'isurah, meaning that one must be even stricter about avoiding danger than one is about avoiding an Aveirah, something forbidden by the Torah. The Rambam (Hilchos Rotzeach 11:5) confirms that Chazal prohibited many activities because they are life-endangering, and asserts that a person may not say that he has the right to endanger himself and that it's nobody else's concern, or that he isn't worried about any danger. This ruling is accepted by the Shulchan Aruch. The Rambam then lists numerous such activities, forbidden because they are considered harmful to life. The Shulchan Aruch too gives such examples, and goes into even more detail elsewhere. The Rama rules explicitly that one must avoid all things that might lead to danger because a danger to life is stricter than a prohibition. After listing additional examples, The Rama concludes that it is prohibited to rely on a miracle and to put one's life in danger in any way.

It is interesting to note that because of this idea that one should be stricter regarding danger to life than one is regarding a prohibition, the Halachos regarding such dangers may also be stricter. For example, in the area of prohibitions relating to food, there is a Halachic principle called Bitul B'shishim which allows one to eat a good item which contains a mixture of Kosher and non-kosher ingredients (or meat and milk together) provided that the ratio of Kosher ingredients to non-Kosher ingredients (or of meat to milk or milk to meat) is at least 60:1. The Taz quotes Poskim who hold that this principle does not hold true when danger to life is at stake, and rule that even the most minute amount of dangerous ingredients that fall into a mixture render the entire food item prohibited. The Pischei Teshuvah, however, quotes many who disagree and rule that the same principle of

Bitul B'shishim applies in the case of dangerous ingredients, assuming that such a small amount is not really considered dangerous.

Although the Vilna Gaon indicates that the background to all of these prohibitions designed to avoid danger is the aforementioned Gemara in Shabbos which cites the Pasuk in this Parsha, it is noteworthy that there are two other Pesukim in the Torah (Devarim 4:9,15) which imply perhaps more directly that one must take good care of one's life and stay away from danger. Indeed, the Sma quotes one of these Pesukim as the primary source for these prohibitions; the Be'er HaGolah entertains the possibility that those prohibitions are in fact Biblical in origin.

An interesting question arises as to whether one may, or should risk one's own life in order to save someone else's life. Rav Yosef Karo, in both his Kesef Mishneh on the Rambam (Hilchos Rotzeach 1:14) and in his Beis Yosef on the Tur, quotes from the Yerushalmi that one should, but this ruling is not brought in the Shulchan Aruch. It is also not clear from the Beis Yosef where this Yerushalmi may be found, but the Netziv, in his commentary Ha'amek She'eilah on the She'iltos of Rav Achai Goan, identifies the Yerushalmi in Terumos (8:4) that seems to indicate this position, which he asserts is accepted by Rav Achai Gaon. Nonetheless, the Shulchan Aruch HaRav, among others, rules clearly that one may not endanger one's life to save someone else's. Rav Moshe Feinstein, however, states that although one is not required to endanger his life in order to save someone else, he may do so if he wishes, unless it is certain that by saving this other person, he will in fact lose his own life.

In view of all of the above, it should be clear that activities deemed to be dangerous to one's life must be avoided according to Halacha. The Be'er HaGolah explains that Hashem created the world so that His Creatures would appreciate His greatness, serve Him, and observe His Torah and Mitzvos. One who endangers his life thus, in effect, rejects the will of Hashem, the worst thing that one can do.

Thanks to hamelaket@gmail.com for collecting the following items:

from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>
reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com
subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Blog :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The Gift Of Generations

The Lord blessed me last week with the birth of a great-grandson. As I began writing this article I almost slipped and wrote "another" great-grandson. I have been blessed many times over with becoming a great-grandfather. But I caught myself and did not write "another" great-grandchild because the birth of every great-grandchild is unique and special. I come from a generation where I and my peers barely knew grandparents and no one ever imagined seeing a great-grandparent.

The fact that great-grandparenthood is almost taken for granted in our current society is really one of the momentous miracles of our time. Much of this achievement has to do with the great strides in medical care and resultant increases in longevity occasioned by these medical advances. But there is also an element of spiritual mystery, which plays a role in the likelihood of seeing a fourth generation in one's family.

As the bonds of societal cohesion continue to loosen in our time, it has become ever more imperative that family relationships and influences be strengthened. The family is the last and strongest fortress for developing character, morals, tradition and proper role models for children and later generations.

A child who sees and interacts with grandparents and great-grandparents can gain a greater perspective on life and its events than what the child would gain on its own without the input of generations. The Torah implies that Menasheh and Ephrayim became equal members of the tribes of Israel due to the fact that they were to a great extent raised and influenced by their grandfather Yaakov.

The Western world today suffers from a breakdown of family bonds and generational relationships. Declining rates of marriage, increased incidence of divorce and single parenting, personal mobility and the anonymity afforded by current urban life, all have contributed to vexing societal problems. In all relationships within a family, a steady hand and role model must be present.

This necessary ingredient for family stability can and should be provided by older generations present in that family. Grandparents should not interfere in the arrangements and marriages of their children's children. That is the responsibility of the actual parents who are raising those grandchildren. Nevertheless, grandparents, by their presence, provide an example and can make great contributions to the welfare and wisdom of their later generations. It is difficult to assess what the true impact of previous generations have upon their descendants. But, I feel that it is abundantly clear that there is such an impact and that it can be a most positive one. How to create such an impact requires a complex and delicate blend of unconditional love, sound advice, patience, and wise silence and abiding faith in the ability of future generations to right the ship no matter how unlikely it presently looks.

All of these ingredients for family stability and Jewish continuity can be supplied by grandparents and great-grandparents. So, the birth of a grandchild or a great-grandchild is not only to be treated as a moment of joy and personal accomplishment but it is also to be seen as an opportunity and a challenge to yet play a significant role, even at an advanced age, in the structure and traditions of Jewish family life.

The Torah makes special mention of great-grandfatherhood when it remarks that the grandchildren of Joseph were raised on the knees of Yaakov. One of the many terrible consequences of the Holocaust has been the disruption in the chain of generations.

Knowing the past generations is somehow a crucial and necessary component for Jewish survival. The same pending disaster is true for the wave of assimilation and intermarriage savaging Western Jewish society today. My old wise teacher in the yeshiva long ago would say to us: "Boys, if your grandparents and your grandchildren are both proud of you, then you are probably alright."

I may not have truly appreciated the wisdom of his remarks when I was in my adolescent years but I certainly understand them well now. Part of the turmoil in Jewish life today, especially here in Israel, lies in the fact that the new generation senses, that somehow their forbearers took a wrong turn somewhere. Now they are looking for a way to get back to the correct road in Jewish life. Generations are a great challenge in Jewish life. They are certainly a blessing. But like all blessings, generations require care and nurturing, appreciation and watchful guarding.

Shabbat shalom

from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>
reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com

subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha Blog:: Rabbi Berel Wein
Vayishlach

One of the basic questions raised by the commentators to the Torah as well as by all of Jewish history is determining the true relationship of Jacob and Esau. Is Esau the implacable enemy of Jacob and so has he remained throughout human history? Or, is he only the wayward brother of Jacob who is capable of reconciliation and cooperation in building a better and more just society?

This question is been debated in Jewish sources for millennia. The Talmud itself records for us varying and even contradictory opinions regarding the matter. Over the long years of Jewish dispersion as history itself shows, especially in the countries of Europe, Jacob has suffered mightily at the hands of Esau. This fact alone naturally colors the mood and attitude of the Jewish people towards the non-Jewish and especially the Christian world.

In the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century, Jewish Europe sought to join Esau in all ways and endeavors. Hundreds of thousands of Jews converted to Christianity and millions more adopted the philosophy, worldview and behavior pattern of Esau while still officially remaining Jacob. This trend was rudely interrupted by the events of World War II and of the Holocaust.

To a great extent European Jewry was no longer the driving force behind Jewish life generally the world over. However, much of American Jewry, substantial in numbers, influence and wealth, continued to pursue the ways of Esau and his less than wise lifestyle. American Jewry, across its entire spectrum, views Esau as our brother, and to a great extent as our friendly and benevolent brother. We have to pray and hope that this assessment is a correct one.

However, it is undeniable that Esau in many respects remains our enemy. The non-Moslem world of Esau loses no opportunity to criticize, demonize and oppose Jacob at every turn. The Catholic Church constantly supports the Muslim narrative of the events in the Middle East, even though it is Christianity and Christians that are being persecuted and killed regularly by Muslim extremists.

It seems that the only thing that matters is that somehow Israel and the Jews should be deprived of legitimacy and security. So in that sense, it is certainly clear that Esau is not a benevolent brother but rather a most formidable foe.

Over the long history of Jews in the Exile, neither assimilation nor acculturation has helped dissuade Esau from persecuting Jacob.

In the Bible itself, Jacob attempts to buy his way out of trouble by temporarily appeasing Esau with wealth and money. But in the long run, this tactic also fails to solve the "Esau Problem" as far as Jews are concerned.

After the creation of the State of Israel, Jews the world over hoped that Esau would finally reconcile himself with Jacob - and with Jacob's new found resilience and accomplishments. Apparently that was too much to hope for. So, the "Esau Problem" still looms large in Jewish private and public life.

Apparently, the solution and removal of the problem is destined to occur only in messianic times. Meanwhile, we still continue to wrestle with Esau, whether he as foe or brother.

Shabbat shalom

from: Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com>

to: Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com>

subject: Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
Parshas Vayishlach

He charged them, saying, "Thus shall you say, 'To my lord, to Eisav, so said your servant Yaakov.'" (32:5)

A number of ambiguities seem to surround the meeting between Yaakov Avinu and his brother, Eisav. Midrash Rabbah posits that Eisav was not on his way to confront Yaakov; rather, our Patriarch instigated the meeting. Yaakov is compared to one who grabs the ear of a dog (Mishlei 26:17) and, as a result, the dog bites him. According to the Midrash, Hashem said to Yaakov, "Eisav is journeying along his way, and you initiate a meeting with him by sending him a message implying that you are his servant, Yaakov." Chazal indicate that Yaakov erred by getting involved with Eisav. "Let sleeping dogs lie": If Eisav is not bothering you, ignore him and be thankful. In another Midrash, Chazal state that, when Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi would have to go to Rome to discuss the government's treatment of the Jewish religion and its effect upon the Jews of the Holy Land, he would study Parashas Vayishlach, using it as a guide on how to deal with the government. This would seem to indicate that Yaakov's behavior was laudable.

The Ramban explains that Parashas Vayishlach was termed parashas ha'galus, the parsha dealing with the exile. Thus, Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi followed his holy grandfather's advice on how to deal with a gentile. This idea is reiterated by the Shlah Hakadosh, applying the notion, Maase avos siman labanim, "The actions of the fathers are a portent for their sons," as to

how to act. Just as Yaakov prepared himself with *doron*, a gift; *tefillah*, prayer; *milchamah*, for war, if necessary; likewise, should we make similar preparations when it is our time to meet with the gentile rulers. Apparently, Yaakov's intentions and manner of preparation for his meeting with Eisav take on a new perspective if they are to serve as the road map for our encounter with the Eisavs of our time. One question concerning Yaakov's behavior stands out: Why did the Patriarch act obsequiously by referring to himself as, "your servant, Yaakov."

In his *Shevilei Pinchas*, Horav Pinchas Friedman, Shlita, presents us with an entirely new scenario, based upon the illuminating expositions of the Chassidic Masters. He begins with a question concerning the *pasuk*, *Vayitzav osam leimor*, "He charged them, saying." The word *leimor*, saying, appears to be superfluous. Usually this word is used when one expresses his intention concerning what to say to someone. Yaakov, however, already did this with the words - "Thus shall you say." This question is posed by the Agra D'Kallah who quotes the following Midrash to explain the *pasuk*. "Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi asked Rabbi Efes to pen for him a letter to the Antoninus (Marcus Aurelius) Caesar. He first wrote: "From Yehudah Nesia (the Prince) to our master, King Antoninus." Rabbi Yehudah tore up the letter, feeling that the greeting had been improperly written. Finally, he wrote, "From your servant, Yehudah, to the master, King Antoninus." Rabbi Efes questioned this greeting. "Why are you denigrating yourself before the king?" Rabbi Yehudah replied, "Am I better than my grandfather (Yaakov) who said to Eisav, 'From your servant, Yaakov?'"

We derive from Chazal that the *moreh derech*, guide, for Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi in his dealings with Antoninus was none other than Yaakov Avinu. Rebbi (as he is referred to in the Talmud) had no problem denigrating his status of Nasi, because Yaakov appeared to have done the same in preparing for his encounter with Eisav. Thus, the Agra D'Kallah interprets the word *leimor*, saying, as a portent for future generations, indicating that, upon addressing gentile rulers, we should follow Yaakov's directive. *Leimor* - as he said it then, so should his descendants follow suit.

For the next frame in his presentation, Rav Friedman quotes the *Megaleh Amukos*, who cites the opening *pasuk* of *Parashas Va'eschanan* (*Devarim* 3:23), *Va'eschanan el Hashem ba'eis ha'hi leimor*, "I implored Hashem at that time, saying." He renders a brilliant insight into Moshe Rabbeinu's *leimor*. Our leader, Moshe, saw *b'ruach ha'kodesh*, through Divine Inspiration, that one day Rebbi would redact the Six Orders of *Mishnayos* which serve as the foundation for *Torah She'Baal Peh*, the Oral Law. Although this seems to be a violation of Torah law, which prohibits the dissemination of the Oral Law in written or fixed form, Rebbi did this with virtually unanimous consent from all of the Sages at the time. It had become clear that the structure of the Jewish world was about to change. Jews were migrating away from the centers of Torah and would soon lose contact with one another, causing Torah scholarship to inevitably decline. The nation, under pressure of various cultures, would variabl

y disintegrate as a Torah entity. Applying the rule, *Eis laasos l'Hashem heifeiru Torasecha*, "It is a time to act for the sake of Hashem; they have overturned Your Torah" (*Tehillim* 119:126), we derive from this *pasuk* that it may, at times, become necessary to exert certain flexibility concerning the letter of the law, so that it may be preserved and the larger principle be protected.

Therefore, Rebbi used the guidelines of the *pasuk*, *Eis laasos l'Hashem*, as his directive for writing down the Oral Law. Rebbi did this with incredible *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice, because he knew it was the only way to save the Oral Law from extinction. This was carried out at a time when relations between Rome and Eretz Yisrael were, at best, tenuous. As a result of Rebbi's incredibly close relationship with Antoninus, a moratorium on Jewish persecution seemed to prevail. It was Antoninus who granted Rebbi the necessary permission to redact the *Mishnayos*.

This, explains the *Megaleh Amukos*, was Moshe's prayer: *Va'eschanan*, represents: *vov* - six (orders of *Mishnayos*) *eschanan* - "I implored." Moshe

prayed for Rebbi's success in redacting the six (*vov*) orders of *Mishnayos*. *Ba'eis ha'hi*: This was done as a result of the dispensation, *ba'eis hahi*, which is a reference to *Eis laasos l'Hashem*, "It is a time to act for Hashem." The word *leimor* is a *nutrekon*, abbreviation, for: *lamed*: *l'yemos* (in the days); *aleph*: *Antoninus*; *mem*: *melech* (king); *reish* (Rome).

We now have two meanings for the word *leimor*: A) for future generations to follow suit; B) abbreviation indicating that Yaakov was heralding Rebbi's redaction of the *Mishnayos*. The *Megaleh Amukos* adds that Rebbi was a *gilgul*, reincarnation, of Yaakov Avinu, and Antoninus was a *gilgul* of Eisav. Indeed, he explains that this was why Rebbi was called *Nasi*, which is an abbreviation for *nitzutz* (spark) *shel* (of) Yaakov Avinu.

What prompted Yaakov to arouse the spark of decency within Antoninus, somehow so that *Torah She'Baal Peh* would be preserved? Rav Friedman shows us that our Patriarch received a Heavenly indication that this was appropriate. Yaakov sent *malachim*, messengers, to Eisav. Rashi explains that these were no simple messengers, but rather, *malachim mamash*, real, authentic, Heavenly Angels, whom our Patriarch dispatched.

The *Yismach Moshe* explains who these *malachim* were. There are two forms of *malachim*: those who were created by Hashem during the Six Days of Creation; those who are created as the result of a person's Torah study and *mitzvah* observance. The primary difference between these two types of Angel is their creation in relation to the righteous person whose positive action catalyzes their creation. Obviously, those Angels who were created during the creation of the world preceded man, while the other ones are predated by man.

Ki malachav yetzaveh lach lishmarcha b'chol derachecha, "He will charge His Angels for you, to protect you in all your ways" (*Tehillim* 91:11). In his *Maggid Meisharim*, Horav Yosef Karo, zl, explains that this *pasuk* refers to the Angels that are created by a person's *mitzvos*. They accompany him at all times. Yaakov Avinu did not want to dispatch the Angels that were always with him as agents to go to Eisav. He felt that, by doing so, Eisav would be benefiting from his Torah. Hashem sent another group of Angels - those who were created during the Six Days of Creation. Thus, when Yaakov saw them, he declared, *Machaneh Elokim zeh*, "This is a G-dly camp" (*Bereishis* 32:3). These were not Angels whose usual job it was to accompany. Therefore, he called the place *Machanayim*, "Two Camps," alluding to the two camps of Angels who were present.

When Yaakov observed the new group of Angels who were Heaven sent, he realized that Hashem wanted these Angels to be his agents to go to Eisav. Who were the Angels? Rav Friedman points to the *Tefillah HaDerech*, wayfarers' prayer, in which we recite the above *pasuk* recording Yaakov's encounter with the Angels and his statement upon seeing them: *Vayomer Yaakov Kaasher raam*, "And Yaakov said upon seeing them; this is a G-dly camp." The letters which comprise *Raam*: *Reish* - *Rephael*; *Aleph* - *Oriel*; *Mem* - *Michael*, with *Machaneh Elokim* representing - *Gavriel*. Thus, the four Archangels which we mention during *Krias Shema al ha'mitah*, prior to going to sleep, who protect us then, also accompany us on our journey. Last, we have the brother of the *Maharal m'Prague*, who writes in his *Igeres HaTiyul* that the word *Gemorah* (Talmud/Oral Law) is an abbreviation for the names of these four Angels. *Gimmel* - *Gavriel*; *Mem* - *Michael*; *Reish* - *Raphael*; *Aleph* - *Oriel*. This teaches us that one who studies *Gemorah* is surrounded by the four Heavenly Archangels, who are present to protect him. In summation, Yaakov sent the four Heavenly Angels (who were sent to him by Hashem) to Eisav, because by appeasing Eisav, he would arouse the spark of Antoninus residing deep within Eisav, so that he would assist Rebbi (Yaakov's descendant) to redact the Oral Law. These Angels represent the letters of *Gemorah*, which is the ultimate culmination of the Oral Law begun by Rebbi. We now understand why Rebbi would always study *Parashas Vayishlach* prior to visiting Antoninus in Rome. It was in this *parsha* that Rebbi saw how his saintly grandfather, Yaakov, set the stage for his spiritual success. I have condensed this thesis for the sake of brevity; however, it

gives the reader a small window into the secrets of Torah whose surface we barely penetrate.

Devorah, the wet-nurse of Rivkah, died, and she was buried below Bais-Kel, below the plateau; and he named it Allon-Bachus. (35:8)

One expects the Torah to record the lives of the Jewish nation's most distinguished, intriguing figures. Indeed, the Avos and Imahos, Patriarchs and Matriarchs, were individuals without peer. Their lives represented the Jewish mission; their enduring legacy is the Jewish nation, who are their progeny. Understandably, their lives obscure the lives of those whose impact on the future was less compelling. We are rarely introduced to one of those "obscure" individuals, a person whose impact on the future of the nation, while not as significant as that of the Avos and Imahos, still left an impression. In this parsha we read about such a person, concerning whose existence we are informed of only at the time of her death. The Torah does not record anything about her life. We find this in the various Midrashim. Devorah, the wet-nurse of Rivkah, is introduced to the reader via her obituary. In fact, the reason her passing is noted is that she happened to be with Yaakov Avinu at the time. Why she was there and why the Torah records her passing, engender a debate between Rashi and Ramban. Chazal teach that, while the Torah only mentions the passing of Devorah, the place where she is buried is called Allon Bachus, which Chazal perceive to mean the plateau of double weeping. They explain that Rivkah Imeinu had also died. The Torah does not mention her death explicitly, because she was buried secretly. Rivkah's funeral was very sad. Her husband, Yitzchak Avinu, was blind and could not attend. Her son, Yaakov, whom she loved, was away from home, for fear of his life at the hands of his brother, the wicked Eisav. Eisav would not attend, because he blamed his mother for all of his problems. It was through her machinations that he lost out on the brachos, blessings. Thus, Rivkah was buried by her neighbors in a quiet, sad ceremony. The Torah writes about Devorah's passing, but by referring to her burial place as the place of double weeping, the Torah alludes to the passing of Rivkah.

Rashi contends that Rivkah had sent the elderly Devorah to notify Yaakov Avinu that it was finally safe to return home. Ramban posits that when Yaakov left Lavan, he took Devorah with him. Apparently, she had returned to Padam-Aram following Rivkah's marriage. Out of respect for his mother, Yaakov supported her wet-nurse in her old age. In any event, Devorah had been around for quite some time, having been witness to the glory of the building of the House of Yisrael. According to Ramban, she probably played a role in raising the Shivtei Kah. According to Rashi, she probably raised Yaakov. Yet, all of this time, she remained in the background. Clearly, she had had an influence on the children and, by extension, on Klal Yisrael. These are two women whose lives were intertwined almost from the onset. Both had long and troubled lives. Rivkah raised Yaakov, but she never had the chance to see the nachas of her grandchildren. Devorah led an obscure life. She was always present, but the Torah does not identify her until her passing - and that is only in order to conceal the sad, covert, late-at-night funeral of Rivkah.

Both of these great women gained distinction for their motherly function. Rivkah gave up experiencing the nachas for which every parent pines, so that Yaakov could be safe. Devorah remained in the background all of her life as a wet-nurse and then as the mentor of the Shevatim. The world around us venerates the public person and pays homage to the superstar. What about, however, the fellow who goes through life faithfully executing his daily tasks without complaint and without fanfare; the fellow who sits in the back of the shul and spends every spare moment learning, without publicizing his presence; the one who only achieves recognition posthumously? These two women attest to their distinction. It is about what you do - not about who knows about it. Some people are truly recognized posthumously - in fact, no one is aware of their true greatness while they are living. I recently heard this

story from a Rav, who heard it directly from Horav Moshe Aharon Stern, zl. Even if it

is not a "seamless" fit with the above dvar Torah, it is worth relating to the reading public.

Horav Aryeh Levine, zl, would visit Shaarei Tzedek hospital every Shabbos. One Shabbos, he was there when an elderly patient had a heart attack. A few hours later, when he was about to leave the hospital, he went to check up on that patient. He walked into the room and was shocked to see the man sitting up in bed, as if nothing had ever occurred. Sensing Rav Aryeh's incredulity, the man said, "I actually died and my neshamah, soul, went up to Heaven. It was not yet ready to leave this world, and I begged for a reprieve. The Heavenly Tribunal replied that I had lived out my allotted time in this world. The subject seemed closed, when suddenly, the neshamah of a great Rav entered. 'Let him go back,' the neshamah pleaded. 'For twenty-five years he was a gabbai tzedakah, charity solicitor and received no recompense.' I was allowed to return, but my neshamah did not know to connect back with my body. It began to flounder around, when suddenly, out of 'nowhere,' another neshamah ca

me over and showed 'me' how to return.

"I asked this neshamah why he was doing this for me. He replied that he had once been visiting my town in western Europe on a Shabbos. The custom would be that all the guests lined up single file by the door of the shul, and, when the congregants would walk by, they would invite them one by one. I was last in line. Because of my oversized girth, no one wanted to invite me. You were a little boy of nine years old,' he said. 'Your father quickly walked by, taking you with him. I was left alone in shul - depressed, dejected and hungry. A short while later, you returned and invited me to your home. Apparently, when you came home, you created a ruckus by crying and begging that I be invited. This is why I came back to help you.'" One never knows whom he is actually helping when he helps someone; it might even be himself.

*Sponsored in memory of Rabbi Louis Engelberg z"l niftar 8 Kislev 5758
Mrs. Hannah Engelberg z"l niftara 3 Teves 5742 t.n.tz.v.h. - Etzmon and
Abigail Rozen and Family*

http://www.ou.org/torah/author/Rabbi_Dr_Tzvi_Hersh_Weinreb

from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org>

reply-to: shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

**Orthodox Union / www.ou.org
Rabbi Weinreb's Parsha Column
*Vayishlach: "The Better Angels"***

Do you believe in angels? Have you ever met one? I do, and I have. Let me tell you about the ones I've met.

But first, why do I believe in angels? Well, it is because I believe in the Bible, and the Bible speaks of angels. If you have been following the Torah readings for the past several weeks, you have read about angels quite a few times: An angel of God instructs Hagar to return to Sarah's service (Genesis 16:7-12); it is an angel who assures Hagar that her son Ishmael will survive (ibid. 21:17-18); and an angel calls out to Abraham from heaven and prevents him from harming Isaac (ibid. 22:11-12).

The Torah portion we read just last week, Parshat Vayetze, began with Jacob's dream, in which angels ascend and descend a ladder to heaven (ibid. 31:11), and concluded with the "angels of the Lord" whom he encountered upon his return to the land of Canaan.

Not once in any of these incidents is the angel described, and we are left wondering whether these angels are humanoid but winged creatures (as they are described elsewhere in the Bible), or heavenly bodiless spirits, emissaries of God who heed His command and perform His will. Either way, if you take the Bible literally, you must believe that there is such a thing as an angel. But what do I mean when I say that I have met angels? Surely you would scoff if I told you that I encountered a winged creature that descended from

the heaven and spoke to me on my way to the subway yesterday. I wouldn't try to convince you of that without fear that you would question my sanity, and indeed that is not what I mean when I say that I have met angels.

In order to explain what I mean, I must quote that central masterpiece of Jewish mysticism, the Zohar, in a passage in its commentary on the Book of Ruth. There, it is written, "If you perform mitzvot, you will find that out of each mitzvah, a beneficent angel is created." That good angels are created out of our good deeds, and that evil angels are produced by our sins, is a popular notion in our tradition—so much so that many commentators find sources in the Mishnah and Talmud for this idea.

Take, for example, this passage in the fourth chapter of Pirkei Avot, (Ethics of the Fathers): "Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob said: One who performs a single mitzvah acquires for himself an advocate. One who commits a single transgression acquires for himself an accuser." No less an authority than the Gaon of Vilna understands that the advocate is the good angel created by the performance of the mitzvah, and the accuser is the evil angel resulting from a sinful act.

What are these angels like? Are they the winged creatures flying from place to place, as they are often depicted in illustrated Bibles? I think not. I think these angels are representations of the influence that our deeds have upon others in our environment. If we perform a good deed, it has an effect on those around us, and this effect is termed a good angel. I've known some very pious individuals and have seen the "angels" they produced in their lifetimes reflected in their offspring and disciples, even long after they themselves passed away. And we all have witnessed the lasting impact of the "evil angels" created by the misdeeds of fiends and knaves.

Over the past several months, we have all suffered as we witnessed the tragic murders of fellow Jews—in synagogues, at bus stops, and upon battlefields. As we read about these individuals, we could not help but be impressed by the impact and influence they had on others. Even in the cases of very young victims, we learned of the effect they had upon parents and siblings. Each of these kedoshim, holy martyred souls, left behind numerous angels who will live on long after the death of those whose good deeds created them. These are the angels whom I have met. I met some of them on those occasions when I paid condolence calls upon bereaved families who embody the teachings of their lost beloved parents and teachers. And I have met others in print as I read the numerous stories of the lasting impact that young soldiers had upon their fellows and friends.

We create angels, and I believe that these are the kind of angels whom we read about in this week's Torah portion, Parshat Vayishlach (Genesis 32:4-36:43). It begins: "Jacob sent messengers ahead to his brother Esau..." The Hebrew word here generally translated as "messengers" is malachim, or malach in the singular. Yet this is the same word which, in the verses cited near the beginning of this column, is invariably translated as "angels." Did Jacob send angels, or did he send messengers?

Those who translate malachim in this verse as messengers do so because they cannot fathom that Jacob, a mere mortal, would have angels at his beck and call. Yet Rashi, the greatest of our commentators, insists that Jacob sent malachim mamash, real, "tangible" angels. How could that be?

I would not be the first to suggest that Jacob's angels were of the second type of angel that I have been describing. Jacob's "angels" were the product of his many good deeds: of his faithful adherence to his duties as Laban's shepherd, of his acts of charity and fervent prayers to God. The angels he created out of his good deeds are the ones he sent to appease his fearsome brother, Esau.

Some have found a hint of this interpretation in the words malachim mamash. Mamash means real, actual, and literally tangible. But its letters comprise an acronym for -Min Mitzvot She'asah, from the good deeds he performed; or Malachim Mimitzvot She'asah, angels from the good deeds he performed.

Jacob was not the only one capable of creating angels. We all are capable of performing good deeds. Our good deeds may not reach the level of those of

Jacob, so our angels may be less "angelic" than his, but we all can cultivate angels within ourselves.

We can step outside the Jewish tradition and learn that others have discovered this secret—namely, that we have spiritual abilities within us that cry out for expression. There are potential angels within us all.

Abraham Lincoln knew this and expressed it in his majestically eloquent First Inaugural Address: "The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield...all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

Long before Lincoln, our father Jacob taught us that we all have mystic chords of memory within us, waiting, desperately waiting, to be touched by the better angels of our nature. These better angels, whom we create out of our own good deeds, will stand us in good stead as we encounter the Esaus of our own time.

from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org>

reply-to: shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org

Orthodox Union / www.ou.org

Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

The Parable of the Tribes

From beginning to end, Genesis 34 tells a terrifying story. Dina, Jacob's daughter – the only Jewish daughter mentioned in the entire patriarchal narratives – leaves the safety of home to go out to "look at the daughters of the land." She is raped and abducted by a local prince, Shechem, son of the king of the town known as Shechem.

Jacob learns of this fact but does nothing until his sons return. Shimon and Levi, Dina's brothers, immediately realise that they must act to rescue her. It is an almost impossible assignment. The hostage-taker is no ordinary individual. As the son of the king, he cannot be confronted directly. The king is unlikely to order his son to release her. The other townspeople, if challenged, will come to the prince's defence. It is Shimon and Levi against the town: two against many. Even were all of Jacob's sons to be enlisted, they would still be outnumbered.

Shimon and Levi therefore decide on a ruse. They agree to let Dina marry the prince but they make one condition. The members of the town must all be circumcised. They, seeing long term advantages to an alliance with this neighbouring tribe, agree. The men of the town are weakened by the operation, and the pain is most acute on the third day. That day, Shimon and Levi enter the town and kill the entire male population. They rescue Dina and bring her home. The other brothers then plunder the town.

Jacob is horrified. "You have made me odious to the people of the land," he says. What then were we supposed to do, ask the two brothers? "Should we have left our sister to be treated like a prostitute?" With that rhetorical question, the episode ends and the narrative moves elsewhere. But Jacob's horror at the action of his sons does not end there. He returns to it on his deathbed, and in effect curses them:

"Simeon and Levi are brothers—their swords are weapons of violence.

Let me not enter their council, let me not join their assembly, for they have killed men in their anger and hamstringed oxen as they pleased. Cursed be their anger, so fierce, and their fury, so cruel! I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel. (Gen. 49: 5-7)

This is an extraordinary passage. It seems to lack any kind of moral message. No one comes out of it well. Shechem, the prince, would seem to be the chief villain. It was he who abducted and raped Dina in the first place. Hamor, his father, fails to reprimand him or order Dina's release. Shimon and Levi are guilty of a horrendous act of violence. The other brothers engage in looting the town.[1] Jacob seems passive throughout. He neither acts nor instructs his sons on how to act. Even Dina herself seems at best to have been guilty of carelessness in going out into the town in the first place, in what was clearly a dangerous neighbourhood – recall that both Abraham

and Isaac, her grandfather and great grandfather, had feared for their own lives because of the lawlessness of the times.[2]

Who was in the right and who in the wrong are left conspicuously undecided in the text. Jacob condemns his sons. But his sons reject the criticism.

The debate continued and was taken up by two of the greatest rabbis in the Middle Ages. Maimonides takes the side of Shimon and Levi. They were justified in what they did, he says. The other members of the town saw what Shechem had done, knew that he was guilty of a crime, and yet neither brought him to court nor rescued the girl. They were therefore accomplices in his guilt. What Shechem had done was a capital crime, and by sheltering him the townspeople were implicated.[3] This is, incidentally, a fascinating ruling since it suggests that for Maimonides the rule that “all Israel are responsible for one another” is not restricted to Israel. It applies to all societies. As Isaac Arama was to write in the fifteenth century, any crime known about and allowed to continue ceases to be an offence of individuals only and becomes a sin of the community as a whole.[4]

Nahmanides disagrees.[5] The principle of collective responsibility does not, in his view, apply to non-Jewish societies. The Noahide covenant requires every society to set up courts of law, but it does not imply that a failure to prosecute a wrongdoer involves all members of the society in a capital crime. The debate continues today among Bible scholars. Two in particular subject the story to close literary analysis: Meir Sternberg in his *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*[6] and Rabbi Elhanan Samet in his studies on the parsha.[7] They too arrive at conflicting conclusions. Sternberg argues that the text is critical of Jacob for both his inaction and his criticism of his sons for acting. Samet sees the chief culprits as Shechem and Hamor.

Both point out, however, the remarkable fact that the text deliberately deepens the moral ambiguity by refusing to portray even the apparent villains in an unduly negative light. Consider the chief wrongdoer, the young prince Shechem. The text tells us that “His heart was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob; he loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her.

And Shechem said to his father Hamor, ‘Get me this girl as my wife.’” Compare this with the description of Amnon, son of King David, who rapes his half sister Tamar. That story too is a tale of bloody revenge. But the text says about Amnon that after raping Tamar, he “hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her. Amnon said to her, ‘Get up and get out!’” (2 Samuel 13: 15). Shechem is not like that at all. He falls in love with Dina and wants to marry her. The king, Shechem’s father, and the people of the town, readily accede to the Shimon and Levi’s request that they become circumcised.

Not only does the text not demonise the people of Shechem. Neither does it paint any of Jacob’s family in a positive light. It uses the same word “deceit” (34: 13) of Shimon and Levi that it has used previously about Jacob taking Esau’s blessing and Laban substituting Leah for Rachel. Its description of all the characters, from the gadabout Dina to her excessively violent rescuers, to the plundering other brothers and the passive Jacob, the text seems written deliberately to alienate our sympathies.

The overall effect is a story with no irredeemable villains and no stainless heroes. Why then is it told at all? Stories do not appear in the Torah merely because they happened. The Torah is not a history book. It is silent on some of the most important periods of time. We know nothing, for example, about Abraham’s childhood, or about 38 of the forty years spent by the Israelites in the wilderness. Torah means “teaching, instruction, guidance.” What teaching does the Torah want us to draw from this narrative out of which no one emerges well?

There is an important thought experiment devised by Andrew Schmookler known as the parable of the tribes.[8] Imagine a group of tribes living close to one another. All choose the way of peace except one that is willing to use violence to achieve its ends. What happens to the peace-seeking tribes? One is defeated and destroyed. A second is conquered and subjugated. A third flees to some remote and inaccessible place. If the fourth seeks to defend itself it too will have to have recourse to violence. “The irony is that

successful defence against a power-maximising aggressor requires a society to become more like the society that threatens it. Power can be stopped only by power.”[9]

There are, in other words, four possible outcomes: [1] destruction, [2] subjugation, [3] withdrawal, and [4] imitation. “In every one of these outcomes the ways of power are spread throughout the system. This is the parable of the tribes.” Recall that all but one of the tribes seeks peace and has no desire to exercise power over its neighbours. However, if you introduce a single violent tribe into the region, violence will eventually prevail, however the other tribes choose to respond. That is the tragedy of the human condition.

As I was writing this essay in the summer of 2014, Israel was engaged in a bitter struggle with Hamas in Gaza in which more than 1,000 people died. The state of Israel had no more desire to be engaged in this kind of warfare than did our ancestor Jacob. Throughout the campaign I found myself recalling the words earlier in our parsha about Jacob’s feelings prior to his meeting with Esau: “Jacob was very afraid and distressed” (Gen. 32: 8), about which the sages said, “Afraid, lest he be killed, distressed lest he be forced to kill.”[10] What the episode of Dina tells us is not that Jacob, or Shimon and Levi, were right, but rather that there can be situations in which there is no right course of action; where whatever you do is wrong; where every option involves the abandonment of some moral principle. That is Schmookler’s point, that “power is like a contaminant, a disease, which once introduced will gradually but inexorably become universal in the system of competing societies.”[11] Shechem’s single act of violence against Dina forced two of Jacob’s sons into violent reprisal and in the end everyone was either contaminated or dead. It is indicative of the moral depth of the Torah that it does not hide this terrible truth from us by depicting one side as guilty, the other as innocent.

Violence defiles us all. It did then. It does now.

[1] Disapproved of biblically: see Deut. 13: 13-19, 1 Samuel 15: 13-26, Esther 9: 10, 15-16. [2] The Midrash is critical of Dina: see Midrash Aggadah (Buber) to Gen. 34: 1. Midrash Sechel Tov is even critical of her mother Leah for allowing her to go out. [3] Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot Melakhim* 9: 14. [4] Arama, *Akedat Yitzhak*, Bereishit, Vayera, Gate 20, s.v. uve-Midrash. [5] Nahmanides, *Commentary to Genesis* 34: 13. [6] Sternberg, Meir. *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985. 444-81. [7] Elhanan Samet, *Iyyunim be-Parshat ha-Shevuah*, third series, Israel: Yediote Aharonot, 2012, 149-171. [8] Andrew Bard Schmookler, *The Parable of the Tribes: The Problem of Power in Social Evolution*. Berkeley: U of California, 1984. [9] *Ibid.*, 21. [10] Quoted by Rashi ad loc. [11] Schmookler, *ibid.*, 22.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks is a global religious leader, philosopher, the author of more than 25 books, and moral voice for our time. Until 1st September 2013 he served as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, having held the position for 22 years. To read more from Rabbi Sacks or to subscribe to his mailing list, please visit www.rabbisacks.org.

from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org>

Reply-to: shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org

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Rabbi Ari Kahn on Parsha

Preparing for Battle, Praying for Peace

Years ago, as then-Prime Minister of Israel Menachem Begin prepared for a critical meeting with Presidents Saadat and Carter, he stopped in New York on the way to Washington. There he met individually with three of the great rabbis of that generation, Rabbis Moshe Feinstein, Menachem Schneerson, and Yosef Soloveitchik. From reports I have heard, all three rabbis gave Begin the same advice: Before the fateful meeting, review the Torah portion of Vayishlach.

This advice reflects the rabbinic understanding of the parashah, expressed in the midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 78:15) and reiterated in Ramban's commentary on the Torah (Bereishit 32:4), that the section dealing with the dramatic meeting between Yaakov and Esav was not just a "biblical story." Rather, it contains within it a prophetic program for future diplomatic, political and even geo-political encounters that should be heeded throughout the long years of Jewish exile.

The context is Yaakov's impending return to Israel, the land of his birth, the land promised to him by his father and later by God Himself. Yaakov was now nearing the borders of his promised land, but there was a "catch"; for Yaakov, nothing ever happens the easy way. He had just escaped unscathed from a skirmish with his father-in-law Lavan, and was about to contend with the matter of his brother, who might still be piqued over certain blessings that had made their way to Yaakov.

Yaakov makes the first move. He sends a delegation to his brother Esav, bearing gifts and words of rapprochement. The response brought back by these messengers is ominous: Esav is on his way, with an "escort" of four hundred men. While Yaakov tries to avoid war with gifts, Esav seems poised for battle. Yaakov divides his household into two camps; he reasons that if one camp is attacked, the other might escape.

Our sages extrapolate both economic and communal conclusions from Yaakov's preparations: One should not "put all of their eggs in one basket," or, in the words of the midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 76:3), "Do not put all your money in one corner." This lesson is taken beyond the purely monetary realm, and the rabbis stress that the same principle is true regarding even more valuable "commodities" – people. Just as Yaakov hoped to minimize the toll of war and to insure his family's survival in case of attack, so, too, should the Jewish People plan for the worst, and attempt to save even a portion of the dispersed and persecuted Jewish nation. If the Jews in one community are in danger, hopefully another community will survive; when, for example, the community in the "south" (presumably Israel) is under threat, steps must be taken to insure the survival of the Jewish community in the diaspora. The sages of the midrash had seen the First and Second Temples destroyed, and they developed a pragmatic strategy for Jewish survival, a strategy that dated back to Yaakov: Divide and survive. In fact, the midrash itself tells us that this parashah was more than just the source of general wisdom; it served as required reading, as the text with which representatives of the besieged Jewish community prepared themselves for meetings with the ruling authorities.

A careful reading of this episode teaches us that Yaakov took a three-pronged approach to his precarious situation: First, he attempted to make peace, sending a conciliatory message and showering his brother with gifts. Yaakov also turned to God in a prayer for peace and deliverance from harm, while simultaneously taking practical defensive steps to minimize the damage in the event that the worst-case scenario would unfold. Indeed, this formula has been applied throughout thousands of years of Jewish history: Paying "tributes," taxes and ransoms to the lords of the lands in which the Jews lived, dispersing Jewish enclaves to the farthest corners of the known world to insure that not all would be lost, and a great deal of prayer. Rabbinic sources refer to this strategy specifically regarding Rome, the symbol of Christendom. We cannot help but wonder how Prime Minister Begin read this passage. Would our sages have been more worried about dealing with President Carter than with President Saadat?

In recent history, our return to the Land of Israel in vast numbers has created a double-edged sword. On the one hand, more and more Jews are concentrated in a small, defined geographic area, which makes the threat to Jewish survival more acute. On the other hand, the Jewish People now has, for the first time in thousands of years, the ability to fight back, to protect itself against the constant threats of persecution, exile and annihilation. This new/old reality has engendered a gradual paradigm shift, in which Yaakov's example, which was predominantly a diaspora model (as observed by the Ramban Bereishit 33:15), has become augmented by the example set by

Yaakov's sons. Rather than pulling up stakes or avoiding conflict when their sister Dina was abused, they chose the opposite path. They were unwilling to defer to their adversaries, and stood up to claim their rights as equals, at the very least, among the community of nations. This inevitably led to confrontation – the type of confrontation Yaakov preferred to avoid.

For a more in-depth analysis see:

<http://arikahn.blogspot.co.il/2014/11/audio-and-essays-parashat-vayishlach.html>

www.matzav.com or www.torah.org/learning/drasha
Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Drasha Parshas Vayishlach
by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky
No News is Jews News

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" (Bereishit 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 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 to 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.

Good Shabbos

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky is the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Toras Chaim at South Shore and the author of the Parsha Parables series.

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Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Parshat Vayishlah – Contributing to civilization, worshipping G-d

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

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In this week's Torah portion, we read about Ya'acov's journey back from Haran (also called Padan Aram) after 20 years of labor, accompanied by his wives, his children and his great wealth, heading to the land where he was born and raised – the Land of Canaan.

When Ya'acov reaches Canaan, he searches for an appropriate place to settle and finds the city of Shechem suitable for him.

The verse that describes Ya'acov's settling in Shechem is written in rather irregular language. This brought the sages of the Talmud to find a hint in it of another act that Ya'acov performed there. This is the language of the verse: "And Jacob came safely [to] the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan Aram, and he encamped [vayichan] before the city." (Genesis 33:18) According to the sages, "and he encamped ["vayichan"] before the city" hints at an action of *chen* ("grace") or *chanina* ("pardon") that Ya'acov performed upon arriving in Shechem. This is how the Talmud explains this verse: "Vayichan [and he encamped] before the city" – Rav said: He established coins for them, and Shmuel said: He established markets, and Rabbi Yohanan said: He established bathhouses for them. (Talmud Bavli, Tractate Shabbat, daf 33) When we read the words of these sages, we are a bit surprised. The holy fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Ya'acov, are described everywhere as special people of strong faith and especially moral values. If we would be asked what Ya'acov would likely do when he arrives at a new town, we would probably answer that Ya'acov would build a yeshiva. Or, at the very least, that he would establish a Torah lesson, or he would direct the residents of the place on proper behavior, charity, etc... But to our great surprise, Ya'acov does not deal with any of that. He dealt with benefiting the residents of the place in simple materialistic ways: coins, markets or bathhouses.

Why did Ya'acov choose to deal with the kind of economy practiced in Shechem or in the personal hygiene of its inhabitants? This talk about Ya'acov's deeds is discussed in the Talmud in a very interesting context. Right there, the Talmud tells the famous story of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai who sharply criticized the Roman rulers of his time. When his words reached the Roman rulers, they sentenced him to death and he had to escape together with his son Elazar and hide in a cave. Rabbi Shimon and his son were in that cave for 12 years, until they found out that the Roman caesar died and all his decrees were canceled following his death. During those 12 years, Rabbi Shimon and his son sat and did one thing: They devotedly studied Torah.

After they left the cave and started to meet people, they were surprised to see people plowing and planting their fields. Their complete disconnect for 12

years caused them to see dealing with fields as worthless. So much so, that whatever they looked at would burn.

Then they heard a "divine voice," a sort of heavenly declaration that only they heard, and the following harsh words were uttered: "Did you come out to destroy My world?! Return to your cave!" They immediately returned to the cave for another year during which they internalized the message told to them. During this year they understood that working toward building a better civilization does not conflict with the lofty values that the Torah teaches. And not only does it not conflict, it is the right way in which to make actual these values.

Following the additional year, Rabbi Shimon and his son left the cave. They began talking to people they met, and their conversations were completely different than the ones they had had before this year. They asked people: Is there anything in your town that needs repair? How can we help you live lives which are correct and balanced? They learned this from Ya'acov Avinu. Ya'acov did not disconnect from the world. On the contrary, he dealt with developing civilization and established coins, markets and bathhouses. In this way he sanctified G-d's name through his mannerisms and lifestyle and radiated the way in which others should walk and the deeds they should do.

They understood that contributing to civilization and improving it is the correct way in which to implement the values of the Torah perfectly. A man can be a scientist, a doctor, an economist, a technician, a plumber or a carpenter. In any area, if he works honestly and fairly and makes sure to implement the values of the Torah and radiates this to his surroundings, he is following in the footsteps of Ya'acov Avinu from whom we learn that contributing to civilization is the best way to express the values and the commandments that the Torah teaches us.

The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.

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Rabbi Yakov Haber

Middos and Morals[1]

"Vaya'anu b'nei Yaakov es Sh'chem v'es Chamor aviv b'mirma... - And the children of Yaakov answered Sh'chem and Chamor his father with deception..." (VaYishlach 34:13). This passuk introduces the episode beginning with the proposal by all the sons of Yaakov Avinu to Sh'chem and his father, leading to the circumcision of all of the inhabitants of Sh'chem, the subsequent killing of all the males by Shimon and Levi, and the rescue of Dina from her captors.

Ramban questions why Yaakov harshly rebuked Shimon and Levi both immediately after the event and again before his death if his silence during the proposal implied his consent to their plot. Furthermore, why did he single out Shimon and Levi if all the brothers who had made the proposal to Sh'chem seemed to be aware of what was to occur, Shimon and Levi merely acting as their agents? He answers that Yaakov only consented to this proposal since he thought that one of two possibilities would occur. The likely scenario would be that the townspeople would not consent to circumcision and that this would allow the return of Dina in a "diplomatically correct" manner without Sh'chem and Chamor "losing face". If they did consent, then their subsequent weakness could be utilized to seize Dina from them. This was also presumably the rest of the brothers' intention as well. When Shimon and Levi seized the opportunity to exact vengeance from the entire city, something Yaakov Avinu did not anticipate, he censured them for killing those not directly involved in the attack and kidnapping of Dina.

What emerges then is that Yaakov Avinu agreed to this mirma, or deception, at least partially. We find elsewhere that Yaakov Avinu engaged in deception or seeming trickery: once, by masquerading as Eisav in order to receive the b'rachos from his father Yitzchak Avinu (Toldos 27) and once in outmaneuvering Lavan to have the sheep produce the agreed-upon type by having them gaze at sticks appropriately carved placed at the water trough (VaYeitzei 30:28 ff.). These actions are difficult to understand coming from someone who if referred to by the Torah as "ish tam - a man of simplicity" (Toldos 25:27 see Rashi there) and whom the prophet Micha identifies with the quality of truth, "titein 'emes! Yaakov" (7:20)!

These seemingly disparate behaviors and descriptions are not necessarily contradictory. Commenting on the phrase "ish tam" the Chozeh of Lublin (quoted in Sha'arei Aharon) questions how the Torah could describe Yaakov as ish tam when later, Rashi (29:12) quotes a comment from the Midrash that Yaakov told Rachel that if her father acts with guile toward him, he is "his brother in trickery"! His insightful answer helps us resolve the aforementioned contradictions. Yaakov is described with the appositive phrase "ish tam" not just with the adjective "tam". This means that he was the master of his simplicity and straightforwardness. (Compare "Hashem Ish milchama".) When appropriate, which was most of the time, he used straightforward honesty and integrity. But when dealing with crooked people, he utilized guile in order to achieve true justice. The blessings were rightfully his both because he had purchased the birthright and because Yitzchak would clearly not want the blessings to be in the hands of Eisav had he known his true wickedness. In addition, he had been told by his mother prophetically that the blessings must go to him (see Targum Onkelos to 27:13). He outsmarted Lavan who wished to leave him penniless and switched the agreement one hundred times (!) by using legal - albeit under ordinary circumstances not proper - means to secure his just salary which would have not been given to him otherwise. He consented to deception to rescue his daughter Dina from the clutches of Sh'chem who had attacked her and kept her captive in his home. Yaakov was a master of middos, culling traits from his multifaceted arsenal of qualities to be utilized at the appropriate time. King David praises Hakadosh Baruch Hu: "im gibor tamim titamam... v'im ikeish titapal - with the innocent one you act straightforwardly, with the crooked, you act crookedly" (Sh'muel II 22:26-27). We are commanded to walk in the ways of Hashem in this regard as well.

Chazal note the absurdity of always applying kindness. "Anyone who is merciful on the cruel, will ultimately be cruel on the merciful" (Tanchuma, M'tsora 1). Misplaced mercy will not lead to a better world, but to a more dangerous one. They note the requirement to lie or at least bend the truth to avoid a quarrel, quoting Hashem Himself as a source for this (see Rashi on VaYeira 18:13). They list situations where even a Torah scholar, who should be punctilious never to even "bend the truth", should do exactly that (Bava Metsia 23b). At first these statements seem against what appears to be morally correct. Is not honesty always the best policy? Is not kindness always appropriate? Chazal teach us that the consummate servant of G-d cannot just operate based on the ostensibly "good" qualities even though they certainly should be our norm. Occasionally, circumstances warrant channeling the "bad" qualities for a higher purpose. Chazal even justify sin when done l'sheim shamayim such as Ya'el being with Sisera and Esther being with Achashverosh in order to save the Jewish people (see Horayos 10b). This of course must be done with the utmost of caution balancing the sin with the benefit and only upon appropriate decision-making by Torah personalities.[2]

The Vilna Gaon, commenting on the verse in Mishlei (8:12) "I am wisdom, I dwelled with craftiness", contrasts Eisav and Lavan with Yaakov Avinu. Eisav and Lavan developed craftiness and deception as part of their nature. Yaakov Avinu utilized his Torah wisdom to know when to use deception appropriately. As a result, he outsmarted both of them.[3] This is why Targum Onkelos translates both instances of the word "mirma" - concerning

Yaakov's taking the b'rachos (27:35) and concerning his sons' proposal to Sh'chem and Chamor - as "with wisdom" rather than the literal "with deception" indicating that the source of its utilization emerged from the wisdom of the Torah.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik noted in a recorded oral lecture I had the privilege of listening to that even good values when taken to extremes become corrupted.[4] The "moralist" will utilize his warped sense of extreme "morality" to arrive at unjust and immoral conclusions. To illustrate, in the last war that was thrust upon the State of Israel, Europeans, the United States and many individuals accused the Israeli army of unjust cruelty in battle. Hamas' use of human shields and bunkers built under hospitals was totally ignored while Israel was accused of being the aggressor. Labeling aggression as evil even when enacted in response to thousands of missiles being fired at a country's citizenry is not something that one would believe could be uttered by intelligent people if not for the fact that we all witnessed precisely this occur. Many viewed the Israeli government's decision not to bomb more of the missile sites early on in the war for fear of causing civilian casualties as misplaced mercy. A recent decision by the Israeli Supreme Court to prevent demolition of a cruel terrorist's home came under similar criticism. I do not wish to take sides on these issues in this article, but I do wish to raise the point that mercy can be unjustly misplaced when dealing with the enemy. Only through study of Torah and consultation with the masters of Torah can we arrive at an appropriate balance of which qualities to use when. Yaakov Avinu's complex mixture of behaviors serves as an example of the centrality and importance of not being monolithic in our application of middos to different life situations. May Hashem open our eyes to utilize character traits properly.

[1] Different approaches to the main themes in this article are also presented by Mori v'Rabi Rav Willig shlita in Confrontations and Tribulations and by Mori v'Rabi Rav Rosensweig shlita in Parshat Vayishlach - The Principled Pursuit of Principle. V'shivim panim l'Torah.

[2] Rav Chaim Volozhiner is quoting as saying that "aveira lishma" only applied before Mattan Torah when the mitzvos were kept voluntarily. I believe I heard that his statement should be interpreted as greatly limiting its application post-Mattan Torah but not eliminating it altogether. The actions of Esther and Ya'el were both post-Mattan Torah.

[3] See also footnote 115 of the Mossad HaRav Kook edition by Rav Katzenelenbogen.

[4] He explained, fascinatingly, that mankind does this in their search for "Infinity". When their questing souls do not find "Infinity" they substitute "finiteness" for "Infinity". This includes misplaced "morality".

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