

B'S'D'

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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON VAYISHLACH - 5762

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From: adam.katz@bear.com
Mazel tov to R' Daniel and Rena Deutsch upon the birth of a girl, Avigayil Liba, this past week (tues 11/20)

From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND ryfrand@torah.org
"RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas VaYishlach
The Significance of Making Huts For The Cattle

The Tur [Siman 417] writes in the laws of Rosh Chodesh [the new month] that the 3 pilgrimage festivals correspond to the patriarchs. Pesach corresponds to Avraham, as is alluded to by the pasuk [verse] "Knead and make rolls" [Bereshis 18:6]. (The Rabbinic tradition is that the Angels came to visit Avraham on the holiday of Pesach.) Shavuot corresponds to Yitzchak, because the shofar blast at the time of the giving of the Torah [Shmos 19:19] was with a shofar that came from the ram (that was sacrificed in place) of Yitzchak at the time of the Akeida. Finally, Succos corresponds to Yaakov, as it is written "...and for his cattle he made little huts (Succos), therefore they called the name of the place Succos" [Bereshis 33:17].

Rav Meir Bergman asks an obvious question in the book Shaarei Orah. We can understand that Pesach corresponds to Avraham, because he told Sarah to bake Matzos. That makes sense. The attribute of Avraham Avinu (our forefather Avraham) was Chessed (Kindness), and the act of preparing food and serving guests -- at a time when he was still recovering from the surgery of circumcision -- represented his attribute of kindness, his essence.

We can also understand that Shavuot corresponds to Yitzchak, because the Shofar of Har Sinai was from the ram of the Akeida. That too makes sense. Yitzchak represented the attribute of self-sacrifice (mesiras nefesh). That attribute is embodied in the ram that was a replacement for the sacrifice that Yitzchak was prepared to offer of himself. This fits in well with the theme of receiving the Torah (on Shavuot) for which we also need that same attribute of self-sacrifice. Therefore, both these allusions make sense. However, in what way does making huts for his sheep embody the essence of Yaakov Avinu?

Rav Bergman has a beautiful interpretation of the Tur's comment. The Or HaChaim haKadosh asks the following question on the above quoted pasuk: Does it make sense that they named the place "Succos" just because Yaakov made little huts there for his cattle? Was that such a significant activity that for time immemorial the place should be known by the name Succos? The Or HaChaim answers that Yaakov did something revolutionary for his cattle, with Succos, that no one had ever done before in the history of the world. Yaakov was the first person to build shelters for his animals. To commemorate this precedent-setting action, the location was forever more given the name Succos.

However, the answer of the Or HaChaim still begs for further explanation. The explanation is as follows: Next week's parsha contains the incident of Yosef being tempted by Potiphar's wife. Our Sages tell us that when Yosef was about to commit the act of adultery with this temptress, he thought to himself, "How can I do this? Your husband was so nice to me -- he gave me a job, he gave me a place to live -- how can I be so ungrateful by committing this treacherous act?"

What prompted Yosef to have these "second thoughts"? At that moment, the image of his father Yaakov appeared to him in the window. This stopped him from proceeding with the sin. What does this mean?

The meaning is that Yaakov gave over to his son Yosef the appreciation of the attribute of Hakaros HaTov [recognizing when someone is owed a debt of gratitude]. Our Sages learn from the fact that Yaakov sent Yosef (as we will learn in next week's parsha) telling him, "Please go check on... the welfare of the sheep..." [Bereshis 37:14] that a person is obligated to investigate after the welfare of things from which he derives benefit. In other words, a person must even have HaKaros HaTov towards his sheep.

If one earns his living by raising sheep, the attribute of HaKaros HaTov demands that you show appreciation to those animals. They are responsible for your livelihood. Yaakov Avinu's attribute of HaKaros HaTov was so extensive that he told Yosef to investigate the welfare of the sheep.

Clearly then, HaKaros HaTov is not for the sake of the person who did the favor - it is for the sake of the beneficiary. I must show appreciation. Therefore, it does not matter if I benefited from a stone or a sheep or the Nile River. In Judaism, anything that gives me pleasure, sustenance, or shelter is something to which I must show my appreciation.

This was the Torah of Yaakov our Patriarch. The request for Yosef to check on the sheep was a lesson that would stay with him for the rest of his life. Do not be an ingrate. Recognize favors that are done for you. Therefore, when Yosef faced the ultimate test of sinning with his master's wife, it was that image, representing the moral lessons of Yaakov his father that appeared to him from the window.

The image of Yaakov was not warning him about the severity of the sin of adultery. It was warning him about the severity of the sin of ingratitude. That is what stopped Yosef.

Now we know the meaning of the Or HaChaim. The city is called Succos because Yaakov was the first person in history to make huts for his animals. What was so significant about that? Now we understand. The recognition that "my sheep should not be out there in the rain and in the snow and in the heat because my sheep take care of me, so I must take care of my sheep" was the attribute of Yaakov Avinu. This is not a matter of a good investment -- that perhaps the sheep will get fatter, enabling them to be sold for a higher price. It is a matter of "I owe a debt of gratitude even to a sheep".

The significance of Yaakov's innovation warranted calling the place by the name Succos.

Now we also understand the Tur. We celebrate the Festival of Succos because the patriarch Yaakov made Succos. Yaakov taught us about HaKaros HaTov - even toward animals, certainly towards man, and even more so towards G-d. As such, every year, when we sit in our Succos, we are fulfilling the Torah of the patriarch Yaakov. We say thank you to G-d for taking us out of Egypt and sustaining us in the desert for those forty years. "Thank you" - that is what Succos is all about.

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These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 307, The Difficult Childbirth Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information.
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<http://www.koltorah.org/volume10/vayishlach2000.htm>

THE EMPTY TENT
BY RABBI EZRA WEINER

This week's Parsha is not the first time we encounter the unique spelling of Ahalo ("his tent") as is found in the Pasuk: Vayisa Yisrael Vayet Ahalo Mehala Lemigdal Eider. The replacing of a "Vav" with a "Hey" in the word Ahalo appears originally in Parshat Noach (9:21) and

twice in Parshat Lech Lecha (12:8 and 13:3). Rav Hirsch explains that Ahalo (ending with a "Hey," denoting feminine nature) designates the tent that is occupied by both husband and wife in which the wife is the ruler of the household. This was represented in the tents of Noach, Avraham, and as our Parsha relates, Yaakov as well.

However, as Yaakov's love for Rachel was paramount, only the tent that he shared with Rachel merited the title of Ahalo. It is possible, therefore, that immediately following the burial of Rachel the Pasuk above attempts to convey that Yaakov pitched the tent that he could unfortunately no longer share with Rachel far away from the rest of his family and encamped there alone. As long as Rachel was alive, he lived with the other wives as well, but now that she was gone he separated himself from the others. The next Pasuk relates, Vayihi Bishkon Yisrael Baeret Hahi Vayelech Reuven Vayishcav Et Pilegesh Aviv Vayishma Yisrael, "And it was when Yisrael (Yaakov) settled in the land and Reuven went and slept with [Bilha], his father's concubine, and Yisrael heard."

Reuven, the Bechor of the family, deemed it a necessity, if not an obligation, to demonstrate that Yaakov's abandonment of the tents of his other wives was inappropriate. Reuven therefore slept in Bilha's tent so that his father should realize that although Rachel died, the tents of his other wives are noticeably incomplete and that his absence is having an effect on the entire family. Vayishma Yisrael, Yaakov listened, but emotionally and quite possibly physically remained somewhat apart from his wives. As the Pasuk concludes, Yaakov had twelve sons - once Rachel died, he had no more children.

<http://www.jpost.com/Editions/2001/11/29/Columns>

SHABBAT SHALOM: Jacob wrestled with himself, and won
By RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

(November 29) Parshat Vayishlach Genesis 32:4-36:43

"Jacob remained alone. A stranger [ish] wrestled with him until just before daybreak." (Genesis 32:25)

This awesome and eerie wrestling match presents a number of questions. First of all, how can one remain alone if one is engaged in a wrestling match? It takes two to wrestle.

Second, with whom did Jacob wrestle? Who is this "stranger" called ish in the Torah? Is it the supernatural spirit or angel of Esau, as some commentators suggest? The Bible usually does not record such events.

Third, what is the real root-meaning of the Hebrew va'ye'avek, (and he wrestled)?

Rashi quotes Menachem Ben-Serek, who suggests that the root of the word is avak, or "dust," an inevitable by-product of two fighters in the field.

Citing two Talmudic prooftexts, Rashi posits a different meaning - va'ye'avek expresses the idea that Jacob "fastened himself on" the stranger - a form of joining.

Similarly, Nachmanides cites verses where the alef and chet interchange so that the word va'ye'avek (and he wrestled) bears a striking resemblance to va'ye'havak, meaning "and he embraced."

Does this mean that Jacob "embraced" the stranger (ish)?

The context certainly doesn't suggest it, but perhaps Nachmanides is suggesting that during this night at the river, Jacob didn't merely wrestle with the individual in the traditional sense; instead, two opposite emotions and actions surfaced simultaneously: wrestling and embracing. What reinforces this idea is that in the very next chapter, when the two brothers finally meet after their long separation, Esau is so excited that he "... ran toward [Jacob], and embraced him." (Genesis 33:4)

And fourth, after the wrestling match and after Jacob and Esau finally confront each other in the flesh, Esau seems perfectly ready for a rapprochement and it is Jacob who is reluctant. Esau says, "Let us take our journey, and let us go together, and I will go before you" (Genesis 33:12), to which Jacob demurs, ostensibly because of the frailty of his children and cattle. (Genesis 33:13)

In fact, when Jacob adds that he will eventually meet "my lord in Se'ir," Rashi comments that Jacob has no intention of ever meeting

Esau during this lifetime. He is suggesting that they can only get together when "G-d will judge Mount Se'ir - in the days of the Messiah. Why is Jacob loathe to effectuate a real reconciliation?

To answer these questions, we must go back to Jacob's beginnings: "Now Isaac loved Esau because he did eat of his venison; and Rebecca loved Jacob." (Genesis 25:28) It is logical to assume that Jacob was hurt by his paternal rejection, and yearned for his father's approval. It is even logical to assume that the wholehearted student desired to adopt some of the aggressive outdoorism and verbal skills ("for the entrapment was in his mouth") of his more favored brother.

From this perspective, Rebecca's suggestion that Jacob enter his father's tent disguised as Esau may well have struck a responsive chord. Finally, if only for a brief period, Jacob will become the beloved Esau in his father's eyes.

Having dressed as Esau, it's possible that Jacob then made room for a little bit of Esau in his own being. Actually, the timing could not be more propitious, since he will now be dealing with one of the craftiest men in Haran, his father-in-law Laban. In Haran he learns how to grow a second coat of skin, more aggressive and assertive; Jacob becomes crafty of hand and mellifluous of tongue, effectuating a deal that transfers a good deal of wealth into his own "bank" account.

After two decades with Laban, Jacob has become more Esau than Esau.

Two events bring Jacob back to his old self. First, although he may have grown comfortable in his quasi-Esau role, he doesn't want his own beloved son to be so different from Abraham and Isaac. "And it came to pass when Rachel had given birth to Joseph that Jacob said unto Laban: 'Send me away that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country.'" (Genesis 30:25)

The second event takes place when he realizes that instead of dreaming about ladders connecting heaven and earth, he's dreaming about the "stock market" - "...flocks that were streaked, speckled and grizzled." In his dream an angel says to him, "Lift up now your eyes... for I have seen all that Laban does unto you..." (Genesis 31:12) The angel reminds him of the vow he made when he poured oil on the monument of stones.

Living with Laban, Jacob's true personality had been submerged. But the time has come to go home. "Now arise and get you out of this land and return to the land of your birthplace." (Genesis 31:13) Jacob must return to his true self.

But returning to his father's land as the old Jacob is not as simple as it sounds. The Esau-like qualities that cling to his personality will have to be expunged before he can even step on the soil of Israel. Jacob understands that he is a personality divided within himself, and the real Jacob must emerge victorious.

Now we should be able to get a better idea of what it means that Jacob remained "alone." At the moment that he is ready to have the final struggle with the spirit and nature of Esau, he is alone with himself. What he is about to do must be done alone. Jacob has an Esau inside him, and the task at hand is nothing less than exorcising Esau's spirit, thereby restoring his original self as "the wholehearted [simple] man" - he must restore his original dream of a ladder connecting heaven and earth.

That he triumphs earns him a new name, Yisrael. As we know, the name Ya'akov is the name of the brother who grasps onto Esau's heel in order to overtake him - overtake him at his own game: it even has the nuance of "deceiving." Ya'akov is in a perpetual struggle with Esau; the struggle ends only when Jacob, standing alone, wrestles with his innermost self and succeeds in exorcising Esau. Ya'akov then becomes Yisrael. And once Jacob has finally rediscovered his authentic self, he cannot team up with Esau on any level. Just as he remained alone on that dark night by the side of the River Jabok, so must he remain alone with his family as he forges the children of Israel to whom he bequeaths the dream of unifying heaven and earth.

Shabbat Shalom

AROUND THE MAGGID'S TABLE
By RABBI PAYSACH J. KROHN

HOUSE GUESTS

It is said that outside the house of the Maharsha (R' Shrnuel Eliezer Eidels, 1555-1631), head of the beis din (religious court) in Ostroh, Poland, and author of a noted Talmudic commentary, there was a placard on which was written the verse from Iyov (31:32), "Bachutz Lo Yalin Ger Dilosai LoOrach Eftach" - Let no stranger sleep outside, my doors are open for guests." Indeed, it was well known that the Maharsha's home was open to all wayfarers, regardless of their station in life.

The Maharsha stressed the careful wording of Chazal (the Talmudic scholars) in their teaching in Avos (1:15), "Heve Mekabel Es Kol Adam Bisever Panim Yafos" - Receive every person with [your] cheerful countenance." The dictum specifically states, "Kol Haadam" indicating that it is proper and obligatory to greet all individuals in a friendly manner, regardless of their positions in life.

The following story, told by R' Sholom Schwadron, involves the Brisker Rav, R' Yosheh (Yosef) Ber Soloveitchik (1820-1892), author of Beis HaLevi, who, as the Maharsha did generations earlier, displayed an attitude of uniform concern to all members of Klal Yisrael.

It happened one bitter cold evening that R' Yosheh Ber had to travel to another town, through a blinding snowstorm, to take care of an important matter. The roads were getting impassable, and finally R' Yosheh Ber and his wagon driver realized they would have to stop somewhere and stay overnight.

It was already very late. The wind was howling and visibility was extremely poor, but the wagon driver thought he remembered coming across an inn somewhere in this area, so he continued on.

After traveling a bit more they came upon the inn, and the driver told the Brisker Rav to wait in the wagon while he went to knock on the door. The driver knocked and knocked but there was no answer. He continued banging on the door and still there was no answer.

He came back to R' Yosheh Ber and said, "I think we will have to continue on. There doesn't seem to be anyone here."

"There has got to be someone there," said R' Yosheh Ber. "Just knock as hard as you can."

The driver j a huge strong fellow j knocked until the owner, who had been sleeping upstairs, thought the door would be shattered. The owner came to his window and yelled down, "What do you want so late at night? Can't you see this place is closed?"

The owner had indeed heard the knocking earlier, but he didn't feel like getting out of his warm comfortable bed to welcome a traveler who happened to need lodgings so late at night.

"We are freezing out here and it is dangerous for us to travel further. Please open up so we can come inside," the wagon driver yelled back.

"You couldn't find any other place?" the innkeeper shouted downward.

"We must get out of the cold or we'll freeze to death," the driver roared into the frozen night.

The innkeeper slowly got out of bed, grumbled something under his breath, and came downstairs to see just who was making all the noise. When he opened the door, the driver ran to get the Brisker Rav, who had been waiting in the shelter of the covered wagon.

The two men made their way into the inn where the innkeeper made it obvious that he was in no mood to tend to them. He told his guests to unpack their things in a side room which was near the washrooms. The room was cold, but to the two travelers it was a great improvement over being outdoors. The Rav and his driver tried to make themselves comfortable in the tiny room as they settled in for the night.

About half an hour later a tremendous din came from outside j the noise of people banging on the front door. "Open up in there" someone called from the other side of the door. "The Rebbe and his chassidim are here!" The owner, who had just fallen asleep, couldn't help but hear the commotion outside. He ran to the window and saw that indeed there were close to twenty people outside his door. That meant good business, and so he ran downstairs and opened the door with a smile. "Come right in out of the cold," he said warmly. "I have room for all of you."

The chassidim ushered their rebbe [some versions of the story say that it was R' Aharon Koidonover (1839-1897)] in ahead of them, and soon a band of twenty chassidim followed. The owner invited them all into his main dining room, assuring them they would be made comfortable, and convincing them how lucky they were to be able to spend the night at his inn. The owner brought out whiskey and cake and passed around the drinks until everyone felt warm. Soon songs and lively conversation broke out as the guests celebrated the fact that they had indeed found a place to spend the night, and were saved from continuing their perilous journey through the frozen darkness.

As their partying continued, the Rebbe had to leave the room for a moment to wash his hands. As he walked towards the washroom he noticed two people shivering in the side room. The Brisker Rav, who heard the Rebbe coming, pulled his hat over his eyes so that he would not be recognized. But the Rebbe entered the room, walked over to the man hidden under the hat, and lifted the brim.

"Oy vay' Brisker Rav!" he exclaimed, recognizing the Torah luminary immediately. "What are you doing here in this cold room?"

Who put you here?" The Rebbe didn't wait for an answer but insisted that the Rav and his driver get up immediately and come with him. The two followed the Rebbe into the huge room where the chassidim had gathered.

As the Rebbe walked in with the two behind him, everyone stood up. "Do you see who is in the inn with us?" the Rebbe asked out loud. "The gadol hador, R' Yosheh Ber."

And with that he led the Rav to the head of the table where he seated him, disregarding his protests. Soon the owner of the inn came in with more food, and the Rebbe tore into him verbally. "How could you have put the Brisker Rav, the gadol hador, in that small cold room? Where is your kavod haTorah (honor befitting a Torah scholar)? He was freezing in there. You must ask the Rav for mechilah (forgiveness)!"

Everyone turned to see what the innkeeper would do, and slowly he began talking to the Brisker Rav. "I am sorry," he said. "I didn't realize who you were." The Brisker Rav peered at the innkeeper through icy eyes and said aloud, "I cannot be mochel (forgiving)."

The Rebbe angrily turned towards the innkeeper. "Then you must ask for forgiveness again," the Rebbe said. "You obviously mistreated the Rav and his driver, so you must beg his pardon a second time." And once again the innkeeper asked for forgiveness and once again the Brisker Rav refused to grant it.

The Rebbe continued to address the innkeeper, saying, "Your sin is so great that your end will be a bitter one unless you somehow get the Rav to forgive you." The innkeeper now pleaded with the Rav to forgive him, but the Rav remained silent. People began to wonder amongst themselves why the Rav was being so obstinate. Finally, as the innkeeper, along with everyone else, waited on edge to hear what R' Yosheh Ber would say, the Rav began to speak softly.

"My dear friend and host, of course I will forgive you. But first I would like to explain something to you and to all who are here. Many of you are aware that this Shabbos we will read [as the Torah portion of the week] Parshas Vayishlach. "In the parshah we find that the children of Yaakov were angered when they learned that their sister Dinah, the daughter of our Patriarch Yaakov, had been defiled by the immoral man, Shechem. The verse states (Bereishis 34:7) Vayichar Lahem Miod Ki Nivala Asa BiYisroel Lishkav Es Bas Yaakov Vichen Lo Yease j The men (Yaakov's children) were distressed and were fired deeply with indignation, for he (Shechem) had committed an outrage in Israel by defiling the daughter of Jacob j such a thing may not be done.'

"Why," asked R' Yosheh Ber, "did the Torah add the last part of the verse, Vichen Lo Yease j Such a thing may not be done?' The Torah had already expressed the anger of Dinah's brothers (in the first part of the verse) at the outrage that had been committed.

"The answer," continued the Brisker Rav, "is that the Torah is telling us that 'such a thing may not be done' under any circumstances, regardless of whether it was to the family of Jacob or to any other family.

"And that," said the Rav, "is the problem here. You are begging my pardon because I am the Brisker Rav. That's not why you should be

asking forgiveness. You should be asking forgiveness because it was wrong of you to behave like that to any Jew that may have come to your inn. No one should be left out in the cold waiting, and then be the subject of your derision.

"I harbor no ill feelings towards you," continued the Rav. "Quite the contrary. I forgive you and I would greatly appreciate if the very next time you come to Brisk, you will be a guest in my home!"

The innkeeper was without words for he was in an emotional quandary. On one hand he was gratified and relieved that the burden of guilt had been lifted from his shoulders by his having been forgiven, while on the other he felt humbled by the lesson he had just been taught. Slowly he walked up to where the Rav was sitting, bowed his head respectfully, and told the Rav that he would indeed welcome the opportunity to be a guest at the Rav's home. The Rav smiled warmly, and everyone drank l'chaim as the rest of the evening was spent in a warm and friendly atmosphere.

By the next morning the storm had subsided and everyone prepared to continue on his own particular way. The innkeeper bade everyone farewell, and as he watched the travelers fade into the distance, he realized that a change had come over him because of the special individuals who had by chance spent an evening at his inn.

A number of weeks later the innkeeper had an occasion to be in the city of Brisk, and true to his word he made his way to the home of R' Yosheh Ber. The Rav went out of his way to serve the innkeeper personally, and saw to it that the man's accommodations met the highest possible standards.

As the guest personally experienced the quality of the Rav's hachnasas orchim (hospitality) and saw how the Rav went out of his way to make him comfortable, the transformation that had begun a few weeks ago became complete. The innkeeper returned to his roadside inn having learned, both by instruction and example, how to treat a fellow Jew. From then on his inn became a model of hospitality and good cheer as he became the most noted host in the entire region.

<http://www.artscroll.com/parashah.html>

Parashah Talk

Excerpt from Windows to the Soul,

by RABBI MICHAEL BERNSTEIN, M.D.

Parashas Vayishlach

Our sages calculate the number of years Jacob was separated from his beloved son Joseph as twenty-two. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery when he was 17 years old, and he was reunited with his father when he was 39 years old. They further find in the number twenty-two an appropriate rebuke, measure for measure (middah keneged middah) for the twenty-two years Jacob failed to fulfill the commandment of honoring his parents (see Rashi, 28:9). Jacob spent these twenty-two years almost entirely with Laban, getting married and building his family and possessions.

A question immediately arises. Why did the Sages find fault with Jacob for his separation from his parents? He had fled for his life, urged on by his own parents. What else could he have done? How can these years be considered a lapse in the fulfillment of his obligation to honor his parents?

The Torah tells us (33:17) that after Jacob headed back to the land of his birth he stopped at Succos, where he built a home and a temporary structure for his livestock. The Talmud teaches (Megillah 17a) that he stayed there for eighteen months.

Jacob undoubtedly had reason to stay in Succos. Nonetheless, the Midrash that considers him partially at fault for the twenty-two-year separation may be focusing on this stopover in Succos. He may have chosen to name the place Succos to show that the layover was only temporary and that he was eager to return to his parents; a succah by definition is a temporary dwelling. However, such a long hiatus in his journey indicates less than absolutely perfect zeal to return to his parents and honor them. G-d holds the righteous to a strict standard (medakdek kechut hasaarah) in order to bring them to absolute perfection. Jacob's delay implied that throughout his involuntary

separation from his family he might have been less than perfectly sensitive to their suffering. To help him perfect that sensitivity, G-d decreed that he himself undergo a similar separation.

In actuality, Jacob was separated from his family for thirty-six years. In addition to the twenty-two years spent with Laban, he also spent fourteen years in the yeshivah of Shem and Eiver. The Talmud tells us (Megillah 17a) that Jacob was not punished for these fourteen years because learning Torah supersedes honoring parents. We may also add that learning Torah was in reality the greatest honor he could have bestowed on his parents; there was no lapse during these fourteen years.

http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2000/parsha/rsob_vayishlach.html

TorahWeb [from last year]

RABBI ZVI SOBOLOFSKY

Physical and Spiritual Danger - the Legacy of Eisav

As Yaakov anticipates a dangerous reunion with Eisav, he calls out to Hashem for assistance. He beseeches Hashem to, "Rescue me from my brother, from Eisav". This prayer appears to be redundant since "my brother" is Eisav. The Beis HaLeivi comment that Yaakov was actually asking Hashem for assistance in facing two different kinds of danger. Eisav poses as a physical threat to anyone he encounters when he appears as the personality of Eisav HaRasha. Yaakov had experienced this danger twenty years earlier when he was forced to flee for his life. Upon hearing that Eisav was coming to meet him with an army of four hundred men, Yaakov was presented with a very real threat of physical harm.

There was an entirely different danger that also frightened Yaakov. After so many years, perhaps Eisav had softened his position towards Yaakov. Could it be that Eisav was ready to approach Yaakov as a brother? Such a reunion posed an entirely different type of threat to the existence of Yaakov and his family. To become too close to a brother such as Eisav and expose his family to the lifestyle and values of an Eisav could spiritually destroy the foundation of the Jewish people. It was this dual danger that prompted Yaakov to request assistance in the manner that he did. "Rescue me from my brother", i.e. protect me from the dangers of a close relationship that could be spiritually devastating. "Rescue me from Eisav", i.e. protect me from physical harm that Eisav HaRasha may want to inflict upon me.

These two threats that faced Yaakov would constantly resurface through out Jewish history. There were times when the Jewish people faced the dangers of Eisav HaRasha, the threat of physical annihilation. There were other times when the danger was subtler in the form of being lured into assimilation by those who appeared as our brothers.

Chanukah and Purim, the two festivals instituted by Chazal to commemorate the miraculous rescue of the Jewish People, celebrate two different aspect of our ongoing clash with the outside world. Our enemies at the time of Purim appeared as Eisav HaRasha, intent on physically destroying us. At the time of Chanukah, the assault against us was by those claiming to be "brothers" f by those who sought to befriend us by having us join their culture. In each instance the call to Hashem was different. "Rescue us from our brother" f save us from those who try to lure us into their lifestyle, "Rescue us from Eisav" f save us from those who try to annihilate us physically. Just as we constantly remain on guard against our physical enemies, let us remain on guard against our spiritual enemies and with Siyata DEShmaya (heavenly help) be able to overcome all the dangers that may confront us.

<http://www.tzemachdavid.org/thepracticaltorah/vayishlach.shtml>

THE PRACTICAL TORAH

BY RABBI MICHAEL TAUBES

Parshas VaYishlach: Becoming a Bar or Bas Mitzvah

No definitive Halacha LeMa'aseh conclusions should be applied to practical situations based on any of these Shiurim.

The Torah tells us that after the people of the city of Shechem

circumcised themselves in compliance with the wishes of their leader Chamor, who wanted his son Shechem to be able to marry Yaakov's daughter Dinah, two of Yaakov's sons, Shimon and Levi, took their weapons and attacked the city, slaughtering all the men there (Bereishis 34:25). The Posuk (Ibid.) refers to each of Shimon and Levi there as an Ish, meaning a man, that is, an adult. The Mishnah in Pirkei Avos (5:21) states that one becomes obligated in Mitzvos at the age of thirteen; Rashi (Ibid. s.v. Ben Shalosh Esrei) explains that this is because at that age, the person is classified as an Ish, and as such is responsible for his actions, and subject to all punishments in the Torah, since there is a Posuk elsewhere in the Torah (Bamidbar 5:6) which implies that one who is an Ish, an adult, is held accountable for his transgressions.

Rashi (on Pirkei Avos Ibid.) then adds that it is specifically at the age of thirteen that one becomes classified as an Ish because we know that Shimon and Levi were thirteen at the time when they destroyed Shechem, and the Posuk in this Parsha (Bereishis Ibid.) already identifies each of them as an Ish. In his commentary on the Gemara in Nazir (29b), Rashi (Ibid. s.v. V'Rebbi Yosi B'Rebbi Yehudah) implies that we have it by tradition that Shimon and Levi were thirteen at that time; the Tosafos Yom Tov, in his commentary on the aforementioned Mishnah in Pirkei Avos (Ibid. s.v. Ben Shalosh Esrei), works out the calculation of the ages, pointing out, though, as does the Bartenura (Ibid. s.v. Ben Shalosh Esrei), that actually, only Levi was thirteen at that time, while Shimon was slightly older.

Despite these sources, however, the Rosh (Sheilos V'Teshuvos HaRosh Klal 16 Siman 1) states that the fact that the age of thirteen is used as the age when one becomes responsible for Mitzvos is a Halacha LeMoshe MiSinai, and this age is included in the statement of the Gemara in Sukkah (5b) that all amounts and measurements (Shiurim) used in Halacha are based upon a Halacha LeMoshe MiSinai. This point is quoted as well by the Shittah Mekubetzes, printed on the page in the Gemara in Erchin (31b, Ot 8) in the name of Rabbeinu Elchanan, and is agreed to by the Maharil (Sheilos V'Teshuvos Maharil Siman 51) who writes that any references to this in Pesukim, such as that cited above, is merely an Asmachta, a hint or an intimation. The aforementioned Rashi in Pirkei Avos (Ibid.) actually goes on to mention something similar to this, saying that the Halacha LeMoshe MiSinai indicates that one becomes obligated to fulfill Mitzvos with the appearance of certain physical signs of development, and the Rabbanan have determined that these physical signs are present once the boy is thirteen years old. This view seems to be based on the Gemara in Niddah (46a) which speaks of a Chazakah, a valid Halachic assumption, that by a certain age, one has developed the necessary physical signs of maturity. The Gemara in Sanhedrin (69a), and see Ibid. Tosafos s.v. B'Yadua) connects the age of adulthood with the ability to produce seed and procreate, as well as with the visible physical signs. It is worth noting that Ibn Ezra (Vayikra 20:9, s.v. Damav) implies that we must simply rely on the tradition of our ancestors in determining the age one becomes a Bar Mitzvah.

The Gemara in Erchin (18b) as well as in Niddah (47b-48a), among other places, discusses different Halachos for which age or the passage of a certain number of years is relevant, with the understanding that for certain Halachos, one year is considered to have gone by as soon as the next Rosh HaShanah arrives, and year two begins even though actually only a few days or months may have passed, as presented in the Gemara in Rosh HaShanah (10a-10b) and elsewhere. In other words, sometimes the year in question is a function of the calendar year as counted in the (Jewish) world, and not the year of the particular person or situation. Regarding the moment at which one becomes a Bar Mitzvah, however, the Gemara in Erchin (Ibid.) and in Niddah (Ibid.) says clearly that it depends upon the individual's year, that is, the passage of thirteen full years in the life of the person. In other words, a boy becomes a Bar Mitzvah not on the Rosh HaShanah prior to his thirteenth birthday, but rather on the actual day of his birthday, after thirteen full years of his life have gone by M'eis L'eis, from the time of birth to the time of his birthday.

This interpretation actually emerges from the simple reading of the Mishnah earlier in Niddah (45b), and is codified by the S'ma, in his

commentary on the Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat Siman 35 Sif Katan 2), and by the Shulchan Aruch HaRav (Orach Chaim 53:13), among others. The Rambam (Hilchos Ishus 2:21) stresses that a year here does not depend on the solar year or the lunar year (and certainly not the civil calendar year), but rather on the "Jewish" year, as established by the Beis Din, taking into account the passage of leap years, months with an extra day, and so on. A boy born, therefore, on the 16th of Shevat, for example, becomes a Bar Mitzvah on the 16th of Shevat thirteen years later.

The problem discussed by many authorities is the question of precisely when on one's thirteenth birthday one becomes a Bar Mitzvah. Does he become a Bar Mitzvah immediately at the beginning of this birthday, that is, in our example above, as the evening of the 16th of Shevat begins, or must he wait for the exact time of day at which he was born thirteen years earlier, literally, before becoming a Bar Mitzvah? The difference would obviously be regarding those Mitzvos which must be done at an earlier point in the day. Tosafos in Niddah (44b s.v. Shloshim and 47b s.v. Kulan) writes that for most Halachos, this literal M'Eis L'Eis, requiring one to wait for the specific moment of the day, is not needed; a boy thus becomes a Bar Mitzvah at the start of his thirteenth birthday, in the evening, regardless of what time of day he was born. Tosafos in Erchin (31a s.v. M'Yom), however, presents both opinions, suggesting that some hold that indeed one must wait until the exact hour of the day in order to have the literal M'Eis L'Eis. The Divrei Chamudos, in his commentary on the Rosh in Niddah (Perek 5 Ot 5), suggests that such in fact is the position of Tosafos in Rosh HaShanah (10a s.v. Hen) where the complete literal M'Eis L'Eis is required. This also seems to be the view of Rav Achai Gaon in the She'iltos (Parshas B'Chukosai, Sheilta 116), since he specifically mentions M'Eis L'Eis; the Netziv, commenting on the She'iltos (HaEmek Sheilah Ibid. Ot 2), writes that had other Poskim seen the She'iltos, they would not have been so inclined to reject this position.

Nevertheless, the majority of the Poskim do reject this view, and rule that one becomes a Bar Mitzvah as soon as the day of his thirteenth birthday begins, in the evening. In commenting on the Gemara in Niddah, the Ramban (Chiddushei HaRamban on 47b Ibid. s.v. Ha) and the Rashba (Chiddushei HaRashba Ibid. s.v. Shanah) both write that in order to begin adulthood, one need not wait for the exact moment of the day when one had been born; one thus becomes a Bar Mitzvah when the day itself begins. The Shach, in his commentary on the Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat Ibid. Sif Katan 1), proves that one becomes a Bar Mitzvah with the arrival of the day of his thirteenth birthday, and this is also the view of the Bach, expressed both in his Teshuvos (Sheilos V'Teshuvos HaBach HaYishanos Siman 145) and in his commentary on the Tur (Orach Chaim Siman 53 s.v. U'MaShekasav Rabbeinu). This is indeed the accepted position, as presented by the Magen Avraham (Orach Chaim Ibid. Sif Katan 13), the Taz (Ibid. Sif Katan 6), the Chayei Adam (Klal 29, Sif 10), the Mishnah Berurah (Orach Chaim Siman 52 Sif Katan 42) and many others. The Noda BeYehudah (Sheilos V'Teshuvos Noda BeYehudah Mahadurah Teninah Chelek Orach Chaim Siman 6) writes that this is the practice followed all over and one may not change it. The Sdei Chemed (Klalim, Ma'areches HaMem Klal 104 Ot 1) quotes many who discuss this, and likewise concludes that this is the accepted practice all over; he then adds (Ibid. Ot 14) that we may follow this practice even for Mitzvos from the Torah, though some take the stricter view for certain Mitzvos.

It should be noted that all of the above rules apply as well to a girl becoming obligated to fulfill the Mitzvos, except, of course, that a girl becomes a Bas Mitzvah on her twelfth birthday, not her thirteenth. The Gemara in Niddah (45a) explains that this is because Hashem created women with an extra amount of perception and understanding, which means, apparently, that a girl develops intellectually at an earlier age than a boy; she is thus obligated in Mitzvos at an earlier age. The distinction may also be based on the above cited Gemara in Sanhedrin (69a) which connects adulthood with the ability to procreate; this physical maturity also develops earlier in a girl than in a boy. It is noteworthy that the Midrash in Koheles Rabbasi (Parsha 4 Siman 15)

states that it is at the age of thirteen (or twelve for a girl) that the Yeitzer Tov is implanted into a person.

From: Shlomo Katz[SMTP:skatz@torah.org] Subject: HaMaayan / The Torah Spring - Parashat Vayishlach Edited by Shlomo Katz
Sponsored by the Marwick family in memory of Samuel Sklaroff
The beginning of this week's parashah describes the reunion of Yaakov and Esav after decades of separation. As the parashah unfolds, we see Esav as the fierce warrior and Yaakov as the pious father of the Jewish people.

Seemingly, writes R' Elazar M. Shach z"l (see biography below), Yaakov and Esav are merely fulfilling the destinies that were assigned to them from birth and childhood: Esav, the ruddy hunter, and Yaakov, the wholesome dweller in the tents of Torah. But if we think this, says R' Shach, we are in error, for what distinguishes mankind from all of the higher and lower creatures - the angels and the animals - if not man's free will! Surely Yaakov could have chosen to be Esav and Esav could have chosen to be Yaakov.

R' Shach elaborates: The gemara states that one may not testify that a man died merely because the witness saw the man being thrown to lions. After all, says the gemara, lions sometimes attack and eat and sometimes do not. Does this mean that lions have free will? asks R' Shach. No, they do not! The reason that lions sometimes attack and eat and sometimes do not is because they are "programmed" to eat only when they are hungry. When they are not hungry, they don't attack.

But isn't this true of man, as well? Doesn't man, too, sin only because he feels a need to? Furthermore, if man had the clear understanding of G-d that angels have, wouldn't man, like the angels, never sin? Perhaps angels do have free will, but they just have no incentive to sin because they have an absolute understanding of right and wrong!

The answer to all of these questions is that man's free will is unique. Our Sages teach, "Everything is in G-d's hands except man's fear of G-d." Do we need to be told that fear of G-d is not controlled by G-d? It would be worthless if it were so. The lesson of this gemara, explains R' Shach is that despite the knowledge of right and wrong and the inborn traits and predilections that G-d gave man, man still has absolute free will. Man has complete control over his actions, complete free will, and he can never give as an excuse the fact that he was born with a tendency to act a certain way. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Avi Ezri p. 102)

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From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@ohr.edu] To: weekly@ohr.edu Subject: Torah Weekly - Vayishlach
PREGNANT PAWS

"He said to his servants, 'Pass on ahead of me and leave a space between each flock.' " (32:17)

Several years ago, one of the world's leading Jewish thinkers gave a lecture here in Jerusalem. From the number of tape recorders surrounding the lectern you might have thought you were at a presidential press briefing rather than an arcane and mystical exploration into the deeper reaches of our Holy Torah.

After the lecture, the owners of the tape recorders came to reclaim their respective machines. The scholar stopped one of the owners and said that he had noticed that the tape only ran when he was speaking, that it paused when he did, editing out the intervening silence.

"Yes" replied the young man. "It's voice-activated. Whenever you stop, it stops."

"That's a pity," replied the scholar, "it missed the most important

part."

Silence is golden. For many reasons. The space between things allows us to grasp them properly. For their true impact to register. The deeper the thought, the more time is needed to digest that thought. It's not uncommon for a Torah lecturer to pause for a minute or more. Try pausing for a minute in the middle of speaking to someone. A minute of silence is a long time.

The more superficial the message, the less time we need to absorb that message. Television is wall-to-wall sound and vision. The only silence is either when you hit the mute button or when the station breaks down. Why? Because the television has very little to say. There is no need to pause whatsoever. Moreover, if the television paused, we might realize the great paucity of meaning that lies behind its "Now this! Now this!" style.

If you look at a Torah scroll you will notice that there are two types of breaks in the flow of the writing. Others are the equivalent space of nine letters. Some are like a new paragraph. These breaks are called p'tuchot and s'tumot. They divide one section from another. Now, a shorter break. Now, a longer break.

Nothing is incidental in the Torah. When G-d dictated the Torah to Moshe, He gave Moshe time to pause and reflect on what he had written down. Some matters required more contemplation than others.

However, no less than the letters, those silent moments of reflection are part of the Torah itself.

In this week's Torah portion, Yaakov sends a tribute of cattle to pacify his brother Esav. He instructs his servants to leave a space between the parade of each of the flocks. Rashi comments that Yaakov did this so that they would look more numerous.

Esav knew how to count sheep; Yaakov wasn't trying to fool Esav into thinking that he was giving him more sheep than there actually were. Yaakov was doing something more subtle. Yaakov wanted Esav to feel the full impact of his gift. He wanted the importance of the gift to sink in.

Yaakov instructed his servants to pause - because he wanted Esav to give pause.

For Yaakov's very life depended on it.

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From: RABBI JONATHAN SCHWARTZ jschwrtz@ymail.yu.edu
Subject: Internet Chaburah -- Parshas VaYishlach

Prologue: They fought all night long.

The battle between Yaakov and the Malach of Esav serves as the beginning and the paradigm for all future battles between the Jews and their enemies. Ramban points out that there are periods in Jewish history when it appears that the Jews are going to fail but as the crack of dawn appears, Yaakov returns, Shaleim, and defeats his foes.

But Yaakov did not merely accept the declaration of victory and move on as the champion. He insisted on a Beracha. Why? And why did the changing of his name fulfill his request?

The Gevuros Yaakov explains that a Beracha from someone on your side is as if it is a preaching to the choir. Many challenge it and sometimes they are successful. When one needs to receive a Beracha from a Malach who does not regularly support you. The challengers disperse. If the main challenger is claiming that the challenge is over and worthy of Beracha, all side challenges are muted. Hence Yaakov wanted the Beracha from Malach DEsav to silence challenges against him.

The Rosh HaYeshiva ztl. Maran Harav Chaim Yaakov Goldvicht used to explain that the Beracha of the Malach worked in that manner. Rashi explains that through the name change, there would be a recognition that Yaakov did not steal the Berachos through trickery but took them rightfully. By changing his status from Yaakov, the one often associated with the inner-form of Avodas Hashem to Yisroel, the strong deliverer, Yaakov's rightful status as the next link to the Avos would be sealed. By getting the pronouncement from Malach DEsav, the recognition would be from the ultimate source-- the one who would

normally enter the challenge.

Yaakov's secret weapon was his Kol. This week's Chaburah examines the strength of Yaakov at the moments of darkness in the still of the night. It is entitled:

Power of Prayer: Recitation of Tehillim at night

Last week we began a discussion of whether one may learn Torah She'B'ksav at night during the week. The issue seems to be based upon a pronouncement of the Ari HaKadosh (cited in Birkei Yosef). Some discussion ensued as to whether this pronouncement only included Chumash (Rav Shalom Sharavi cited in Shut Chaim Shaal II:25, Sdei Chemed in Sefer Ohr Lee) or not (Chida, ibid). Either way, what would be the Halachic ruling in regard to the recitation of Tehillim at night? Can one recite Tehillim at night if it is meant to be part of prayer? What if it is an emergency, could Tehillim be recited then?

It seems clear that there are periods when the recitation of Tehillim is allowed even at night. The Leket Yosher (I:141) cites the Minhag in his hometown where the congregation would stay up on the night of Yom Kippur in order to recite Tehillim. However many are quick to note that the prohibition of the Ari did not apply to Shabbos and Yom Tov. Thus, Yom Kippur (despite its status as a Yom Din and we try to stay away from things that are MeeOrer Din) takes on a Yom Tov status and one can recite Tehillim on the night of Yom Kippur. Shut Rav Poalim (II Orach Chaim 2) clearly notes that Shabbos and Yom Tov are not included but cautions one from being Meikil on Rosh Chodesh nights despite the call of Yeshiah Hanovi "Chodesh V'Shabbos Kro Mikra (read Mikra)" (Isiah, 1).

When the great Yemenite MeeKubal Rav Shalom Sharavi came to Eretz Yisroel, he toured Chevron and Yirushalayim. While there, he noticed that the Kabbalistic communities of these cities followed the Ari but recited Tehillim in the early hours of the day (before sunrise). In an effort to explain the strange practice he explained that perhaps Tehillim was not included in the Gezaira of the Ari for even Yaakov Aveinu stayed up at night studying and reciting Tehillim (Midrash Rabba). He personally chose not to follow their practice as this dispensation was not recorded by Rav Chaim Vital when he recorded the proclamation of the Ari (See Shut Yosef Ometz 54). However, one thing became apparent, that according to Rav Shalom, the entire night was included in the Gezaira against Mikra.

This position becomes interesting for when the Ben Ish Chai (Shin Alef, Pekudai 7) discusses the issue, he allows one to follow the position of Rav Shalom and recite Tehillim at night after Chatzos on Leil Shabbat. Yakil Avdee (IV:Orach Chaim 2) agreed with the differentiation between periods of the night. He cites the Chida as the source despite the fact that the Chida never makes such a distinction.

What does this mean for us? When discussing the sources cited from Pirka D'rav Eliezer (46:10), Radal notes that the reason Mikra has its time during the day and Moshe studied Mikra during the day on Har Sinai is based upon a Gemara (Gittin 72) that notes that one should not recite the written word by heart. Thus, Mikra at night in a lit room is not a problem. And Tehillim which is known to many by heart would also not pose a problem according to the Radal.

Tehillim, according to many who follow the Ari, is not a problem as well. Kaf HaChaim (237:9) allows the recitation of Tehillim after Chatzos every night because it is not regular Mikra. Rather it takes on the status of Shiros V'Tisbachos. Rav Chaim Palagi explained that Dovid HaMelech rose to recite Tehillim at these times so one must be able to recite them then as well. The Kaf Hachaim's grandson (Emes l'Yaakov Kuntroos Sfias Emes LYom HaKippurim) allowed the recitation of Tehillim earlier if it were to be for the purpose of praying for the ill or the departed. Rav Chaim Palagi only allowed the Shomrim around the bed of a Niftar to recite Tehillim as a Horaas Shaah.

L'Halacha, modern Poskim seem divided on the matter. Rav Ovadiah Yosef (Yabia Omer VI, Orach Chaim, 30) was skeptical but allowed the recitation of Tehillim at night after Chatzos for a Choleh or someone who wanted to recite Tehillim as a form of prayer. The Tzitz Eliezer (VIII:2) was more Meikil and allowed the recitation of Tehillim all night long because Dovid Hamelech wrote them then and the Aris whole concern was study of Mikra and not a Gezaira against prayer.

***** Battala news Mazal Tov to R. Betzalel Posy upon his recent engagement. Mazal Tov to Mr. And Mrs. Avi Grunhaus upon their recent marriage.

From: Kerem B'Yavneh feedback@kby.org

To: kby-parsha@kby.org

Vayishlach "Yaakov was Left Alone"

RAV ARYEH STERN, SHLITA

In the dark of night Yaakov was left alone; no one was with him. That moment was the opportunity for the man who came to wrestle with him. They wrestled until dawn, and when the sun shone Yaakov was left limping -- but victorious. Ultimately, though, Yaakov reaches Shechem complete in all respects: in complete health, with his wealth intact, and complete in his Torah. This episode serves as a microcosm of Am Yisrael's history throughout the generations. "The acts of the patriarchs are a sign for the children."

We begin with a situation in which the entire world is on one side and Avraham Avinu is on the other. This is the starting point for the Divine prophecy in Bilaam's mouth that we are "A nation that will dwell in solitude and not be reckoned among the nations." (Bamidbar 23:9) When we go out in exile, they will lament about us, "Alas -- she sits in solitude." (Eichah 1:1) When we will merit the complete redemption all will say, "Hashem alone will be exalted on that day" (Yeshaya 2:11), and along with him, his nation and flock will sit alone in the greatest height and honor.

Yaakov knew well the secret of Am Yisrael's solitude. He knew that in this solitude is hidden a great blessing. This nation, which was formed in order to tell the praises of G-d in the world, must detach itself from the way of life of the other nations, and adopt for itself a purer, loftier way of life. Only through guarding our uniqueness are we able to fully develop all the Divine abilities that are within us. Unnecessary closeness with the nations that are around us is liable to cause a blurring of our special identity and a loss entirely of our distinction.

Therefore, when Yaakov prepared for his historic meeting with Esav, he prepared himself for three things, among them prayer. What did he pray at that moment? "Rescue me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esav." (Bereishit 32:12) What does the repetition -- "my brother," "Esav" -- allude to? He has no brother other than Esav, so why did he have to repeat, "from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esav?" Furthermore, why did he repeat the phrase, "from the hand of?" He could have said, "Rescue me, please, from the hand of my brother, Esav!"

In the writings of the Beit Halevi we learn that Yaakov understood at that moment that two options stood then before Esav, after all those decades of detachment and hatred. It was possible that Esav was coming in order to attack him and kill him, as a direct continuation of that protracted hatred. However, it was also possible that Esav already changed his attitude, and now he was coming for conciliation and a brotherly relationship of friendship.

Yaakov feared and was concerned about both possibilities. Not only Esav's hatred frightened him, but also his love and affection. The excessive closeness with Esav is also liable to harm his "complete" house, and who knows? Perhaps spiritual damage will be caused to one of his children or family members when they see Esav's decadent way of life. Yaakov knew better than anyone else how difficult and complicated the encounter with the corrupt world is, as Yaakov encountered it in Lavan's house. Although he himself was saved from it, as he said, "I lived with the wicked Lavan -- yet kept the 613 mitzvot" (Rashi, Bereishit 32:4), who can guarantee that all his family will stand up as he did?

This double concern is highlighted in the verses that describe Yaakov's emotions at those moments: "Yaakov became very frightened, and it distressed him." (32:8) This can be interpreted as a double concern. "Yaakov became very frightened" -- of Esav's hatred and vengeance; "and it distressed him" -- if Esav will instead seek his closeness and love. From here flows his prayer, which is comprised of two parts. He asks of G-d, "Rescue me from the hand of my brother" -- if he wants to act towards me as a brother and friend. And, "Rescue me

from Esav" -- if he wants to act towards me wickedly and with hatred. Yaakov's prayer was accepted, and Esav and his large band were not able to do anything to him. However, when Esav saw that he could not prevail with his might, he changed his tactic and suggested to Yaakov an offer of affection and friendship: "Travel on and let us go -- I will proceed alongside you." (Bereishit 33:12) Chazal explain that he suggested forming a partnership in the two worlds, this world and the world to come.

Yaakov understood well the great danger inherent in this offer. It is possible that if they were to live together, he would succeed in influencing Esav somewhat and improving his ways a little. If, indeed, this would happen, Esav would merit a small share in the world to come. However, it was just as likely that Esav would succeed in negatively influencing Yaakov and his family by showing them some of the pleasures of this world. If, G-d forbid, this would occur -- that was exactly the tragedy that Yaakov feared. Yaakov's answer did not delay in coming, and it is clear and unequivocal: "Let my lord go ahead of his servant; I will make my slow pace ...until I come to my lord at Seir." (33:14) Until the coming of the Messiah -- when the great and true encounter between Israel and the other nations will take place -- until then we need to travel alone, and to proceed at our own pace in the fulfillment of the Divine goals that are incumbent upon us.

The struggle that occurred that night is explained by Rashi (32: 25) in two ways: "vaye'avek" is either from the word "dust," that the raised dust with their feet through their motions. Or, it is from the word "to be bound," since it is common for two who are wrestling to grasp one another in their arms. These two interpretations hint to the two ways through which the nations attempt to undermine Israel. The first way is through persecution and wars, which are intended to weaken and destroy the strength and physical existence of Israel. The second way is that of closeness and love, which attempt to weaken and blur the spiritual strength of Israel.

In every generation enemies rise against us to destroy us. That night instills within us the belief that even if we limp -- we will not fall. We will always continue to stride forward. The prohibition of the gid hanashe, which was established for generations, strengthens us and infuses within us a constant hope that the sun will soon shine for us. We will come complete in all aspects of our life to the Temple, which will be established on the mountaintops, and all the nations will stream to it, as Yeshaya prophesized. "For from Zion will go forth the Torah." (Yeshaya 2:3)

From: Jeffrey Gross[SMTP:jgross@torah.org] Subject: Weekly Halacha - Parshas Vayishlach

By RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT Rav of Young Israel of Cleveland Heights A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

BLESSINGS FOR PLEASANT FRAGRANCES

Finally! The Monthly Halachah Discussion, the third volume of The Halachah Discussion series published by Feldheim, is now available at your local Hebrew bookstore.

QUESTION: When is one required to recite a blessing before smelling a pleasant fragrance?

DISCUSSION: Just as one may not derive pleasure from food or drink before reciting a proper blessing, so too, one may not enjoy a pleasant fragrance before reciting the appropriate blessing(1). Certain limitations apply, however, as to when and where this blessing should be recited. Let us explain:

A blessing over a pleasant fragrance is recited only over an object whose purpose is to exude a pleasant fragrance. If the object is primarily for another purpose - even if the object is sweet-smelling - no blessing is recited(2). Some examples: - One enters a kitchen while food is being cooked or baked. Since the purpose of the cooking or baking is not to create an aroma, no blessing is recited(3). - Flowers in a vase exude a pleasant fragrance. Since people usually buy flowers for their beauty, one who walks by and smells them does not recite a blessing. If, however, the flowers are picked up and smelled, a blessing must be recited. [If the flowers are roses, the blessing is Borei atzei

besamim, since a rose bush is considered to be a "tree" in regard to the laws of blessings(4).] - The fragrant smell of a backyard garden, etc. does not require a blessing. This is because a garden is usually planted for its beauty, not for its smell. If, however, one bends over and cups a flower in his hands in order to smell it, a blessing must be said(5). [If the flower is classified as a "grass," the blessing is Borei isvei besamim.] - Many florists display flowers so that their fragrance will attract customers. In such a case, the proper blessing must be recited over the fragrance even if one did not pick the flowers up and even if he has no intention of smelling them(6). If, however, the flowers are displayed just for their beauty, or are packed up for storage, no blessing is said even though the flowers smell good(7). - A cup of coffee is poured for the purpose of drinking. No blessing is said over the aroma since the purpose of pouring the coffee is for drinking and not for its aroma. If, however, one specifically opens a fresh jar of coffee in order to smell it, a blessing is recited(8). No blessing should be recited over instant coffee(9). - A sweet-smelling fruit, such as an esrog, requires the blessing of Ha-nosen rei'ach tov ba-peiros(10). Many poskim rule that nowadays, when fruits are generally grown for their taste and not for their smell, one should avoid smelling these fruits, since it is questionable if a blessing is required(11). On Sukkos, the esrog should not be smelled at all(12).

GENERAL NOTES: Many poskim rule that no blessing is recited over perfume, since its fragrance is derived by chemical means, not natural ones(13). On Motza'ei Shabbos, the proper blessing is Borei minei besamim - no matter what type of fragrance is being used(14). No blessing is recited over air purifiers, deodorants, soaps, etc., since their purpose is to remove foul odors(15). One who does not enjoy a particular fragrance does not recite a blessing. One who needs to smell an item to test if it is fit for purchase does not recite a blessing(16).

FOOTNOTES: 1 O.C. 216:1. 2 O.C. 217:2. See also Mishnah Berurah 217:1; 216:11. 3 Sha'ar ha-Tziyon 216:46. 4 Mishnah Berurah 216:17. 5 Ruling of Harav Y.Y. Fisher (Vezos ha-Berachah, 4th edition, pg. 178); Az Nidberu 10:11. See further for the view of Chazon Ish. 6 Mishnah Berurah 217:1,2. 7 If they are picked up in order to be smelled, a blessing is recited. See note "8" for the view of Chazon Ish. 8 Mishnah Berurah 216:16. Chazon Ish (O.C. 35:5-7), however, rules that if the coffee jar is going to be returned to the kitchen, then no blessing may be recited over it. In his view, a blessing is recited only when the spices are designated for smelling only and serve no other purpose. 9 Harav Y.Y. Fisher (Vezos ha-Berachah, 4th edition, pg. 177). 10 This is the proper nusach which is quoted by most poskim and all siddurim - unlike Mishnah Berurah 216:9. 11 See Chazon Ish O.C. 35:5-7, and Vezos ha-Berachah, 4th edition, pg. 177. 12 Mishnah Berurah 216:53. See Beirur Halachah, that this is so throughout the entire Yom Tov, not only at the time the mitzvah is fulfilled. 13 View of Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Vezos ha-Berachah, 4th edition, pg. 181, Yashiv Moshe, pg. 18) and Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 61 note 32). Harav M. Feinstein is also quoted as ruling not to use perfume for Havdalah (The Radiance of Shabbos, pg. 132). 14 Mishnah Berurah 297:1. Even if fruit is used - Aruch ha-Shulchan 297:4. 15 Mishnah Berurah 217:10; 216:41; Aruch ha-Shulchan 217:5. 16 Harav C.P. Scheinberg (Vezos ha-Berachah, 4th edition, pg. 179). Weekly-Halacha, Copyright 1 2001 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org. The author, Rabbi Neustadt, is the principal of Yavne Teachers' College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is also the Magid Shiur of a daily Mishna Berurah class at Congregation Shomre Shabbos. The Weekly-Halacha Series is distributed L'zchus Doniel Meir ben Hinda. Weekly sponsorships are available - please mail to jgross@torah.org. The series is distributed by the Harbotzas Torah Division of Congregation Shomre Shabbos, 1801 South Taylor Road, Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118 HaRav Yisroel Grumer, Marah D'Asra. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> 17 Warren Road, Suite 2B Baltimore, MD 21208