

DIVREI TORAH FROM INTERNET
ON PARSHAS VAYISHLACH - 5756

(c/o CShulman@paulweiss.com)

From: "Ohr Somayach <ohr@jer1.co.il>"
To: CSHULMAN, " " Highlights of the Torah weekly
port...
Date: 12/4/95 3:24pm
Subject: Torah Weekly - Vayishlach

* TORAH WEEKLY *

Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion

Parshas Vayishlach

For the week ending 16 Kislev 5756 8 & 9 December 1995

Summary

Returning home, Yaakov sends angelic messengers to appease his brother Esav. The messengers return, telling Yaakov that Esav is approaching him with an army of four hundred men. Yaakov takes the strategic precautions of dividing the camps, praying for assistance, and sending a tribute to mollify Esav. That night, Yaakov is left alone, and wrestles with the angel of Esav. Although Yaakov emerges victorious, he is left with an injured sinew in his thigh (which is the reason that it is forbidden to eat the sciatic nerve of a kosher animal). The angel tells him that his name in the future will be Yisrael, signifying that he has prevailed against man (Lavan) and the supernatural realm (the angel). The brothers meet and are reconciled, but Yaakov, still fearful of his brother, rejects Esav's offer that they should dwell together. Shechem, a Caananite prince, abducts and violates Dinah, Yaakov's daughter. In return for Dinah's hand in marriage, the prince and his father suggest that Yaakov and his family intermarry and enjoy the fruits of Caananite prosperity. Yaakov's sons trick Shechem and his father by feigning agreement -- however, they stipulate that all the males of the city must undergo bris mila. While weakened by the circumcision, Shimon and Levi, two of Dinah's brothers, enter the town and execute all the males. This action is justified by the city's tacit complicity in the abduction of their sister. Hashem commands Yaakov to go to Beis-El and build an altar there. His mother Rivka's nurse, Devorah, dies and is buried below Beis-El. Hashem appears again to Yaakov, blesses him and changes his name to Yisrael. While traveling, Rachel goes into labor and gives birth to Binyamin, the twelfth of the tribes of Yisrael. She dies in childbirth and is buried on the Beit Lechem Road. Yaakov builds a monument to her, which is still there today, as the Torah predicts. Yitzhak passes away at the age of one hundred and eighty, and is buried by his sons. The Parsha concludes by listing Esav's descendants.

Commentaries

The Housewife and the Cat

"And Yaakov was very frightened and distressed" (32:7).

Rashi comments that Yaakov was frightened lest he or members of his family be killed, and he was distressed, that he might be forced to kill others.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein asks: Why was Yaakov distressed that he might be put

B'S'D' in a position of having to kill Esav or one of his four hundred wicked companions? Wasn't this an opportunity to rid the world of evil -- a reason to rejoice, and not to be distressed? Reb Moshe answers with the words of Beruriah to her husband Rabbi Meir (Berachos 10a): "better to pray that evildoers repent, than to pray that the wicked die." Yaakov was distressed that he might have to kill to remove evil from the world. There is an inherent danger in using undesirable methods to achieve desirable goals -- that one can become tainted by the means. Rabbi Chaim Brisker pointed out that there are two kinds of zealots in the world, who are comparable to a housewife and a cat. Both the housewife and the cat want to rid the house of mice. The only difference is that the housewife hopes that there will never be another mouse to eliminate, and the cat hopes there will be many more. Before we are zealous to attack the evils of the world, let us make sure that we are acting as housewives and not cats... (Adapted from Rabbi Z. Leff in Shiurei Binah)

"With Friends Like You..."

"Deliver me please, from my brother, from Esav" (32:12).

In preserving Jewish continuity, we are threatened by two kinds of dangers from the nations of the world: On the one hand, the physical threat of illogical hatred, expressed as crusade, pogrom and holocaust; and on the other, the spiritual threat of the welcoming arms of acceptance, which turns into the asphyxiating embrace of assimilation and intermarriage. These two dangers are expressed in Yaakov's prayer here: "Save me from my brother..." when he behaves with friendship and brotherhood, threatening the spiritual uniqueness of the Jewish People; and "from Esav", when he reveals the naked malice of the Jew-hater, seeking a final solution. Of the two threats, history has shown that the spiritual danger of assimilation is more formidable than the physical peril of annihilation, and for this reason, Yaakov first prays for divine assistance to overcome the threat of his "brother". (Beis HaLevi)

The Third Pillar

"Yaakov was left alone and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn" (32:25).

The man/angel that Yaakov wrestled with represents the yetzer hara -- the evil inclination. Why is it that neither Avraham nor Yitzhak were assailed in a similar way? The Chafetz Chaim said that "the yetzer hara doesn't mind if a Jewish person prays and gives charity all day long, provided that he doesn't learn Torah." Yaakov is the Patriarch who epitomizes the Torah. The Sages teach us that the world is built on three pillars: Chesed, kindness -- the characteristic of Avraham; Avodah, service -- Yitzhak; and Torah -- Yaakov. Without Yaakov's pillar, the pillar of Torah, all the Chesed and the Avodah will not be sufficient for the Jewish People to fulfill their mission. Jewish history tragically bears out this point: Communities that were unstinting in giving tzedaka and building synagogues, but neglected Torah learning are now institutions that assimilated and are moribund, but those who built the third pillar -- Yaakov's pillar -- of Torah, have remained strong and connected to their heritage. (Artscroll Stone Chumash)

Haftorah: Ovadiah 1:1-21

The Eagle Has Landed

The entire book of Ovadiah, the shortest in all of the Tanach, is this week's Haftorah. Ovadiah was a convert to Judaism from the nation of

Edom.

Esav lived among two tzadikim, Yitzhak and Rivka and failed to learn from them -- Ovadiah lived among two of the wickedest people, Ahav and Jezabel, yet he remained a tzadik. His prophecy follows Esav/Edom through various periods of history until its eventual downfall in the times of the Mashiach.

"If he will rise up like an eagle and if he will make his nest among the stars -- even from there I will bring him down" (1:4).

In last week's Parsha, Yaakov has a dream of angels ascending and descending a ladder. The Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer explains that these angels represent the four nations who will exile the Jewish People. At first, Yaakov saw the guardian angels of Babylon, Persia and Greece ascend and descend in succession. Finally, the protecting angel of Rome/Edom climbed up the ladder, but he didn't come down. Yaakov feared that this final exile would never end until Hashem said, "If he will rise up like an eagle and if he will make his nest among the stars -- even from there I will bring him down." We are still in that final exile. If a single moment in recent history epitomizes the over-confidence of our age, it is arguably the Moon landing in 1969. It seemed at the time that "we have the technology -- we can do anything!" (Since then there has been the rude awakening of unimaginable mindless violence, urban poverty and pandemic disease to knock the gloss off that arrogant assumption). The first words broadcast from the moon were "Houston, this is Tranquillity Base. The Eagle has landed." Nearly two thousand years ago, Ovadiah predicted: "If he will rise up like an eagle and if he will make his nest among the stars -- even from there I will bring him down."

Sing, My Soul! Insights in to the Zemiros sung at the Shabbos table throughout the generations.

Ki Eshmera Shabbos - "If we observe Shabbos..."

Gam mildabayr bo divray tz'rochim -
"Also from speaking about matters of necessities"

Your speech on Shabbos, say our Sages, should not be like your speech in the weekdays. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai had an elderly mother who was extremely loquacious. When he would remind her that it was Shabbos she would become silent. This is an indication that not only should one be careful not to speak about weekday matters like business on the Shabbos but also to limit the amount of talk even about permissible matters. It therefore required great deliberation before our Sages permitted the greeting of "Good Shabbos" to be used in such widespread fashion on the Day of Rest.

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B"H
Torah Studies
Adaptation of Likutei Sichos
by
Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of Great Britain

Based on the teachings and talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson on the weekly Torah Portion

VAYISHLACH

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VAYISHLACH

In this week's Sidra Jacob, after his struggle with the angel, is told that his name is now to be Israel. And yet we find him still referred to, on subsequent occasions in the Torah, as Jacob.

By contrast we find that after Abraham's name was changed from Abram, he is never again called in the Torah by his earlier name. What is the difference between the two cases?

The Rebbe explains the meaning of the names of "Jacob" and "Israel," of the two stages in the religious life that they represent, and of

their relevance to us today.

WHY JACOB REMAINS

Concerning the verse, "And your name shall no longer be Jacob: Instead Israel shall be your name," the Talmud poses the following problem:

Anyone who calls Abraham, Abram transgresses the command, "And your name shall no longer be called Abram." If so, surely the same applies to one who uses the name Jacob to refer to Israel, for it is written, "And your name shall no longer be Jacob?"

The Talmud concludes that the name Jacob is different from the name Abram in this respect, that after G-d gave Abraham his new name, the Torah never thereafter refers to him by any name other than Abraham. Whereas Jacob is so called in the Torah even after he has been given the name of Israel.

Why does the name Jacob remain?

There is a Chassidic explanation that the names "Jacob" and "Israel" denote two stages in the service of G-d, both necessary at different times in the life of every Jew.

"Israel" denotes a higher achievement, but it does not supplant or remove the necessity for the service signified by "Jacob."

The Inner Meaning of "Jacob" and "Israel"

The difference between them is this. The name "Jacob" implies that he acquired the blessings of Isaac "by supplanting and subtlety" (the name in Hebrew, Yaakov, means he supplanted"). He used cunning to take the blessings which had been intended for Esau.

"Israel," on the other hand, denotes the receiving of blessings through "noble conduct (Serarah, which is linguistically related to Yisrael, the Hebrew form of Israel), and in an open manner."

However the Torah is interpreted, its literal meaning remains true. And the blessings of Isaac referred to the physical world and its benefits: "G-d give you of the dew of the heaven and the fatness of the earth."

Jacob and Rebecca made great sacrifices and resorted to deceit to acquire them. Jacob had to dress himself in the clothes of Nimrod, whose kingdom turned the whole world to rebellion, in order to take and transform the elements of the physical world to holiness (to release their "buried sparks of holiness").

The deeds of the Fathers are a sign to their children. And the implication for us of Jacob's act is that we have to use cunning in our approach to the acts of our physical nature.

The cunning man does not reveal his intentions. He seems to be following the path of his opponent. But at the crucial point he does what he had all along intended. The Jew in his involvement with the material world appears to be preoccupied with it. He eats, drinks, transacts business. But he does so for the sake of heaven. His objectives are not material ones. He wears the "clothes of Esau," but

his implicit purpose is to uncover and elevate the "holy sparks."

But the way of "Israel" is to attain the blessings of "the dew of the heaven and the fatness of the earth" by "noble and open conduct." In worldly conduct he has no need to conceal his intention of serving G-d. He experiences no tensions. The world has no hold on him. It does not hide from him its intrinsic G-dliness.

This distinction can be seen in the difference between a Shabbat and a weekday meal.

Eating a weekday meal embodies the tension between a physical act and its spiritual motivation for the sake of heaven. This discrepancy between outward appearance and inner intention is a form of cunning. But eating a Shabbat meal in itself fulfills a commandment. The holiness of the physical is manifest.

In the light of this we can understand the meaning of the verse, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel, for you have contended with G-d (Elokim) and with men and you have prevailed."

"Elokim" in this context means "angels," and generally connotes the "seventy heavenly princes" through whom flow the Divine emanations which sustain physical existence, and who thereby act to conceal G-dliness.

"Men" signifies a still greater concealment, for men are capable of denigrating the Jew for performing G-d's will, and this is a harder concealment to bear. For this reason, the first paragraph of the entire Shulchan Aruch warns us "not to be ashamed of men who ridicule." And this is the basis of the whole of a Jew's service - to break down the concealment of G-d.

This was the virtue of Israel, to have "contended with Elokim and with men" and to have prevailed over their respective concealments of G-d. They are no longer barriers to him; indeed they assent to his blessings. He not only won his struggle with the angel (the guardian angel of Esau) but the angel himself blessed him. This is the achievement of which the Proverbs speak: "He makes even his enemies be at peace with him."

The Struggle

This distinction accords with the explanation given in Likkutei Torah of the verse, "He has not seen sin in Jacob nor toil in Israel."

At the level of "Jacob" the Jew has no sin, but he still experiences "toil" - his freedom from sin is achieved only by tension and struggle for he has concealments to overcome. This is why he is called "Jacob, my servant" for "service" (in Hebrew, avodah) has the implication of strenuous effort to refine his physical nature (his "animal soul"). He does not sin but he still experiences the inclination to sin, which he must overcome.

But "Israel" encounters no "toil," for in his struggle "with Elokim and with men" he broke down the factors which conceal G-dliness and silenced his dissenting inclinations. Israel no longer needs to contend with those forces which oppose the perception of G-dliness. His progress lies entirely within the domain of the holy.

PARTIAL AND COMPLETE VICTORY

There is a story told by the Lubavitcher Rebbe about the Tzemach Tzedek (the third Rebbe of Lubavitch): Once in the middle of a Chassidic gathering he jumped onto a table in great excitement and said: "What is the difference between something which is killed completely and something which is only partially killed?"

(This refers to a statement in the Talmud: that to have "partially" killed something is to have killed it.) The Tzemach Tzedek giving the halachic point a Chassidic meaning, applies it to the "killing" of the inclination to sin. Even a "partial" killing is a killing, but at the very least we must partially kill it." After some time had passed in speaking and dancing, he continued: "At the moment that one has reached the point of "killing" (the moment of which the Psalms speak in the words, 'My heart is void within me') one's life has taken on a new character."

These two statements of the Tzemach Tzedek refer to the two levels of "Jacob" and "Israel."

At the level of "Jacob" there is still a struggle against one's inclinations, a life of tension - a partial killing. But at the level of "Israel" when the killing is "complete," life is transformed into a new serenity and spiritual pleasure.

LEVELS IN THE LIFE OF THE TZADDIK AND THE BENONI

These two stages of service pertain to two levels within the "G-dly soul."

"Jacob" can be analyzed into the letter Yud and the work ekev (the heel).

Here the perception of G-d (symbolized by the letter "Yud") has reached only the lowest levels of the soul, creating the possibility of a concealment which has to be broken down. On the other hand "Israel" contains the same letters as "Li Rosh" ("The head is mine"). The whole soul, to its highest capacities, has been permeated by the awareness of G-d, and no concealment is possible, no struggle necessary.

In general terms, "Israel" denotes the Tzaddik (the stage of complete righteousness) and "Jacob" the Benoni (the intermediate level, attainable by every person).

And in particular, within this intermediate level, that "Jacob" represents the weekday service, and "Israel" the service of Shabbat.

Even within the stage of complete righteousness, there are still analogues of both "Jacob" and "Israel." This is clear from the fact that Israel himself was still occasionally called Jacob after his change of name. Within him, and indeed in every Jew, "Jacob" remains as a necessary element in the service of G-d.

THE CONTEMPORARY MEANING OF "JACOB"

From the fact that, as we mentioned before, the level of Jacob is

without sin, and yet involves continual effort, it follows that the Jew - though his struggle with contending desires is difficult and fraught with risk - has the power to achieve victory and remain free from sin. For he is "a branch of My planting, the work of My hands," and "a part of G-d above." As nothing can prevail over G-d, so can nothing prevail over the Jew against his will. And he has been promised victory, for we are told, "His banished will not be rejected by Him" and "All Israel has a share in the world to come."

This promise (like all the words of Torah) is relevant to our present spiritual concerns. The assurance of ultimate victory should strengthen our joy in the act of service, and this joy will itself contribute to the victory over our physical natures, and shorten the battle. As the previous Rebbe (Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn) said: though a soldier confronts danger, he goes with a song of joy, and the joy brings him victory.

This is why we say, after the end of Shabbat, "Do not fear, My servant Jacob." For, as we explained above, during Shabbat the Jew stands at the level of Israel; beyond the Shabbat, when we return to the level of "Jacob, My servant," and to the toil of the weekday service, we are told, "Do not fear." This is not merely a command but also a source of strength and of the joy that will shorten the work and hasten its reward - to the point where we are worthy of the time which is "an eternal life of Shabbat and rest."

(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. III pp. 795-9)

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vayishlach

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16 Kislev, 5756 December 9, 1995

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BS"D

TORAH PORTION: Vayishlach, Genesis 32:4 - 36:43

On the trip back to Canaan, Jacob meets his brother Esau; Jacob wrestles with the angel; they arrive in Shechem; Chamor the Hivite (heir to Shechem) rapes Jacob's daughter, Dina; Dina's brothers, Shimon and Levy, massacre the men of Shechem; Rebecca (Rivka) dies; G-d gives Jacob an additional name, "Israel," and reaffirms the blessing to Avraham that the land of Canaan (Israel) will be given to his descendants; Rachel dies after giving birth to Benjamin (Binyomin); Jacob's sons are listed; Isaac dies; Esau's lineage is recorded as is that of Seir the Horite; lastly, the succession of the Kings of Edom is chronicled.

DVAR TORAH: based on Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin

Before Jacob's confrontation with his brother, Esau, he made preparations to ensure the safety of his family and his possessions. Following this, the Torah relates, "And Jacob remained alone..." (Genesis 32:25). How are we to understand the significance of his remaining "alone"?

The Midrash (Beraishis Rabbah 77:1) states that 'just as the Almighty is alone, so too Jacob was alone'. We see from this that the Sages understand that the word "alone" is a positive attribute and a form of emulating the Almighty. "Alone" means that you have an independent attitude and perspective.

The Mishna (a teaching) in Pirke Avot 4:1 (Chapters of the Fathers -- a compilation of Jewish wisdom) defines four key terms: "Who is the wise man? The one who learns from everyone. Who is the strong person? The one who conquers his negative impulses. Who is the wealthy person? The one who is happy with his portion. Who is the honorable person? The one who honors others."

Rabbi Yeruchem Levovitz, of blessed memory, explained the Mishna in light of the positive attribute of being alone -- that every person can only obtain the most important things in life independently of anyone else. The important things depend on your attitude and perspective.

Wisdom is an approach to life, not a comparative contest. The wise man is the individual who does not compare his wisdom to that of others, but because of his love for wisdom he chooses to learn from everyone, for each person has wisdom to share. True strength is having the ability to overcome your negative tendencies and impulses. If it were dependent upon being victorious over others, as soon as someone else is stronger, you are no longer the strong man. True strength is only dependent upon yourself. Wealth is not dependent on how much money you have or the number of your possessions. If it were, then you could lose your entire wealth overnight. Rather, true wealth is feeling joy for what you do have. If honor were dependent on how others treat you, what are you supposed to do if others decide not to honor you? Woe to a person whose honor is dependent on the whim of others. True honor is up to you. You are honorable if you honor others regardless of how other treat you.

All of these important attributes are up to you. You alone decide where you stand as regards: wisdom, strength, wealth and

honor.

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PARSHAS VAYISHLACH BIG RETURNS
12/08/95 Volume 2 Issue 7
by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Anticipating conflict is quite strenuous. Yaakov had heard that his brother Esav was advancing toward him and his twelve children, accompanied by four hundred armed men. He had no idea of Esav's intentions. Was he still raging over the loss of Isaac's blessings or did thirty years of separation calm his wrath? Yaakov had to act fast. He split his camp into two groups and instructed his children both, how to do battle and how to escape. He sent a large contingent of men laden with myriad gifts to greet the advancing army. He hoped that the large offering will indicate submission to his older brother and thus appease him. And of course, he prayed.

In the middle of the night before the encounter, he made his move. In Genesis 32:23-24, the Torah tells us, "and Yaakov got up that night and took his wives, his children, and all of his possessions and crossed the stream at Yabok." It would seem from this verse that Yaakov was together with his entire family and all their possessions. Yet the next verse tells us that Yaakov remained alone. The Torah places him back on the other side of the river, alone. As he stands alone the Torah relates that an angel fought with him till dawn. The question is obvious. If Yaakov crossed with his entire

family, how did he end up on the other side of the stream, alone?

The Talmud in Chulin 91a is also bothered by this question. The Talmud explains that Yaakov returned to his original camping grounds. He obviously had forgotten some Pachim K'tanim, insignificant small earthenware, bric-a-brac, and thus returned alone, to retrieve them. The Talmudic reasoning is thus. If the verse tells us that Jacob crossed with all of his possessions, then it tells us he was alone, whatever he had returned for must have been insignificant and not worthy enough to be considered as possessions.

I am bothered. Why did Yaakov go to retrieve insignificant tchotchkes on the night when he was preparing for the most difficult encounter of his life? Obviously, there is an eternal lesson to be gained. What is it?

In the summer of 1954, my grandmother, Itta Ettl Kamenetzky, of blessed memory, left Beth Israel Hospital, for the last time, after a prolonged stay. Her condition had deteriorated, and the doctors felt that there was nothing left for them to do. My grandfather, Reb Yaakov zt"l, went together with family members to pick her up from the hospital. My grandmother was wheeled to the waiting automobile and made as comfortable as possible. Suddenly, Reb Yaakov seemed to realize that he had forgotten something very important. He whispered something to his wife, and when she nodded her approval, he asked if it was possible for the driver to wait a few minutes. He had to go back into the hospital.

The family members were a bit surprised. Although there was another patient in the room, and items may have been confused, they remembered removing every one of my grandmother's personal belongings from the room. Accompanied by his curious son, Reb Yaakov proceeded to the elevator and pushed the button to the floor on which his wife had stayed.

"Pa," his son protested, "we have everything." The elevator stopped at the correct floor. Reb Yaakov proceeded into his wife's former room and turned to her ailing roommate. "In our rush to leave the hospital, I forgot to tell you good-bye and wish you well. May G-d send you a speedy recovery." With that, Reb Yaakov walked out of the room, nodded at the stunned nurses, whom he already had thanked on his first exit, and left toward the waiting car.

Yaakov went back for something that in our estimation, may have been insignificant. But he knew otherwise. A small jug may have had a sentimental value to one of his wives. An old blanket may have meant something to one of the children. Yaakov our forefather taught us that everything in life has value. It is easy to say, "I crossed the river," "I packed the suitcase," or "I left the building, and I'm not going back." Yaakov's lesson tells us that even at a risk, the little things in life are just as important as the big ones. Some acts are glorified, others are seemingly petty. We can never judge which investments yield great returns, and which returns are great investments!

Good Shabbos (c) 1995 Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Dedicated In loving memory of our Grandmother, Betty Blum of blessed memory by Mark & Jolene Bolender and their children, Elchanan, Miriam and Lana

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Vayishlach-5756

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Vayishlach - Three ways without regret

by Rabbi Pinchas Rosenstein, Barnet Synagogue

After spending over 20 years in exile, Jacob and his new family return to the land of Israel and Jacob is forced to confront his brother Esau whose birthright he stole so many years back. Jacob has no indication as to how his brother will greet him and naturally fears that the bitter hatred that existed so many years ago is still present.

On the night before they are due to meet, Jacob finds himself alone for a few hours and the shortest of all of Jacob's struggles takes place - his struggle with an Angel.

The verses relate that the two fought all night and although Jacob emerged a victor with both a blessing and a new name Israel ("One who fought with God"), nevertheless he is wounded in his thigh and is only able to limp away. The Torah explains this to be the reason why Jews are prohibited to this day from eating the sinew of the thigh.

There is considerable dispute among our main commentators as to how this episode actually happened. Maimonides, writing in his Guide for the Perplexed (2:42), considers the whole story to have been part of a prophetic vision: "... any appearance or speech of an angel in the Bible took place in a vision or dream; it makes no difference whether this is expressly stated or not ... The same, I believe, is the case when it is said, in reference to Jacob, 'And a man wrestled with him (Bereshit 32:25).'

Nachmanides (writing on Bereshit 18:1) strongly rejects Maimonides' argument that the whole episode was simply a vision. In noting the details surrounding the story, he points out: "... if this be the case, I do not know why Jacob limped on his thigh when he awoke! And why did Jacob say, 'For I have seen an angel face to face and my life is preserved'. The prophets did not fear that they might die on account of having experienced prophetic visions".

Whichever view one takes, that it actually happened as described or that it was a prophetic vision, the deeper significance of the episode still requires some explanation. The traditional view, following a principle laid down by our sages explains that all the actions of the forefathers are to be considered as an omen with regard to the future destiny of the Jewish people. This episode is to be interpreted in the same way. The man that Jacob struggles with is explained to be the protecting angel of Esau. His brief struggle with Jacob represents the ongoing struggle of the Jewish people against the nations of the world, Jacob's limp is intended to symbolise the deep wounds that resulted from the struggle and Jacob's victory over the angel promised an ultimate salvation.

A more radical explanation is suggested by the widely respected contemporary author Rabbi Isachar Jacobson in his work Bina BeMikrah. He reminds us that in advance of his meeting with his brother Esau, Jacob prepares himself for all eventualities: He prays to God for Divine assistance and yet at the same time plans for both diplomatic or military eventualities. But Rabbi Jacobson suggests that Jacob omitted one crucial ingredient from all these preparations. We do not appear to read about any regret regarding how Jacob actually treated his brother over 20 years earlier, particularly since it was his own actions which caused him all the problems in the first place.

For over twenty years in exile, Jacob was too busy building up his family to worry about his conscience, but he now has a moment to himself when he is forced to ponder on his past actions. This leads to a night where he finally struggles with his conscience regarding what he had done to his brother Esau. Hence a night of struggle with the angel of Esau. Jacob's wound from this struggle is not just physical, it also serves a moral lesson

to Jacob and to his descendants that the pure and holy must not be achieved in impure and unholy ways.

Two commandments are offered to the Jewish people in the era of the forefathers. The Brit Milah (circumcision) that sets us aside as a holy people and the prohibition of the sinew of the thigh which serves as a warning against the tendency to want to use unholy methods in the pursuit of holy goals.

They were not called Bnei Yisrael till Sinai...(Bereshit 32:33).
Though this was only said after the receipt of the Torah at Sinai, Moses however placed it in Bereshit to explain the prohibition of the Sinew (Hullin 101b and Rashi)

Saadia Gaon - (882-942) by Rabbi Yaakov Shemaria, Beth Hamidrash Hagadol,
Leeds

Rav Saadia Gaon was born in Dilaz, a village of the district of Fayum in Upper Egypt. His family traced their origins to Rabbi Hannina Ben Dosa. Rav Saadia's Jewish and secular education, is a mystery, except we know that the name of one of his teachers was the Muslim historian Al-Mus'udi. We also know that Rav Saadia corresponded with the philosopher and physician Rabbi Isaac Israeli, a North African Jew whose influence is discernible in Rav Saadia's philosophical system. Just how long he remained in Egypt is not known. However we do know a great deal about his life in Egypt. We understand he married and had children and had a talmudic academy but, for some reason he left his wife and children and his students and travelled to Israel. Perhaps he wanted to spend time gaining what he could from the sages of Tiberias, who viewed themselves as the heirs of the teachings of the Sanhedrin before the destruction of the Temple. His good relationship with the Rabbis of Eretz Yisrael was spoiled when he became involved in a halachic dispute with Rav Ben Meir, an outstanding Talmudist concerning the Jewish calendar. Ben Meir argued that the date on which Passover was to fall in the Jewish year 4681, which corresponded to 921 of the general calendar, should be two days earlier than the date calculated by the Babylonian Scholars. Despite Rav Saadia's strong remonstrations he clung tenaciously to his view. The Geonim reacted by dispatching circulars and proclamations to all Jewish communities warning them against accepting Ben Meir's calendar. Nonetheless most Palestinian and Babylonian communities accepted Ben Meir's calendar in celebrating Passover two days earlier. A schism threatened to divide Jewry if there was no uniformity in the calendar and no acknowledged authority to fix it. No longer would Jews celebrate the Festivals the same days. Keenly aware of this danger, Rav Saadia, upon the request of the Babylonian sages, wrote (in 922) the Sefer Hazikaron (The Book of Memory) in which he refuted Rav Ben Meir so effectively, making use of outstanding grasp of astronomy and mathematics, that nothing more was heard of the latter's claims. This important work is no longer extant, only a fragment

has been discovered. However it is thanks to Rav Saadia that the Jewish Calendar in its present form is universally accepted by Jews all over the world.

After Rav Saadia's relationship with the rabbinat of Israel soured he emigrated to Babylonia. Rav Saadia impressed greatly the authorities in Baghdad, so much so that they appointed him as head of the Rabbinical Academy of Pumbeditha. This position became vacant after the death of Rav Yehudah Gaon. His later years were spend in Babylonia as head of the Rabbinical Academy of Sura. His appointment was unprecedented. Prior to that, only Babylonian rabbis had headed rabbinical academies in Babylonia.

.../to be continued next week

THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL

Absalom's rebellion was carefully staged. He acts the demagogue (chapter 15) as a 'self appointed' judge, persuading people to follow him - he stole their hearts (verse 6). He sought his father's permission to go to Hebron to fulfill a vow he had made in Geshur. Hebron was the heartland of David's initial support; by going there, Absalom intended to negate that support. It appears there was a permitted bamah (a place for sacrifice, a High Place which in other contexts may refer to idolatrous worship) there and thus he would be able to carry out his sacrificial vow. The Gemara (Temurah 14b) expresses the view that he went to Hebron to obtain the sheep for sacrifice from there.

He then advised his fellow conspirators throughout the land to acclaim him as king in Hebron (as was David). He also summoned Ahitophel, David's counsellor and teacher, to join the conspiracy. David learned of the conspiracy and fled from Jerusalem with his body-guard and immediate followers, including his loyal servant Ittai. It was during this fight that David composed Psalm 3, according to its heading. The king's ten concubines (to whom David had given kiddushin) were left behind to look after the palace. Zadok the Priest brought the Ark with him to David, now on the other side of the Kidron valley, east of Jerusalem. David ordered him to return to Jerusalem with his sons. He also ordered his loyal follower Hushai to return, after he had come to David, in order to counter any plans of Ahitophel. Thus David had informants in the city to keep him abreast of events, while he continued his flight. Ziba, steward to Mephiboshet, Saul's son, provided provisions, and spun him a yarn that Mephiboshet was hoping to ascend the throne. David accepts the story, but at a later date has some difficulties with Ziba (chapter 19).

.../to be continued next week

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SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO PARSHAS VAYISHLACH

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week.
For final rulings, consult your Rav.

Therefore the children of Israel are not to eat the Gid Hanashe... (32:33)

Non-Kosher Gifts to a Non-Jew

QUESTION: Is it permitted to buy a non-kosher item in order to give to a non-Jew as a gift?

DISCUSSION: One may not profit from non-kosher items. Buying or selling non-kosher items for profit is prohibited(1). Based on the Talmudic principle that "a gift is like a sale," the Poskim(2) agree that giving a non-kosher gift to non-Jew is also prohibited. The rationale is that gift giving usually serves as a form of payment. A Jew would not give a non-Jew a gift unless the Jew felt indebted to the non-Jew. Since he is "paying" back that favor with a gift, it is considered as if the Jew has profited from a non-kosher item, which is prohibited. There are, however, several important points to remember:

Only non-kosher items which are prohibited by the Torah are forbidden to profit from. Items which are prohibited only M'iderbanon are not included in this prohibition.

Kosher wine which is rendered Stam Yeinom may not be given as a gift.

Items which are prohibited because they contain blood or non-kosher fat, although forbidden Min Ha'torah, are permitted to profit from.

Food items which are designed for animal use, although they are edible by humans, are not included in this prohibition and may be given as a gift.

If one already has a non-kosher item in his possession, e.g. he received it free or as a gift, he may give it to a non-Jew as a

gift.

A pet may be given as a gift.

Two of Jacob's sons, Shimon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each man took his sword... (34:25). Shimon and Levi were 13 years old at the time, that is why they are called 'man' (Rashi Nazir 29b).

Bas Mitzvah Celebration

QUESTION: Is it permitted to celebrate a Bas Mitzvah in a Shul?

DISCUSSION: There are no early sources in Chazal or Poskim for the celebration of a Bas Mitzvah. Indeed, some Poskim consider the practice as a non-Jewish custom and prohibit it completely(3). Other Poskim, however, are more lenient. While clearly not recommending the practice, they do not prohibit it. In their view it is considered like any other birthday party and, therefore, not a Seudas Mitzvah(4). There are other Poskim who consider a Bas Mitzvah as a Seudas Mitzva and recommend it, if the purpose is to strengthen the girl's commitment to Torah and Mitzvos(5). All Poskim, however, agree that it should not be celebrated in a Shul(6).

What is the difference between a Bar Mitzvah and a

Bas Mitzvah?

Why is a Bar Mitzvah celebration considered a Seudas Mitzvah while a Bas Mitzvah is not?

Horav Moshe Feinstein(7) explains the distinction in

the following manner. When a boy becomes Bar Mitzvah, there is a recognizable change between his status before the Bar Mitzvah and after. He is now a full-fledged member of the congregation and can be counted in a Minyan and a Mezuman. This marked change requires a celebration and a Seudas Mitzvah. A girl, however, undergoes no apparent change. Outwardly, she has the same status as before her Bas Mitzvah. No celebration, therefore, is warranted or required.

Indeed, since a girl's change is more covert, her happiness is celebrated inwardly, as a private happening. A public celebration, however, is not called for.

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FOOTNOTES:

- 1 YD 117. Some hold the prohibition is Min Hatorah while others consider it a M'iderabonon.
- 2 Shach, Pri Chadash and Pri Tohar YD 117:3. See Kaf Hachaim 117:28 for further references.
- 3 Harav Aharon Walkin in Zkan Aharon 1:6.
- 4 Igros Moshe OC 1:104.
- 5 Sridei Eish 3:93; Yechave Daas 2:29.
- 6 Igros Moshe and Sridei Eish (ibid).
- 7 Igros Moshe OC 2:97.

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Editor : Zev S. Itzkowitz

Dvar Torah of the Week

"Jacob came whole (Shaleim) to the city of Shechem in the land of Canaan, on his way from Padan Aram. He set up camp in view of the city." (Genesis 33:18)

In what way did Jacob come through whole? Jacob had just been through some very harrowing experiences. He had lived by Laban the trickster for twenty years, he had fought an angel and was injured, and he had encountered his brother Esau. Nevertheless, when Jacob arrived at Shechem, he was whole: his injury had healed, he was financially sound, and his spiritual well-being was still intact. It was as if he had been through the lion's den and had emerged unscathed (Rashi).

Another possibility is that until Jacob came to Shechem he was always afraid of Esau. Jacob had traveled from Padan Aram to Canaan. His route, even at areas such as Succoth, made him vulnerable, for he had passed near Esau's territory. Now that he had reached Canaan he was safe - either his father's proximity would discourage Esau from attacking, or, if not, the other inhabitants of Canaan would come to his aid (Ramban).

Alternatively, the Torah isn't telling us that Jacob came through whole. Rather, Jacob arrived at a city in Canaan named Shaleim. This city was part of the area of Canaan in which Chamor, the father of Shechem, ruled. It was only after the episode of Dinah's rape and the city's subsequent destruction that the city was named Shechem - in testimony to the might of Jacob's children (Rashbam).

Mussar of the Week

"Esau said: 'I have a lot [of possessions]. What's yours should be yours.'
Jacob replied: '... Hashem has been kind to me, for I have everything.'
[Jacob thus] urged him and [Esau finally] took it." (Genesis 33:9-11)

Esau claimed that he had a lot of wealth. Jacob, on the other hand, claimed that Hashem had given him everything. If Jacob clearly did not own everything, how could he make such a claim? Wicked people, even though they own everything in the world, still feel that they are missing something - if they have one hundred million dollars, they crave to have two hundred million. Righteous people, however, are the exact opposite. Even a minute number of possessions satisfies and heartens them - it is as if they have everything (Keli Yakar).

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DvarTorah VaYishlach

The posuk says (Genesis 33) "And Yaakov traveled to Succos built a house for himself there and he made sheds, Succos, for his cattle. Therefore he called the name of the city Succos."

This posuk, which seems to be just relating an insignificant detail in the life of Yaakov, poses many questions which in turn will enlighten and expand our understanding of the Torah.

First of all one may ask, Why did Yaakov build a house for himself? Yaakov was just traveling back to Be'er Sheva to be with his father. A tent would have sufficed. In fact we do not find that Yaakov built himself a special dwelling in the rest of his travels, (Machanaim, Shchem, etc.) Secondly, why mention that he built special corrals, or sheds for his sheep, again something that is not mentioned in any of his other travels. And the most perplexing of all is that he chose to name the place "Succos" to remember the sheds built for the cattle! Why did he not call the place "Bayis" to commemorate the house he built there?

The final question, and the one that will lead us to an answer is: Everything our forefathers did was not done without purpose or thought. We have a rule that the actions of the fathers are a "sign" for their children. Therefore what does this section foretell for Yaakov's children and why did he go to this city?

When our forefathers travelled the land of Israel they foresaw future events that will occur in certain areas. The Torah tells us that they took the appropriate actions for the purpose of "assisting" their descendent's.

On further examination one will see that Yaakov built his "Sheds" For his sheep where his children eventually built corrals for their

cattle. We know that the children of Gad took their portion in Israel in "Ever HaYarden", the other side of the Jordan river, across the river from the "Mainland" of Israel. The Posukim in Joshua list the cities in the portion of each tribe and show that Gad had the city of "Succos" (Joshua 13).

Yaakov foresaw that his children would inherit this portion of land. Therefore even though he was travelling to Yitzchock he saw fit to precede this event by building a house here, showing ownership of the land to pre-establish a "settlement" in this land, In this way he showed that this land was his just as the rest of the land of Kenaan was to be his.

Yaakov felt that since this portion of land is surrounded by enemy territories it would not be enough just to build a tent and live there. He felt compelled to build a more permanent structure to fully establish himself as a resident and owner of land. It was even more incumbent upon Yaakov to establish a strong presence there since the children of Reuvain and Gad had to leave their familie's there while they travelled with the rest of the Jews to help conquer the rest of the land of Israel. They definitely needed strong and safe shelter. This was symbolized by Yaakov's building of a house. A permanent and safe structure. This was done specifically in the portion given to Gad, because Gad's portion was relatively more spread out and bordered enemy lands. This required the extra protection afforded by Yaakov's actions.

This is also the reason the Torah tells us that Yaakov built Succos for his sheep in this place. The Torah tells us (Numbers 32) that the children of Reuvain and Gad had an abundance of cattle. They said to Moshe, "This is a land fitting for livestock and your servants own much livestock. Please allow us to take our portion in Israel here." Moshe told them to build corrals for their sheep and houses for their families and assist the rest of the Jews to inherit Israel "proper". Therefore, Yaakov built the sheds for his sheep and named the area SUCCOS specifically because of the sheds he made for the sheep, to indicate that this land was good for sheep and this was going to be the reason his children would request this land as their portion in Israel. The building of the sheds were also to establish a safe haven for cattle in the future, since, when the children of Reuvain and Gad would go off to war they were going to build corrals for their sheep, Yaakov established this "Shemira", safe haven, by his building of the sheds.

This also explains why, even though Reuvain is the "older" tribe The Torah, when discussing the tribes that took their portion in "Ever Hayarden", always refers to the children of Gad and the children of Reuvain. Since Yaakov laid the spiritual groundwork with his actions in the portion of Gad therefore they are mentioned first.

Note: This Vort was taken from the SEFER NIFLAOS MITORAS HASHEM YISBORACH Perek 12.

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PARSHAT VAYISHLACH
SICHA OF HARAV AMITAL SHLIT" A

(Summarized by David Tai)

WHAT YAAKOV TOLD ESAV

"And I have oxen and donkeys... - 'oxen' refers to Yosef, as it is written: 'the firstling of his herd, grandeur is his' (bekhor shoro hadar lo) (Devarim 33); 'donkeys' refers to Yissakhar, as it is written: 'Yissakhar is a strong ass' (Yissakhar hamor garem) (Bereishit 49); 'sheep' refers to Israel, as it is written: 'But you my flock, the flock of my pasture...' (Yehezkel 34); 'and servants' refers to David, as it is written: 'I am Your servant, son of Your handmaiden' (Tehillim 115); 'and maidservants' refers to Avigayil..." (Bereishit Rabba 75:12)

Our Sages taught: "'oxen' refers to the anointed one of war... 'donkeys' refers to Melekh HaMashiach."
(ibid. 7)

What the midrash seems to be saying is a far cry from the 'pshat' of the text. What does the midrash mean, and what is the real significance of Yaakov's statement, "I have oxen and donkeys, sheep and servants and maidservants...?"

This midrash needs to be understood in light of another midrash which appears later in the parasha:

"Let my lord, I pray you, pass over before his servant, and I shall lead on slowly, according to the pace of the cattle that goes before me and the children, until I come to my lord to Se'ir.' - When will he come? In the days

of Mashiach, as it is written, "And the saviors will ascend to Har Tzion to judge the mountain of Esav..." (ibid. 78;17)

When Yaakov tells Esav that he is on his way to meet him at Se'ir, he isn't referring to the immediate present. Yaakov doesn't mean to go right now to Se'ir; he is referring rather to acharit ha-yamim, when the time comes and the hour is right, and then "the saviors will go up to Har Tzion...". Until then, Yaakov says, "I shall lead on slowly" - there is no need to hurry.

We learn (Bereishit 36:31), "These are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned a king over the children of Israel" - there were eight of them, and Yaakov established (his own) and cancelled the kingship of Esav in their days" (Rashi).

Yaakov has an historical perspective. He doesn't live for the moment; rather, with every action he behaves in light of the perspective of the future - there is no need to hurry now, because the kings of Israel will have their hour after the kings of Esav, and hence "let my Lord, I pray you, pass on before his servant". This, then, is the deeper significance of Chazal's words in their explanation of the pasuk, "I have oxen and donkeys, sheep, servants and maidservants..."

Yaakov shows Esav what he has achieved, what is destined to develop from him and where his strength lies - in Melekh HaMashiach, in the anointed one of war, in Yosef and Yissakhar.

Chazal are teaching us that we should not view this as a private battle between Yaakov the man and Esav the man, but rather between two nations: the nation of Yaakov - Israel, and the nation of Esav - Edom.

This battle will continue through the years and throughout the generations, and Chazal point out to us the message behind Yaakov's strategy - in dealing with his challenges his strategy isn't merely pragmatic, based on the contemporary reality, but rather historic and futuristic: what will the ramifications of my present actions be for Israel?

The expression "ma'aseh avot siman la-banim" is well known, but in light of the above its meaning can be sharpened: we are not referring simply to a pattern or sign, signifying that what happened to our forefathers will also happen to us. There is a profound significance here - the forefathers knew that they were going to found a nation, and their sense of mission and responsibility in each and every action was enormous. There is no doubt that when Yaakov went out to engage in a battle against Esav, he weighed his future strength, comparing his descendants and his contribution to the world with those of Esav. Only against the background of such a view could he be confident in the justice of his way and his actions. He would certainly survive and be saved, for he was destined to bring Yissakhar, Yosef and Melekh HaMashiach to the world!

A lesson for our daily lives may be learned from this. During our many years of exile, Am Yisrael felt no sense of responsibility towards our history. With the establishment of the State, however, it becomes our obligation and responsibility to understand the historical significance of every step we take. In the course of our contemporary lives we determine the future of the nation and the State!

(Originally delivered Shabbat Parshat Vayishlach 5750.
Translated by Karen Fish.)

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PARSHAT VAYISHLACH

by Menachem Leibtag

THIS WEEK'S PARSHA SHIUR IS DEDICATED IN MEMORY OF YISSACHAR DOV SHMUEL BEN YAKOV YEHUDA (BERNARD) ILLOWAY.

PARSHAT VA'YISHLACH

Yaakov's name change to Yisrael is, in essence, quite different from the name changes of Avram to Avraham or Sarai to Sarah. In those instances, a letter was simply changed or added, and the new name completely replaced the old name. In contrast, 'Yisrael' constitutes a totally new name and serves as an alternative to 'Yaakov' rather than its replacement. This week's shiur discusses the significance of this name change in relationship to both the rivalry between Yaakov and Eisav and the theme of "bchira" which we have been following throughout Sefer Breishit.

BACKGROUND (& REVIEW)

Thus far, in our shiurim on Sefer Breishit, we have discussed the process of "bchira", the selection and development of God's special nation. The Divine blessing of "zera va'aretz" emerged as the key indicator that a certain person was indeed chosen. This process began with the "bchira" of Avraham and continued with the "bchira" of Yitzchak. As we explained in last week's shiur, there must be a point at which this selection process ends, i.e. with someone whose entire offspring will remain chosen.

Yitzchak originally assumed that his "bchira" marked the end of this process and considered both of his children chosen. Consequently, he designated future family responsibilities according to his children's characteristics. Eisav, the "ish sadeh", was destined to take the leadership in worldly matters, while Yaakov, the "ish tam", would provide the leadership in the 'spiritual' realm.

After Rivka's intervention in the incident of the stolen blessing, Yitzchak finally realized that the "bchira" process needed to continue for yet another generation, and that Yaakov should become the chosen son. Therefore, before Yaakov left for Padan Aram, Yitzchak blessed him that God ("b'shem Kel Shaddai") should bestow on him the "bchira", i.e. "birkat Avraham" (28:1-5). Afterward, when Yaakov fled from home, God ("b'shem Havaya"), reassured him at Bet El (28:13) that despite his exile, he would indeed return and become the chosen son.

FROM YAAKOV --> YISRAEL

Parshat Va'yishlach details various key events that take place as Yaakov finally returns to Eretz Canaan, including two instances in which he receives his new name - Yisrael:

- 1) After his struggle with the "mal'ach" (angel), prior to his confrontation with Eisav (32:24-30);
- 2) During God's revelation to him at Bet El (35:9-13).

An examination of these two sources and their contexts will enable us to understand more fully the significance of this name change.

We will begin with the second source, as it establishes the connection between the name Yisrael and the "bchira" process.

THE RETURN TO BET EL

God's "hitgalut" to Yaakov at Bet El marks the prophetic highlight of his return to Eretz Canaan. Bet El was not only the focal point of Avraham's "aliyah", it was also the site where

Yaakov received his first "hitgalut" and Divine assurance of his "bchira". Therefore, God's message to him during this revelation is thematically significant.

God summons Yaakov to Bet El in order to change his name to 'Yisrael' and to confirm his "bchira":

"And God appeared again to Yaakov on his arrival from Padan Aram, and blessed him: You whose name is Yaakov, shall be called Yaakov no more, but YISRAEL shall be YOUR NAME. Thus He named him Yisrael and God said to him: I am KEL SHADDAI, be fertile and increase... The LAND that I have given to Avraham and Yitzchak I give to YOU and to YOUR OFFSPRING to come... (35:9-16)

The fact that this pivotal "hitgalut" to Yaakov includes both his name change to Yisrael AND the formal confirmation of his "bchira" (the blessing of "zera va'aretz") suggests a thematic connection between this name change and the CONCLUSION of the "bchira" process. Recall that the addition of a letter to Avraham's name marked the beginning of the "bchira" process and served as the 'spiritual preparation' for Yitzchak's conception (see 17:21). Now that the 'formative' stage which began with the selection of Avraham and continued with the rejection of Lot, Yishmael, and Eisav has ended, an entirely new name - Yisrael - may indicate the conclusion of that process. From this point on, all of Yaakov's offspring are to be considered part of the chosen family; those children are to become the forerunners of God's special nation - Am Yisrael.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

So far, we have explained the significance of receiving an additional name from God. Now, we must explain why specifically this name 'Yisrael' was given. To do so, we must return to the beginning of the Parsha and examine the story wherein Yaakov first received the name of 'Yisrael', after emerging victorious from his struggle with the "mal'ach".

[Note, for the sake of clarity, we will refer to the "ish" (person) with whom Yaakov struggled as a "mal'ach" - a Divine angel. See further *iyun* section.]

The background of events which lead up to this struggle will help us appreciate its significance. Note the order of events that take place:

1. Yitzchak plans to bless Eisav with prosperity and power.
2. Yaakov 'steals' Eisav's bracha.
3. Yaakov runs away to Padan Aram, returning some 20 years later.
4. Yaakov prepares for his confrontation with Eisav.

- [His plan shows total subjugation to his brother]
5. God sends a "mal'ach" to confront Yaakov.
 6. Yaakov meets Eisav, bowing to him seven times beforehand.
 7. Eisav proceeds to Seir; Yaakov to Eretz Canaan.

Recall our explanation of Yitzchak's original intention to bless both of his sons. Yitzchak understood that in order to establish a nation, it was necessary to possess the traits of an "ish sadeh" - the qualities necessary to provide leadership in worldly matters. During his youth, Yaakov, the "ish tam", lacked this character. Now that it had been determined that Yaakov was to be the only chosen son, it became necessary that he develop

those traits.

Yaakov's dealings with Eisav and Lavan were characterized by his need to employ trickery to acquire what was rightly his. Even as he confronts Eisav upon his return to Eretz Canaan, he devises various strategies to ensure his survival, yet he remains unable to frontally challenge his brother. During his life, Yaakov has become the expert at survival, but lacks experience in 'frontal combat', a trait necessary to establish a nation.

In the beginning of this week's Parsha, in preparation for his confrontation with Eisav, Yaakov does everything possible to show his brother that, in reality, he never received the blessing of prosperity and power which he had tried to steal. By bowing down to Eisav, Yaakov wishes to show his brother that the 'stolen blessing' of power and dominion over his brother ("hevei gvir l'achecha, yishtachavu l'cha bnei iy'mecha...27:29) was indeed awarded to Eisav. 'King Eisav' is marching with 400 men 'running in front of him', while 'Servant Yaakov' and his entire family plan to bow down to him, at the same time offering gifts. Ironically, Yaakov is using trickery once again, this time to show his brother that his original trickery used to 'steal' the brachot was meaningless.

REALISM OR LAZINESS

It is precisely at this point that Yaakov's struggle with the mal'ach takes place; AFTER his preparation to bow down to Eisav, but BEFORE the actual confrontation. This order of events suggests a thematic relationship between this struggle and that confrontation.

A major controversy exists among the commentators as to whether Yaakov was correct in this total subjugation to his brother. Some hold that Yaakov should have openly confronted his brother while putting his total faith in God, while others maintain that due to the circumstances, his timid strategy was appropriate [this controversy continues until this very day].

Regardless of this controversy and the 'political correctness' of his actions, the situation remains that Yaakov is unable to openly confront Eisav. Nevertheless, God finds it necessary that Yaakov prove himself capable of fighting should such a situation arise in the future. Yaakov must now demonstrate that his subjugation to Eisav stems from political realism rather than spiritual laziness. He must prove that, when necessary, he will be capable of fighting. [Sooner or later, confrontations with the likes of Eisav will be encountered when establishing a nation.]

For this reason, before he meets Eisav, God tests Yaakov's potential to engage in battle with his enemy. Yaakov finds this struggle with the "mal'ach" difficult, for he is untrained; the contest continues all night until the 'break of dawn'. [Possibly, night represents "galut"; 'dawn', redemption. See Ramban, *al atar*.] Although wounded and limping, Yaakov emerges victorious from this confrontation, thus earning his new name:

"Your name shall no longer be Yaakov, but Yisrael, for you have FOUGHT with beings divine ("elokim") and human ("anashim") and TRIUMPHED". (32:29)

Thus, the name Yisrael, reflects the character of one triumphant in battle, be it a struggle of divine nature or

mundane. Yaakov has earned this new name which reflects his capability to engage head on in battle. In order to become a nation, this trait - represented by the name 'Yisrael' - is crucial.

WHY TWICE?

Yaakov's earning this name from the "mal'ach" is not in itself sufficient. It must later be confirmed by God, together with his "bchira", at Bet El (the site where the "bchira" was first promised). Thus, it appears as though the blessings which Yaakov received throughout that entire episode of his trickery must now be bestowed upon him properly. First, God names Yaakov - 'Yisrael', symbolizing the traits of worldly leadership (35:9-10). Afterward God confirms the blessing which Yitzchak had given him (28:1-4).

Note the obvious parallel between these two blessings:

FROM YITZCHAK, BEFORE DEPARTING ARRIVING	FROM GOD, UPON
---	----------------

(28:3-4) [Go to Padan Aram...] May "Kel Shaddai" bless you, make you fertile and multiply, so you become an assembly of peoples. May He grant you the - blessing of Avraham to you and your offspring that you may possess the Land...	(35:11-12) [...Yisrael shall be your name] I am "Kel Shaddai": Be fertile and multiply, An assembly of nations shall descend from you... The Land that I gave Avraham... ... to you and to your offspring to come, I assign the Land.
--	---

This comparison clearly shows that God's blessing to Yaakov at Bet El is a precise confirmation of Yitzchak's blessing to him after the incident of the stolen brachot. The name of Yisrael marks the conclusion of the "bchira" process and defines the character of God's special nation.

THE FUTURE

Although Yaakov's worldly traits may lie dormant for several generations, it must be inherent to his character before his "bchira" receives final Divine confirmation. [Later, Yaakov will bless his two most able sons, Yehudah and Yosef, with the leadership in this realm (49:8-26).]

Throughout the rest of Chumash, the name Yaakov interchanges with Yisrael. This suggests that each name reflects a different aspect of his character. There are times when 'Am Yisrael' must act as Yaakov, the "ish tam", and there are times when the more active and nationalistic characteristics of Yisrael must be employed. Ultimately, as the prophet Ovadyah proclaims, the day will come when:

"Liberators shall march up on Har Zion to wreak judgement on Har EISAV; and the KINGDOM shall be that of GOD." (1:21)

Based on this understanding of the significance of the special name of Yisrael, one could suggest a reason for the necessity of the "bchira" process to continue one generation past Yitzchak. In other words, why was it necessary for Eisav to be rejected, given the importance of his worldly traits?

Our original assumption, that both the traits of an "ish

sadeh" and an "ish tam" are necessary in order to establish a nation, remains correct. Nevertheless, it is important that they are not perceived as equally important. The fundamental character of Am Yisrael must be that of an "ish tam" (Yaakov). Only once that characteristic becomes rooted, the traits of an "ish sadeh" can be added. Had Eisav been included in 'Am Yisrael', our perception of the relative importance of an "ish sadeh" may have become distorted. A disproportionate emphasis on 'nationalism' and strength - despite their importance - would have tainted mankind's perception of God's special nation.

In the formative stage of our national development, our outward appearance as 'Yisrael' must stem from our inner character as 'Yaakov'. We must first speak with the 'voice of Yaakov' (see Rashi 27:22), only then may we don the 'hands of Eisav'.

shabbat shalom
menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. Chazal tell us that the "mal'ach" was the "sar shel Eisav" - Eisav's guardian angel.

1. Explain this Midrash, based on the above shiur.
2. If this "ish" was actually a "mal'ach", why do you think the Torah insists on referring to him as an "ish"? [Note the use of "ish" in Shmot perek bet.]
3. Why do you think there is significance in the fact that Yaakov was wounded in this encounter?

Why must we remember this encounter whenever we eat meat (mitzvat gid-ha'nashe)?

[Could this relate back to the traits of an "ish sadeh"?)

4. Explain the argument between Yaakov and his sons regarding their militant reaction to the act of Chamor ben Shchem in relation to the main point of the above shiur.

B. There is a Midrash that tells us 'Yaakov avinu lo meyt' - Yaakov never died.

1. Relate this Midrash to the fact that the "bchira" process concludes with Yaakov, and that all of his offspring have been chosen.
2. Relate this also to 49:33 in comparison to 35:29 and 25:8.

C. Although Rachel dies prematurely, and Reuven behaves in an unfitting manner, the unit which began with "toldot Yitzchak" (25:19) now concludes with:

"And the sons of Yaakov remained twelve in number ..." (35:23-29)

1. Explain the structure of the finale of this unit based on the above shiur.

D. TOLDOT EISAV

Yitzchak was chosen. Therefore, we need to follow the toldot of Eisav, just as we needed to follow the toldot of Yishmael & Lot.

1. Based on this assumption, explain perek 36.
2. Based on the above shiur, why do you think there is an

emphasis on the kings who ruled in Edom before a king ruled over Bnei Yisrael (see 36:31)!

E. We mentioned in earlier shiurim the thematic similarity between Lot leaving Avraham for the 'easy life' (lack of will to face a spiritual challenge) in "kikar ha'yarden" to Esav's attitude of life of "hinei anochi holech lamut v'laama zeh li bchora".

1. Note 36:6-7 - the reason why Esav leaves Eretz Canaan, not enough room for both Yaakov and Esav to keep their sheep and cattle! (Sounds familiar? See Breishit perek 13.)

Try to explain this reason for Eisav's departure to Seir, in relation to the main points of the above shiur and the "bchira" process.

F. BRIT MILAH & GOD'S BLESSING TO YAAKOV

*** Note: the following questions are quite complex, but relate to some very basic issues. In this shiur, we will deal with this topic and the reason why Yaakov never completely fulfilled his vow, in next year's shiur, "bli neder". In the 'meantime', these questions should point you in a certain direction. "B'hatzlacha".***

A quick analysis of God's final blessing to Yaakov at Bet El (35:9-15) immediately shows that it is reflective of Brit Milah (Breishit perek 17). The name of Kel Shaddai; pru u'rvu; khal goyim & mlachim.; shem Elokim; and the concept of l'hiyot l'cha l'Elokim can all be found at Brit Milah.

1. Note that the bracha of Brit Milah which began in perek 17 with Kel Shaddai telling Avraham "hit'ha'leych l'fa'nei - v'heyeh TAMIM" is being given now to Yaakov - the ISH TAM.

Try to explain the significance of this.

2. Compare carefully Yitzchak's bracha to Yaakov before he departs to Padan Aram (28:3-4) to God's blessing of Yaakov at Bet El (35:9-13)! Note that they are almost identical.

Relate this to the last two shiurim.

3. Note that God's name bshem Havaya does not appear unto Yaakov from the time that he arrives in Eretz Canaan!

Note also God's promise to Yaakov at Bet El, before he left to Padan Aram, (28:13-15) which was given bshem Havaya.

Are any aspects of that "bracha" repeated in Bet El when Yaakov returned? If so, which?

4. Note the single use by Yaakov of shem Havaya in his prayer prior to his confrontation with Eisav (32:9-12). What promise does he remind God of that time? Where is the source of that promise.

Relate to the relationship (bshem Havaya) between Brit Bein HaBtarim, the bracha at the Akeida, and this tfila. Note - "kochvei ha'shamayim" and "asher lo yisafer m'rov".

How does this relate to the nationalistic aspect of these revelations, i.e. the concept of "yerushat ha'aretz".

5. Yaakov made a neder at Bet El. Upon his return, which part of that neder did he fulfill, and which part was left unfulfilled.

Relate to 35:14-15, note Hashem's name in this perek!

Can this explain why Yaakov did not build a Beit Elokim?

6. Read the Ramban on Breishit 12:8. He explains the significance of building a mizbayach and calling out bshem Havaya. The Ramban also explains why Avraham and Yitzchak did this, while Yaakov did not. Relate the Ramban's explanation to the above shiur.

7. Recall the previous shiur on the difference between Brit Bein HaBtarim (shem Havaya) and Brit Milah (shem Elokim and Kel Shaddai). Note the nationalistic aspect of Brit Bein HaBtarim, and that it was to be fulfilled only after 4 generations and/or four hundred years.

Use this background to explain why shem Havaya does not appear to Yaakov, and why the language of Brit Milah is emphasized instead.

Use this to suggest a possible explanation of why Yaakov is passive in his confrontation with Eisav at this time.

8. Could one consider from a nationalistic perspective that even though Yaakov returned from Galut Aram, his stay in Eretz Canaan was only a short stopover on his way down to Galut Mitzraim?

Relate this to "arami oved avi, va'yered mitzraim..." (Dvarim 36:3-10). Compare the language there to Brit Bein HaBtarim!

Why do Chazal interpret this pasuk as referring to Yaakov? Could the fact that Yaakov understood that the time for the fulfillment of Brit Bein HaBtarim had not yet come, explain his timid behavior when he confronts Eisav?

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To participate in a weekly discussion group on this shiur, moderated by the instructor, please subscribe to YHE-PAR.D as described above. For direct questions or comments to Menachem Leibtag, please send email to ML@etzion.org.il.

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Date: 12/7/95 12:39pm
Subject: Vayishlach

MESSAGE FROM THE HAFTORAH
PARSHAS VAYISHLACH

Ovadhah

This week's haftorah reveals to us the true nature of Eisav and his descendent Edom and displays their two-sided character. It teaches us to recognize Eisav's perpetual hatred for Yisroel and never to trust in his friendship. Although there may be moments when Eisav displays true brotherhood we should be wary of these situations. The haftorah warns us to remember the hatred Eisav harbors and never to establish any close association with him.

The haftorah opens with a moving description of a plot acted out against Edom, descendents of Eisav. The prophet Ovadhah says, "How was Eisav pillaged, his hidden treasures sought out? To the borders they sent you (Eisav), all of your allies enticed you: they were (then) capable of getting at you." These passages refer to a historic moment when Edom's surrounding allies rushed to his assistance in a war he waged against a powerful neighbor.

They accompanied Edom all the way to his borders and then abandoned him, leaving his entire country unprotected. They then returned inside his country and invaded the entire Edom, now in its most vulnerable state. The prophet draws our attention to this peculiar episode to demonstrate the unique quality of Edom's "brotherhood". Although Edom appeared to be a true ally this relationship was only external and when the opportunity presented itself he would typically turn against his "friends". This time, his allies gave him a taste of his own medicine and, after luring Edom into war, turned on him and pillaged his entire country.

This two sided nature was the undertone of our Jewish nation's sad experience throughout the Roman Empire, largely composed of the descendents of Eisav. The prophet Ovadhah focuses on one specific aspect of this era, the role that the Edomites played in the destruction of the second Temple. Ovadhah says, "On the day that the nations took the Jews captive, entered the Jewish gates and cast lots over Yerushalayim, you were also amongst them." In truth, this war belonged to the Romans but Edom could not stand idly by and therefore gladly participated in destroying the walls of the Bais Hamikdash. The Malbim reminds us that these descendents of Edom were insincere Jewish converts accepted during the reign of Herod. They originally appeared to be sincere and embraced the Jewish people and its religion. But, as usual, Edom was not be trusted and when the Jews were down these alleged converts turned against their Jewish "brethren" and readily assisted in destroying them.

This hidden hatred expressed itself even in the early Babylonian exile when Eisav's descendents offered their services to drive the final nails into the Jewish coffin. The Prophet Ovadhah says, "And don't stand by the crossroads to finish off his (Yaakov's) refugees." The Yalkut Shimoni explains that this passage refers to the cunning strategy of Edom during our early exile. They would station themselves a short distance behind the

Babylonian army and wait in ambush for the Jewish refugees. They reasoned, "If the Jews win we'll say we're here to help them and if the Babylonians win we'll help them and kill the remaining Jews." Again we are reminded of the unique "brotherhood" of Edom. They passed for true brothers awaiting to help the Jews in their time of distress but in truth this disguise provided them the perfect opportunity of erasing any trace of the Jewish people, should the situation arise.

Edom's pattern of "brotherhood" traces itself all the way back to Edom's predecessor Eisav. In this week's sedra we find Eisav running towards his brother Yaakov to embrace him. Eisav was Yaakov's archenemy from birth but now he had finally experienced a change of attitude and feeling. The Torah tells us (Bereishis 32:4) that in response to an elaborate gift of friendship, Eisav ran to this brother and embraced him, fell on his neck and "kissed" him. However, Chazal note the peculiar manner in which the word "kissed" appears in the Torah and explain that Eisav did not truly intend to kiss his brother. He actually attempted to bite him but was unsuccessful in his endeavor. His perpetual hatred was so deep that even in this moment of friendship Eisav could not contain his inner feelings and felt compelled to express them. Rashi (ad loc) quotes the classic statement of Rav Shimon Bar Yochai who reminds us, "It is a set principle that Eisav hates Yaakov." He warns us never to lose sight of Eisav's inner hatred and even when gestures of "friendship" are displayed never to forget the deep hatred that lies under the surface. Eisav, now Edom will never be our real friend and we must therefore never permit him any close association with us.

by Rabbi Dovid Siegel, Rosh Kollel (Dean), Kollel Toras Chesed of Skokie
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- "RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vayishlach -

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: Tape # 33, Nitel Nacht Good Shabbos!

Parshas Vayishlach:

What's In a Lack of a Name?

Following the struggle with the Angel of Esav, we find that Yaakov refuses to release the Angel until he receives a blessing. The Angel asks Yaakov his name and then changes it from Yaakov to Yisroel. Yaakov then asks the Angel for his name and the Angel responds, "Why do you ask my name?" [Bereshis 32:28-30].

Rav Leib Chasman interprets these verses as follows: Chaza"l tell us that a name embodies the definition of a person or a being (as we find when Adam gave names to all creatures). Therefore, when Yaakov Avinu asks the Angel (who our Sages say represents the Evil Inclination, the Yetzer Hara) what his name was, he was really asking what is the definition and the reality of this entity: "What are you all about -- Yetzer Hara?"

The answer was "Why do you ask my name?" meaning -- I can't tell you my reality because I am not a reality. The Yetzer Hara is nothing more than a figment of a person's desires. There is no reality to a passion (ta'avah) -- it is a figment of what a person wants, but that is not something that actually exists.

This can be compared to a person who awakes in the middle of the night and sees shadowy figures on the wall. He thinks perhaps it is a bear, perhaps it is a man... Then he turns the light on and sees that it was nothing... just his imagination.

That, says Rav Leib Chasman is the Yetzer Hara. It is only a figment of a person's desire without any actuality. Since it has no actuality, it has no name. That is why the only answer Yaakov could be given to the question "What's your name?" is that there was no real name.

And He Called the Name of the Place Succoth

The verse says, (33:17) "And Yaakov journeyed to Succoth and he built (for himself) a house and for his cattle he made huts; therefore, he called the name of the place Succoth".

This is seemingly very strange. Why would he call the name of the place for all eternity Succoth, just because he built huts there for his cattle?

We all know that in this world, there is Ruchniyus and there is Gashmiyus - there is the spiritual and physical side of a human being. We know that a person has to put time and effort and strength into preserving his Spirituality (Ruchniyus). To invest time and effort only into strengthening one's Material well-being (Gashmiyus) is a mistake, because the only thing that is truly lasting is Spirituality.

That is what the verse is trying to tell us. Yaakov erected for himself, for what he represented (i.e. -- Ruchniyus) a permanent dwelling (Bayis). To make sure that a person's spirituality and learning and mitzvos remain intact, he has to build a house around them. But for the cattle, the material possessions, all that he felt was necessary was something temporary and flimsy -- Succoth. It is not worth it to put any type of real effort into fleeting and superficial things like cattle. For them he erected only huts.

This lesson was so vital for us to remember that he named the place Succoth. This way all future generations will be reminded and taught that our approach to wealth and to material possessions should only be one of Succoth (that which is temporary and secondary in importance).

I Kept the 613 Commandments... but that's not all...

Rash"i cites the famous Chaza"l on Yaakov's message to Esav (32:5) "I have lived (garti) with Lavan" -- that I have observed the 613 (Taryag) commandments while living with Lavan and have not learned from his wicked actions.

Rav Ruderman ZT"L pointed out that there appears to be a redundancy in this message. If Yaakov has already said he kept the 613 commandments, what does he add by saying he has not learned from Lavan's wicked actions? Is he not repeating himself?

The Rosh Yeshiva said that we see from this Chaza"l that a person can keep the Taryag mitzvos, but he can still have learned from a Lavan. He can keep the entire Torah but his life-style can be that of a Lavan and not of a Yaakov.

What did the Rosh Yeshiva mean? To clarify, I would like to quote from a response by Rabbi Emanuel Feldman to a questionnaire sent out by a Jewish periodical to contemporary rabbinic leaders on the current state of orthodoxy in America.

Rabbi Feldman writes how the Orthodox community in America can be proud of its growth in the last 40 years. While everyone said 30 years ago that Orthodoxy was dead, today we know that the opposite is true. And yet, he says that with the rebirth of Orthodoxy and observance of mitzvos, there may be more "observant" Jews - but not necessarily "religious" Jews.

"Can it be truly said that today's Orthodox individual is any less self indulgent, less hedonistic, less undisciplined than those who do not perform mitzvos? The authors of those crudely worded wedding invitations that condescendingly remind us to dress modestly 'in accordance with Orthodox tradition' frequently forget that Jewish tradition requires modesty not only in sleeve length, but in Viennese Tables, flowers, and other vulgar excesses which mark the typical contemporary Orthodox wedding.

Disagreements within the Torah community are not always models of civility and restraint. Tsnius in dress is not always extended to tsnius in words. Is it quite possible in this day of resurgent Orthodoxy to have a synagogue with a proper mechitza but yet whose noise volume on Shabbos is so high that one cannot hear the reading of the Torah? Is it quite possible in

effect to be a secular Jew with a Yarmulka, to eat Kosher but to think treif, to be fully observant but to adopt the worst attitude and values of the society around us and still claim to be Orthodox? Is it possible to be observant and yet never think about what G-d wants of us, only of what we want from G-d?"

This is what Yaakov Avinu is saying to Esav. I have lived with Lavan, I have kept the 613 mitzvos; but not only that -- in addition, I did not learn from his actions. I, as an observant Jew, am also a religious Jew. My manner and the way I think and what I want out of life have been elevated by my connection to HaShem and Torah.

Personalities:

R. Leib Chasman -- Great Mussar personality of last century; author Ohr Yahel

R. Yaakov Yitzchak Ruderman (1901-1987) -- Rosh Yeshiva and founder (1933) of Ner Israel Rabbinical College; Baltimore, Maryland
Rash"i -- Rabbenu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (1040-1105); Troyes and Worms, France; "Father" of all Bible and Talmud commentaries

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D'var Torah and News from Project Genesis - learn@torah.org
Volume III, Number 10 Vayishlach

Please pray for the speedy healing of
Chaim Moshe ben Malca and Ya'akov Re'uvein Ben Eeta
Esther Miriam Bas Aliza Geula and Nossan ben Pessa Ella

"[Esav] said, 'what is your relationship to this camp that I encountered?' And [Yaakov] said, '[I sent it] in order to find favor in the eyes of my master.' And Esav said, 'I have plenty, my brother; let what you have remain yours.' ... [but Yaakov replied] 'G-d has been kind to me, and I have everything,' and he persisted and [Esav] took." [33:8-9, 11]

Rashi, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, explains that "I have everything" means that Yaakov claimed to have all that he needed. Esav, on the other hand, said "I

have plenty" - bragging that he had far more than his real needs.

The Chofetz Chaim, Rabbi Yisrael Mayer Kagan, notes that we can also read in these expressions two entirely different outlooks on life and money. Esav said "I have plenty," but even a very rich person desires still more: "one who has 100, desires 200." Yaakov, on the other hand, said "I have everything," meaning that he did not feel any need to acquire more. Esav wanted more and more money, while Yaakov was satisfied with what he had.

Based on experiences with Eastern religions, many people think that an emphasis on the spiritual means becoming an ascetic - denying the physical world. Yaakov set out for us the Jewish way: "I have what I need." "Who is rich?" asks the Pirkei Avos, the Sayings of the Fathers. "One who is satisfied with his lot."

Yaakov, in reality, was quite wealthy at the time. Spiritual health does not demand poverty, just a healthy attitude towards money.

There was once a man who came to see a psychiatrist. "Why are you here?" asked the doctor.
"I don't really know," replied the man. "My family insists that I have a problem."
"So, what's the problem?"
"I love pancakes," explained the patient.
"But what's wrong with that? I also like pancakes a great deal!"
"Really, doc? Then you must come to visit! I have 9,000 pancakes in my attic!"

On the other hand, a person does not need to be wealthy in order to have the wrong attitude. A person is supposed to make "normal efforts" to earn a living - but not go to extremes, or go into debt over luxuries.

In an on-line financial forum, one writer presented his dilemma: over the past two years, he had managed to reduce his debt a great deal, but there was still \$6,000 against his car, financed at 12%. It was clear that each \$1,000 was being repaid with difficulty. Now he had two choices: to pay off the debt quickly... or spend \$4,000 on his fiancée's engagement ring.

This is not to say that an \$8,000 ring is inherently bad (he was able to purchase at half the retail cost). It should, however, be out of the question for an individual who would be deeply in debt as a result - even before the wedding expenses. This individual did note that it was an "astronomical" figure, and his fiancée did decide to go with a more modest ring. But how many people make the wrong decisions in similar situations?

"Yesh li Kol," said Yaakov - "I have everything." I can meet my physical needs on a more modest level, and devote myself to higher pursuits.

In 1990, before Parshas Vayishlach, I attended the weekly class of Rabbi Asher Rubenstein (whom I have quoted here previously). My notes begin with a quotation from the Talmud at the end of Kesubos [112b]: "In the generation when the descendent of David [i.e. the Messiah] comes, there will be strong accusations against Talmudic scholars." Having spent much of the last two weeks reading, thinking and writing about the criticism of Rabbis, Halacha and traditional Jewry following the assassination of Yitzchak Rabin, I could not help thinking that this was very apropos.

I have put together an essay on the current situation, tentatively called "Tradition and Yigal Amir: myth vs. reality." I'm not going to print it here, but if you would like a copy, send mail to learn@torah.org (no earlier than Friday) with "MYTHS" in the subject line.

You can also find it on our new web page, "Traditional Reactions to the Assassination," <http://www.torah.org/rabin/>, which should also be up tomorrow.

Good Shabbos,

R. Yaakov Menken

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To: CSHULMAN, " Yeshiva University s weekly devar
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vayishlach

Enayim L'Torah
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Holy War
by Rabbi Etan Tokayer

If ever there were an example of a Holy War, it would be Yaakov's famous battle with the man. As Ya'acov prepared for a possible war with his brother Eisav, he was diverted to engage in a different type of battle. Ya'acov sent the rest of the camp ahead, while he tarried behind alone - "YaYivateir Ya'acov L'Vado." In the quiet and stillness of this moment in solitude, "Vaye'aveik Ish Imo" - this nondescript man does battle with him. One wonders who this man was and what activity were they engaged in. Rash"i quotes the Midrash which says that the man was Saro Shel Eisav - the agent of Esav. To explain their activity Rash"i focuses our attention on the word VaYe'aveik and presents two alternate and opposing definitions of this word.

The first, explained by the grammarian Menacheim Ben Saruk, teaches that Vaye'aveik is a reference to the dirt (Avak) kicked up in the rough and tumble of the altercation - "Vaye'aveik - SheHayu Ma'alim Afar BeRagleihem."

Vaye'aveik then means to fight. Rash"i, by contrast, maintains that Vaye'aveik means to hug or to connect - Vaye'aveik - "VeHu Lashon Vayikasheir," then, means to embrace.

How is it possible that one word Vaye'aveik can produce two so diametrically opposite meanings? Rash"i explains that when two people fight they first embrace, and in that violent embrace, each one tries to bring the other down. Perhaps on another level one can understand Rash"i's idea in connection with his view of the man's identity - Eisav's agent. Saro Shel Eisav is not only a physical agent that confronted Ya'acov, but rather, he

is a spiritual agent that confronts all mankind at all times. He is the barrier that stands in our way on the path of religious growth. But he does not exist out in the public for all to see. He exists in a far more private place - a place where each man stands alone and apart from anyone else. Eisav's agent exists in our own souls. He embraces us and becomes one with us unless we have the courage to do battle and fight in order to extricate him from ourselves.

There is a second approach to explain the opposing interpretations of Vaye'aveik. Ya'acov fought mightily against Eisav's agent, and through this fight, Ya'acov emerged with a closer connection to HaKadosh Baruch Hu than had been possible beforehand. In fact, Ya'acov's struggle serves as a model for religious and personal development. It is the struggle itself which brings a person closer to God and to His mitzvot while at the same time giving the person a sense of accomplishment. Ya'acov began the fight more distant and separated from HaKadosh Baruch Hu, but as he fought he became closer. Chaza"l in Chullin (91a) teach us "Melameid SheHe'elu Avak MiRaglotam Ad Kisei HaKavod" - they fought and kicked up dust with their legs until it reached the throne of Hashem. At that point, Ya'acov had bridged the distance with G-d, and the struggle - Vaye'aveik was transformed into an embrace - BeHe'avko Imo. The man realized he had lost and cried out in defeat, "Shalcheini" - "send me away", for morning has arrived. Only after winning the Holy War, the battle for spiritual growth and the battle against the Eisav within, was Ya'acov was ready to take up arms to fight the battle against the enemy from afar, Eisav.

The Struggle
by Moti Novick

Immediately after completing the necessary preparations for his imminent encounter with Eisav, Ya'acov Avinu is confronted by someone -- about whom the Torah tells us almost nothing-- with whom he struggles in the final hours of the night. Following in the path of the Midrash, many commentators identify this mysterious man not only as an angel, but as the angel which represents the descendants of Eisav in the Heavenly Court. This struggle is seen as the beginning of Ya'acov's encounter with Eisav; before the personal meeting between the brothers which takes place in the morning, there is the metaphysical meeting at night of two nations, each embodied in a single individual. Indeed, the Ramba"n and the Sefer HaChinuch (on the mitzvah of Gid Hanasheh, which is a result of this story) explain that everything in this episode is symbolic of what is to happen in the future of the Jewish people. They will struggle against the other nations of the world (viewed as descendants of Eisav) and will be hurt by them financially and physically, just as Ya'acov was wounded in the thigh by the angel. But in the end, the symbolic sun of the Moshiach will rise and see the Jewish nation limping victoriously from the scene of the confrontation. It is no coincidence that as a result of this encounter, Ya'acov is renamed Yisrael, the name which will be carried on by the nation which he produces and by the land which will be its home.

One issue not addressed by most commentators is the reason for Ya'acov's encounter with the angel. Its odd presence in the middle of the story of the preparations to meet Eisav (a story which would run quite smoothly without this entire episode) is somewhat striking and begs explanation within the context of the story. Based on its symbolism alone, this episode could have appeared anywhere and indeed would probably have been more appropriate after the personal meeting with Eisav. Two explanations are given for the reason behind the encounter, one by the Rada"k and one by the Rashba"m and Chizkuni. According to the Rada"k,

Hashem sent the angel to fight with Ya'acov as a result of Ya'acov's excessive preparations for his upcoming meeting. By sending such a large gift to Eisav and referring to him as "Adoni" - "my master" so many times, Ya'acov was acting in too servile a manner to his brother, and was not placing enough trust in Hashem. The wound to the thigh which made Ya'acov limp (Piseach) was meant as a just punishment for his actions of ambivalence (Poseach) with regard to all the promises and assurances made to him by Hashem. The Rashba"m, however, explains that the angel was sent by Hashem to prevent Ya'acov from running away, which (according to the Rashba"m) was just what Ya'acov planned to do when he awoke in the middle of the night. Ya'acov thought the best way to deal with the approaching enemy was to run away and hide from him, but Hashem wanted Ya'acov to stay and witness the salvation and protection which He would bring. Thus the angel fought with Ya'acov until sunrise, at which point Eisav was nearby and it was too late to run away. The common denominator between these two explanations is that Ya'acov did something wrong in attempting to evade or pacify Eisav, and the angel was sent to somehow rectify this situation either through punishment or through prevention of further wrongdoing. The goal of the angel was to recreate the original scenario of impending confrontation between enemies.

Integrating these explanations with the Midrash's idea that this episode is symbolic of the future of the Jewish nation, we can add even more meaning to this symbolism. Throughout our history, Jews have attempted to soften or avoid ideological conflict with other nations either by hiding their beliefs and practices from these nations (the Rashba"m's approach) or by trying to get closer to the beliefs of these nations at the expense of their own faith in Hashem (the Rada"K's approach). The first approach was taken by the Marranos during the Spanish Inquisition of the fifteenth century, and the second was taken by European Jews from the time of the Haskalah until the Holocaust. In both of these cases, not only did the attempt to avoid confrontation backfire, but the failure of the attempt was brought about by the other nations themselves -- the representatives of Eisav -- as they searched out the Jews in efforts to destroy their Jewish identities. Hashem has always sent the angel of Eisav to battle the Jews who suppose they can avoid the conflict between Judaism and foreign philosophies antithetical to Torah. This conflict will continually arise; the only question is whether we attempt to evade it or confront it. In the end, the only way to continue surviving as a people and to be worthy of the name Yisrael is by undergoing this confrontation and holding our own throughout. In the course of the long night of the exile, we have seen nations and civilizations rise, fight us either ideologically, physically, or both, and then fall into oblivion. Only the Jews have outlived all of them, and only the Jews will still be standing, albeit limping from the wounds of these struggles, when the dawn of Mashiach finally arrives.

Supercalafrajalistickexpealadoetious
by Daniel Alter

Names can often be attractors of attention; thus, a radical title will cause many people to read one's Enayim L'Torah article. However, they also contain much deeper meanings. The Ohr HaChayim, on numerous occasions, comments that a name actually represents one's soul. With this in mind, the renaming of Ya'acov in Parashat Vayishlach takes on a new significance. Through an analysis of both his old and new names we may better understand Yaakov Avinu and what he represented.

In Parashat Toldot, twins are born to Rivka; the second is named Ya'acov. Rash"i tells us that the name is given because the child is holding on to his brother's heel - a seemingly uncomplimentary name.

Later, in Parashat Vayishlach, Ya'acov is renamed. Emerging victorious from his battle with an angel, he requests a blessing before releasing the subdued adversary. The angel responds by bestowing a new name on Ya'acov; he will now be known as Yisrael.

Despite this new name, however, the Torah continues to call him Ya'acov. This does not change until Hashem, later in the parasha, appears to him and informs him that his new name will be Yisrael. From this point on both names appear. Why doesn't the Torah begin to call him Yisrael after the first time he is given this name?

The answer to this question can be found by studying Ya'acov's life and relating it to the names he is given. The first part of Yaakov's life abounds with stories of deceit and trickery. He manages to trick Eisav into selling him the birthright. He takes Eisav's bracha by impersonating him. Later, in the house of Lavan, he stealthily departs under the cover of night never to return to his father-in-law's house. Thus, it is no surprise that Eisav, after hearing his bracha has been stolen, claims that the reason for his brother's name is because "VaYa'akveini Zeh Pa'amayim" (27:36) - "He has dealt crookedly with these two times." (27:36). This is a new understanding of the meaning of the name Ya'acov.

The turning point in the life of Ya'acov is his battle with the angel. This is the first time he directly confronts an opponent. The angel then gives him a new name. His reason is "Ki Sarita Im Elohim V'Im Anashim VaTuchal" (32:29) - "for you have contended with God (ly beings) and with people and have won" (32:29). Unkelus translates "Im Elohim" as "in front of God." This can be understood as fighting with God on his side. The name Yisrael, then, represents the fact that God now stands with him in all his fights.

Why, then, is he not called Yisrael immediately after this story? Furthermore, why does the angel refuse to divulge his own name after fighting with Ya'acov? Although he has fought with an angel and won, Ya'acov must now face real people. After all, his new name was given because he has contended with God and with people. The angel's refusal to divulge his own name signifies that Ya'acov has not yet proven himself worthy of the name YisraEL, which carries the name of God within it.

There are two episodes which follow this incident and precede the second and more established Yisrael naming. The first is Ya'acov's encounter with Eisav. Rather than try to avoid him, he confronts Eisav directly. This is the new Ya'acov. He shows that he has developed his leadership qualities and is ready to lead his people.

The next story in the parasha is the rape of Dina. Ya'acov becomes furious with his two sons, Shimon and Levi, after hearing that they have killed a whole town of people through methods of trickery and deceit. The new Ya'acov becomes upset because these methods are no longer his style.

Finally, after Ya'acov has proven himself in these two incidents, Hashem appears to him. Once again, he gives him his new name. This time, in contrast to the incident with the angel, Hashem reveals his own name to Ya'acov. He tells him that he is El Shadai. This signifies that Ya'acov's new name has been established. He now truly deserves to carry the name of God within his own name and be YisraEL. Hashem tells him through his new name and the new identity represented by it, that he now possesses the leadership skills necessary to build a nation. Finally, he also tells him "U'M'lachim MeChalatzechah Yetzeiu" (32:11) - "And kings shall come from your loins." (32:11) Ya'acov will be able to pass on these leadership skills to future generations. Thus, as members of B'nei Yisrael, we should strive

that which G-D himself had used?

There is a Mussar Haskel to be learned from the above. It is a lesson in Vhalachta Bdrachav, emulating the ways of Hashem. The humility of Hashem is clearly demonstrated by the way Hashem asks Yaakov to pay his vow. Hashem only reminded Yaakov of the vow that he had taken upon awakening from the vision of the ladder. Yaakov promised that he would give thanks to Hashem if Hashem would return him home in peace to his father and provide him with the bare physical necessities of life (clothing and food). As it turned out, not only was Yaakov saved from Esav, but many miracles were done on his behalf and he returned home a wealthy man. However Hashem (Breishis 35:1) only asked Yaakov to build an altar in thanksgiving for his delivery from Esav, i.e. to fulfill the conditions of his original vow. Hashem did not ask for the complete Hakaras Hatov (recognition for all the kindness of Hashem) which would have included such major miracles as the defeat of Shechem, protection from reprisals of the neighboring lands, his deliverance from Lavan and the wealth he amassed.

Yaakov understood on his own that he owed

Hashem a tremendous Hakaras Hatov. Hence his announcement to his family that he was to build an altar to Hashem who answered him in all the times of trouble and who accompanied him throughout all his travails. the Mussar Haskel is for us to emulate the ways of Hashem and the response of Yaakov. One who is in a position to grant a favor to another should not limit his largesse to the minimum amount requested. In turn the one requesting should show proper Hakaras Hatov that recognizes the complete scope and extent of the favors that were done for him (e.g. the concept of Chesed Shel Emes).

When Avrohom defeated the four kings

the posuk says "Do not fear, Avrohom, your reward is very great". The Ramban comments that Avrohom was afraid that the kings whom he had just defeated would regroup and attack him. About this G-D tells him not to worry. When Moshe was about to enter into battle with Og G-D told him not to fear him.

However, when Yaakov fears Esav "and Yaakov was very afraid and it pained him" G-D does not tell him not to be afraid!

The Rov (Rabbi Soloveitchik z"l) explained that in the cases of Avrohom and Moshe each was concerned about a one time conflict. (Ed: Hashem anticipated the fear of Avraham and Moshe and calmed them before they could even express the fear they felt). Yaakov however foresaw a conflict down through

the ages. "Until I come to my master to Seir" upon which the Medrash, noting that there is no posuk stating that Yaakov actually came to Seir, refers this to the coming to Seir in the times of Moshiach "and the redeemers will ascend Mt Zion to judge the mountain of Esav". Yaakov fears, and expresses his fear of, the struggle with Esav which begins here and stretches out across the millenia. Of this struggle it cannot be said not to be afraid; the conflict is too long and bitter.

Chazal interpret the displacement of the thigh of Yaakov as the loss of Jews to the Jewish nation in the time of shmad. Can Yaakov be reassured not to fear Esav in such a protracted struggle? Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi and Antoninus were the closest of friends, yet when Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi went to see this "friend" he first consulted the parasha of Vayishlach. The struggle is too long and the gap between Yaakov and Esav is too wide and unbridgeable. This is why Yaakov was afraid, yet G-D could not reassure him.

The Rav concluded this shiur with the following observation: "Vayira

Yaakov M'od Vayetzer Lo". Rashi comments Vayira Yaakov that he should not be killed and Vayetzer Lo that he should not kill others. The Rav commented that Yaakov knowing that the conflict with Esav will continue through the ages was afraid that Bnay Yisrael would not in turn adopt the modus operandi of Esav, that of Yadayim Y'dei Esav, and sinking to the level of an Esav.

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