

Weekly Parsha VAYISHLACH 5781

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

One of the more perplexing questions that is raised in this week's Torah reading is why Yaakov sends agents and messengers to Eisav to inform his brother of his return to the land of Israel. King Solomon in Proverbs had already advised to let sleeping dogs lie, so to speak. So why should Yaakov place himself in a situation of anticipated danger and difficulty when it could have avoided.

There are many insights and comments that have been expressed over the ages regarding this problem. I will take the liberty of adding my ideas to possibly explain this quandary. We all are aware that deep within each of us there is a psychological impetus to attempt to correct what we may deem to be a past error of judgment or behavior. In fact, the entire Jewish concept of repentance is built on this and can be mobilized for good and positive purposes. This impulse is usually sublimated when current events constantly impinge upon our lives.

We are busy making a living, raising a family, engaging in a profession or business, studying or teaching, and we have little time to think and recall all our past misdeeds and errors. In fact, we become so involved in our lives, that almost forget our past behavior and less than noble life patterns. But, as is often the case, the past gnaws upon us, and eventually gives us no rest until and unless we attempt to somehow correct what we feel was wrong and even shameful.

Yaakov is aware that he obtained both the birthright and the blessings from his brother by questionable means. This matter has been discussed for millennia, and we have alluded to the many insights, interpretations, comments, and explanations for the behavior of Yaakov. Nevertheless, the issue remains basically unresolved, for the verses in the Torah remain explicit, unchangeable, and eternal. It is, perfectly understandable that our father Yaakov should try somehow to make amends to his brother for the past times that Eisav, wrongly or rightly, felt that he was taken advantage of and deprived of what was really his.

Considering this, it is perfectly understandable why Yaakov behaves in the way he did and bestows upon Eisav such exaggerated gifts. It may be his attempt to square things and to defuse the bitterness of the past. It is not so much that Eisav should be mollified, but, rather, that Yaakov should become refreshed and more at peace with himself regarding his eternal mission of building the Jewish people – a mission which requires that he possess the birthright and the blessings of his father Yitzchak.

Only people who are at peace with themselves can really be constructive and positive in life, for them and others. It is this realization that impels Yaakov to seek out his brother before establishing himself in the land of Israel and beginning to fulfill the mission and the blessings that were rightly given to him.

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

Be Thyself (Vayishlach 5781)

Rabbi Sacks zt"l had prepared a full year of Covenant & Conversation for 5781, based on his book Lessons in Leadership. The Office of Rabbi Sacks will carry on distributing these essays each week, so people around the world can continue to learn and be inspired by his Torah.

I have often argued that the episode in which the Jewish people acquired its name – when Jacob wrestled with an unnamed adversary at night and received the name Israel – is essential to an understanding of what it is to be a Jew. I argue here that this episode is equally critical to understanding what it is to lead.

There are several theories as to the identity of “the man” who wrestled with the patriarch that night. The Torah calls him a man. The prophet Hosea called him an angel (Hosea 12:4-5). The Sages said it was Samael, guardian angel of Esau and a force for evil.[1] Jacob himself was certain it was God. “Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, “It is

because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared” (Gen. 32:31).

My suggestion is that we can only understand the passage by reviewing the entirety of Jacob's life. Jacob was born holding on to Esau's heel. He bought Esau's birthright. He stole Esau's blessing. When his blind father asked him who he was, he replied, “I am Esau, your firstborn.” (Gen. 27:19) Jacob was the child who wanted to be Esau.

Why? Because Esau was the elder. Because Esau was strong, physically mature, a hunter. Above all, Esau was his father's favourite: “Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebecca loved Jacob” (Gen. 25:28). Jacob is the paradigm of what the French literary theorist and anthropologist Rene Girard called mimetic desire, meaning, we want what someone else wants, because we want to be that someone else.[2] The result is tension between Jacob and Esau. This tension rises to an unbearable intensity when Esau discovers that the blessing his father had reserved for him has been acquired by Jacob, and so Esau vows to kill his brother once Isaac is no longer alive.

Jacob flees to his uncle Laban's home, where he encounters more conflict; he is on his way home when he hears that Esau is coming to meet him with a force of four hundred men. In an unusually strong description of emotion the Torah tells us that Jacob was “very frightened and distressed” (Gen. 32:7) – frightened, no doubt, that Esau was coming to kill him, and perhaps distressed that his brother's animosity was not without cause.

Jacob had indeed wronged his brother, as we saw earlier. Isaac says to Esau, “Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing.” (Gen. 27:35) Centuries later, the prophet Hosea says, “The Lord has a charge to bring against Judah; he will punish Jacob according to his ways and repay him according to his deeds. In the womb he grasped his brother's heel; as a man he struggled with God.” (Hos. 12:3-4) Jeremiah uses the name Jacob to mean someone who practises deception: “Beware of your friends; do not trust anyone in your clan; for every one of them is a deceiver [akov Yaakov], and every friend a slanderer” (Jer. 9:3).

As long as Jacob sought to be Esau there was tension, conflict, rivalry. Esau felt cheated; Jacob felt fear. That night, about to meet Esau again after an absence of twenty-two years, Jacob wrestles with himself; finally he throws off the image of Esau, the person he wants to be, which he has carried with him all these years. This is the critical moment in Jacob's life. From now on, he is content to be himself. And it is only when we stop wanting to be someone else (in Shakespeare's words, “desiring this man's art, and that man's scope, with what I most enjoy contented least”[3]) that we can be at peace with ourselves and with the world.

This is one of the great challenges of leadership. It is all too easy for a leader to pursue popularity by being what people want him or her to be – a liberal to liberals, a conservative to conservatives, taking decisions that win temporary acclaim rather than flowing from principle and conviction. Presidential adviser David Gergen once wrote about Bill Clinton that he “isn't exactly sure who he is yet and tries to define himself by how well others like him. That leads him into all sorts of contradictions, and the view by others that he seems a constant mixture of strengths and weaknesses.”[4]

Leaders sometimes try to ‘hold the team together’ by saying different things to different people, but eventually these contradictions become clear – especially in the total transparency that modern media impose – and the result is that the leader appears to lack integrity. People will no longer trust their remarks. There is a loss of confidence and authority that may take a long time to restore. The leader may find that their position has become untenable and may be forced to resign. Few things make a leader more unpopular than the pursuit of popularity.

Great leaders have the courage to live with unpopularity. Abraham Lincoln was reviled and ridiculed during his lifetime. In 1864 the New York Times wrote of him: “He has been denounced without end as a perjurer, a usurper, a tyrant, a subverter of the Constitution, a destroyer of the liberties of his country, a reckless desperado, a heartless trifler

over the last agonies of an expiring nation.”[5] Winston Churchill, until he became Prime Minister during the Second World War, had been written off as a failure. And soon after the war ended, he was defeated in the 1945 General Election. He himself said that “Success is stumbling from failure to failure with no loss of enthusiasm.” When Margaret Thatcher died, some people celebrated in the streets. John F. Kennedy, Yitzchak Rabin and Martin Luther King were assassinated.

Jacob was not a leader; there was as yet no nation for him to lead. Yet the Torah goes to great lengths to give us an insight into his struggle for identity, because it was not his alone. Most of us have experienced this struggle. (The word *avot* used to describe Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, means not only “fathers, patriarchs” but also “archetypes”). It is not easy to overcome the desire to be someone else, to want what they have, to be what they are. Most of us have such feelings from time to time. Girard argues that this has been the main source of conflict throughout history. It can take a lifetime of wrestling before we know who we are and relinquish the desire to be who we are not.

More than anyone else in Genesis, Jacob is surrounded by conflict: not just between himself and Esau, but between himself and Laban, between Rachel and Leah, and between his sons, Joseph and his brothers. It is as if the Torah were telling us that so long as there is a conflict within us, there will be a conflict around us. We have to resolve the tension in ourselves before we can do so for others. We have to be at peace with ourself before we can be at peace with the world.

That is what happens in this week’s parsha. After his wrestling match with the stranger, Jacob undergoes a change of personality, a transformation. He gives back to Esau the blessing he took from him. The previous day he had given him back the material blessing by sending him hundreds of goats, ewes, rams, camels, cows, bulls and donkeys. Now he gives him back the blessing that said, “Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you.” (Gen. 27:29) Jacob bows down seven times to Esau. He calls Esau “my lord”, (Gen. 33:8) and refers to himself as “your servant”. (33:5) He actually uses the word “blessing”, though this fact is often obscured in translation. He says, “Please take my blessing that has been brought to you”. (33:11) The result is that the two brothers meet and part in peace.

People conflict. They have different interests, passions, desires, temperaments. Even if they did not, they would still conflict, as every parent knows. Children – and not just children – seek attention, and one cannot attend to everyone equally all the time. Managing the conflicts that affect every human group is the work of the leader – and if the leader is not sure of and confident in their identity, the conflicts will persist. Even if the leader sees themselves as a peacemaker, the conflicts will still endure.

The only answer is to “know thyself”. We must wrestle with ourselves, as Jacob did on that fateful night, throwing off the person we persistently compare ourselves to, accepting that some people will like us and what we stand for while others will not, understanding that it is better to seek the respect of some than the popularity of all. This may involve a lifetime of struggle, but the outcome is an immense strength.

No one is stronger than one who knows who and what they are.

Shabbat Shalom: Vayishlach (Genesis 32:4 – 36:43)

By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel — “So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. And Jacob journeyed to Succot, and built himself a home...” (Genesis 33:16-17)

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

Jacob finally returns to his ancestral home after an absence of twenty years. Understandably, Jacob is terrified of his brother’s potential reaction and so, in preparation, Jacob sends messengers ahead with exact instructions how to address Esau. Informed of the impending approach

of Esau’s army of four hundred men, he divides his household into two camps, in order to be prepared for the worst.

But what actually happens defies Jacob’s expectations: Esau is overjoyed and thrilled to see him. The past is the past: “And Esau ran to meet [Yaakov], and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him, and they wept” [ibid. 33:4].

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

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

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

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

And what is true for a bowl of soup is true for his choice of wives, as he marries Hittite women, causing his parents to feel a “bitterness of spirit” [ibid. 26:35]. No wonder! The decision of many modern Jews to “marry out” has, according to the 2013 Pew Research Center report, reached an American average of 58%! The “bitterness of spirit” continues to be felt in many families throughout the diaspora. As the Pew report shows, those who marry out and continue to profess a strong Jewish identity are not able to commit to Jewish continuity. Perhaps Esau even mouthed the argument I’ve heard from those I’ve tried to dissuade from marrying out. “But she has a Jewish name!” “She even looks Jewish!” Esau may have said, “Her name is Yehudit!” [literally, a Jewess, from Judah]. “She has a wonderful fragrance!” [Basmal means perfume] [ibid. v. 34].

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

Insights Parshas Vayishlach Kislev 5781

eshiva Beis Moshe Chaim/Talmudic University

Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

This week’s Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Miriam bas Yoel. May her Neshama have an Aliya!”

Camel-ot

...he took from that which had come into his hand a tribute to Eisav his brother: She goats two hundred and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty nursing camels and their young, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys (32:14-16).

This week's parsha opens with Yaakov feverishly preparing for meeting his brother Eisav, who was coming toward him in full battle mode. Rashi (ad loc 32:9) explains that Yaakov prepared in three specific ways: tribute, prayer, and war.

The Torah, in the passage quoted above, details the number of animals that Yaakov readied as a gift for his brother. Oddly, four of the five species that Yaakov gave to Eisav are listed as males and females, while the camels were gifted as pairs of mother and child. It seems probable that this is the reason the Midrash offers an alternate reading of the possuk (cited by Rashi ad loc).

The Midrash suggests that instead of reading the phrase "thirty nursing camels with their young," (בניהם) it should be read as, "thirty nursing camels with those that build them (בנאיהם, i.e. their mates)." Rashi goes on to quote the end of the Midrash that explains why the mates of the camels are written in such a cryptic manner: As camels are modest in their mating habits, the Torah chose not to publicize that the camels were mated pairs.

Why does the Torah describe male camels as "those that build them," and what does this have to do with the fact that they are modest in their mating habits?

Modesty is an attribute that we find associated with royalty. According to the Talmud, Shaul, the first king of Bnei Yisroel, was destined to come from Rachel because of her modesty, and Queen Esther came from him because of his modesty (see Megillah 13b). But what does modesty have to do with kingship?

Modest people are secure within themselves; they don't need constant validation and therefore don't seek the spotlight. They actually prefer to listen rather than speak, so when they take a stand it isn't because they have to be right but rather because they aren't afraid of being wrong and admitting it. Most importantly, they always focus on the needs of others and look for ways to build those around them. These are the necessary characteristics for leadership.

Because the camels are innately modest, the relationship between male and female is one of a bond – they are the only species that Yaakov sent that have 1:1 ratio of male to female. In other words, they were a single unit. The camels aren't focused on self-promotion or merely gratifying their desires, their focus is on having children. The Torah describes having children as being "built" (see Bereishis 16:2 and Rashi).

Because the camels have a sense of modesty, the basis of their mating is not self-centered. The male camels are focused on producing the next generation, which in turn "builds up" the females.

When Angels Sing

Then he said, "Let me go for dawn has broken" (32:27).

This week's parsha recounts the remarkable encounter between Yaakov Avinu and Eisav's "guardian angel" (see Rashi on 32:25). The angel fought with Yaakov and actually injured him, which is why Yaakov emerged from this encounter with a limp. But Yaakov held him in a vise-like grip and the angel pleaded with Yaakov to let him go. Rashi (32:27) explains that the angel told Yaakov that it was his turn to give shira (praise to the Almighty) and that it had to be done by day (see Rashi ad loc).

Yet the Gemara in Chagigah states that angels offer song only at night but keep silent during the day out of respect for the Jewish people (who are giving their own shira). The Maharsha asks (ad loc), why did the angel beg Yaakov to be set free so that he could offer his shira if they only sing at night? Maharsha suggests that there are different types of angels and perhaps this refers to the angels that are created daily and only have the opportunity to sing at that time. This answer seem a little difficult to reconcile with the Chazal, which states that this angel in particular was the guardian angel of Eisav (and presumably not created on that day).

Perhaps there is an easier way to resolve these conflicting Chazals. First, we must understand, in a very simple and basic manner, the purpose of

shira. Ramchal in Yalkut Yedios Ha'emes states that all actions and interactions from heaven take place through shira. Obviously, it is difficult to understand exactly what this means. However, at its most basic level, every action is a manner of connecting and interacting.

The word shira means a link. Likewise, the word sharsheres means a chain – connected links. This explains the very element of what a song is supposed to do, connect one another and create a bond. Thus, the process of shira is that of connecting to one another. When Hashem created the world, His goal was to bestow the ultimate kindness; a relationship with Him. Therefore, the purpose of creation is to create a relationship with Hashem. Shira becomes the most natural expression of this goal, which explains why all beings say shira (see Tehillim 66:4).

Before man, angels were the highest level beings and therefore they had the prominence of saying shira during the day. This continued until the creation of the Jewish people. Avraham Avinu made it his mission to connect the world with Hashem, which became the mission statement for Jewish people's "corporate philosophy."

This week's parsha contains a seismic shift from angels being the forces of connecting Hashem to the world to Bnei Yisroel taking over that role. The angel of Eisav informs Yaakov that Hashem will shortly come to him in a vision and change his name to Yisrael – officer of Hashem. This parsha is also where Yaakov and his family transition from being a brotherhood to being a national entity (a fact made very clear in the story of Dina).

This is why the angel pleads with Yaakov to let him go. Since the status of Yisrael is about to be conferred on Yaakov and his family, it is one of the last opportunities that this angel will have to say shira during the day. For as soon as there is a nation of Yisrael, the angels' opportunity to sing is only at night.

Did You Know...

This week's parsha recounts the kidnapping of Dina and her subsequent liberation by two of her brothers, Shimon and Levi. The brothers then went and slaughtered all the male inhabitants of the city of her captivity. In Pirkei Avos (5:21) it says that once a male reaches the age of 13 he becomes liable to keep all the mitzvos. Rashi (ad loc) explains how we know that the age of responsibility is 13: The Torah (Bamidbar 5:6) says, "a man or woman that commits a sin," and we see that the Torah's definition of manhood is in this week's parsha. Levi, who was only 13 at the time that he and Shimon wiped out the city of Shechem, is referred to here as a man.

Seeing as Rashi cites our parsha as the source for bar mitzvah being from the age of 13, we decided to see what others say on the subject.

1. The Gemara (Niddah 46a) explains the possuk (Numbers 6:2) regarding a man's obligation saying that a "man" is a male who is 13 years and one day old.
2. Another Gemara (Yoma 82a) identifies 13 as the year that boys are liable for biblical commandments.
3. As previously stated, the most well known definition of manhood is from the story of when Shimon and Levi wiped out the city of Shechem. The Torah (Bereshis 34:25) calls them "ish – man," when Levi was exactly 13 (See Tosfos Yom Tov to Avos 5:21 for a calculation). According to Rashi (Nazir 29b) Levi is the youngest person in the Torah that we find described as a man.
4. According to others, since the Gemara (Sukka 5b) says that all measurements were received by Moshe on Har Sinai, many Rishonim say that the age of 13 as bar mitzvah is included in this "Halacha L'Moshe Misinai" (Sheilos V'Teshuvos Ha'Rosh Klal 16 Siman 1, Sheilos V'Teshuvos Maharil Siman 51, and also quoted by Rashi to Avos 5:21).
5. Midrash Raba Parshas Toldos 63:14 says that at 13 years of age Eisav and Yaakov parted ways. Until then they were both going to Yeshiva. Rabbi Elazar says until 13 years old one has to raise his child, at 13 a parent says Boruch Shepatranu – blessed is the Holy one who released my responsibility (recited by most fathers on the day of their son's bar mitzvah).

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Parashat Vayishlach 5781

The Parsha and Current Events: Surviving Evil

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

The weekly Torah readings are approaching the end of the patriarchal and matriarchal period, the founding fathers and mothers of our nation who are very much with us, due to the pivotal role they played in the future direction of the Jewish nation and world history.

The Gemara states (Tractate Berachot 16,b):

Only three (Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov) are considered Avot (founding fathers) and only four (Sara, Rivka, Rachel and Leah) are considered Imahot (founding mothers).

And on the dream of Paro's Chief Butler (Bereishiet 40:10):

and in the vine were three branches: and it budded into blossoms and the clusters brought forth ripe grapes

The Gemara (Chulin 92,a) explains:

The vine represents the world, the three branches – Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov, its blossoms shot forth – Sara, Rivka, Rachel and Leah, and the clusters brought forth ripe grapes – the twelve tribes.

What made the Avot and Imahot unique?

As explained in volume 1B of "With All Your Might" (parashat Kedoshim 5768) the strange number of 613 mitzvot (HaShem's commandments to the Jewish nation) are the result of the life's work of the Avot – Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov. The kedusha (holiness) of these three men was so elevated that, through their actions, they penetrated into the highest domain of the spiritual world and, by doing so, revealed the mitzvot (actions) which unite our world and the Shamayim. Had the Avot been greater, we today would have 614 mitzvot or 1000. Had they been less holy, we would have today 612 or less.

Rava, the great Babylonian Amora confirms this (Sota 17:a):

In the merit of Avraham's humility where he refers to himself as ashes and dust, we have the mitzvot of ashes of the red heifer and the dust of the sota; and in the merit of rejecting the offer of a reward for saving the people of Sodom by saying, "I will not take from a string to a shoe thong," we have the mitzvot of techelet in tzitzit and the leather straps on the tefillin.

The three Avot achieved the pinnacle of human kedusha that enabled them to contact the spiritual roots of mitzvot.

Now, if the Avot were essential in constituting the character of the Jewish nation in the elevated spirituality that connects us to the Creator, the contributions of the Imahot dominated the very real "hands on, day-to-day" involvement and survival of the Jewish nation in the jungle we call olam hazeh (this world).

Our mother Sarah perceived the unbridgeable, contrasting souls of the holy, God-fearing Yitzchak as opposed to the pereh adam (wild, untamable) Yishmael. Yishmael's corrupt, depraved, heinous, immoral, impious and profane basic nature would bring untold human suffering through his pagan beliefs, and eventually through Islam, which are all the absolute antithesis of the basic nature of the future Jewish nation.

Our mother Sarah, with HaShem's approval, "molded in concrete" the future conflict between Yitzchak and Yishmael by urging Avraham to send Hagar and Yishmael away. Sarah's words, "The son of this maidservant will not be heir with my son Yitzchak" would be the guiding factors in who would be the sole heirs to Avraham's spiritual bond with HaShem, as would be indicated by HaShem's gift of Eretz Yisrael to the descendants of the three Avot.

The second of our great Matriarchs was Rivka, to whom I will return shortly.

The third and fourth of our matriarchs – Rachel and Leah, who, unknown to their husband Ya'akov were forced by their father Lavan to exchange places on the wedding night, had a prodigious influence in all of Jewish history. It laid the groundwork for the centuries long contention and rivalry between the House of David from Leah, and the House of Yosef born to Rachel.

The House of Yosef claimed that the monarchy was their legitimate heritage, since their mother Rachel was intended to be the wife of

Ya'akov, first in number and in emotions. The House of David claimed that the monarchy was de facto given to Yehuda, son of Leah, and through him to David.

Ultimately, the rivalry brought about the secession of the ten northern tribes under Yeravam ben Navat, with the city of Shechem, the burial place of Yosef, as the breakaway capital, and the exile of the ten tribes under King Hoshea ben Elah by the Assyrians.

But this is not the end of the story of the ten lost tribes. They will eventually return to the Jewish nation in the most miraculous way, very soon.

Let's return now to Rivka, wife of Yitzchak and mother of Ya'akov and Esav.

Our parasha states (Bereishiet 35:8)

And Devorah, Rivka's nurse died, and she was buried below (in the vicinity of) Beth-el under the oak; and the name of it was Allon-bacuth.

Rashi comments that when Ya'akov left home to go to the house of Lavan, Rivka promised to send for him when Esav's anger would wane. After 20 years, Rivka sends Devorah to inform Ya'akov that he could now return home. When Esav learned that Ya'akov was returning home, he went out to meet Ya'akov with a military force of 400 men, all intent to kill Ya'akov and close the book on the future Jewish nation. Under these circumstances, why did Rivka send for Ya'akov to return?

I submit:

After 20 years of hateful planning by Esav, Rivka realized that Esav's animosity towards Ya'akov would never dissipate. She sent her lifelong, loyal mentor and companion, Devorah, to inform Ya'akov that his brother's hatred would be carried on from father to son, from nation to nation until the end of history. So, the time had come for Ya'akov to return to Eretz Yisrael and stand up to Esav in defense of God's values of good against evil, without fear or trepidation; and HaShem would be at Ya'akov's side.

In our parasha, the two brothers meet. The Torah relates that Esav ran towards Ya'akov with the intent to kill him, but instead of the "kiss of death" Esav kisses his brother in a dramatic turn of events!

What happened?

As Esav was advancing towards the Jewish family, an exceptional unexpected scene unfolded before his eyes. Ya'akov with his four wives, sons and daughters had fallen to the ground in an act of total submission. Esav felt that the thrill of the ongoing degrading, debasing, demeaning, disgracing, dishonoring, and dehumanizing of his brother was far more pleasurable, entertaining, gratifying, and satisfying than the one instant surge of euphoria of murdering him would be.

Esav says to himself, "Let Ya'akov and the Jews live on. After the Crusades, the pogroms, the auto-da-fé, and the exiles, my children's children will emaciate Ya'akov's children in ghettos, then herd them into cattle cars on the way to the gas chambers and crematoria of Treblinka and Auschwitz. Indeed, let Ya'akov live on".

Ya'akov, for his part, returned home to compete with Esav, as he was told by Rivka. But Ya'akov when seeing Esav's 400 bloodthirsty men as opposed to the few of his family, realized that the time had not yet arrived for him to defeat Esav. It was the will of HaShem to permit evil a free hand in history, with the eventual outcome that evil would devour itself, as has proven to be the case in human history. But in the interim Ya'akov and the Jewish nation would have to be satisfied with mere survival within the evil that surrounds them.

Until when????

The answer is in this week's haftara from the prophecy of Ovadia:

For the day of God is near upon all the nations: as they did to you, it shall be done to them...

But in mount Zion there shall be refuge for you, and it shall be holy; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.

And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall burn among them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining to the house of Esau; for God has spoken.

And they of the South shall possess the mount of Esau, and they of the lowland the Philistines; and they shall possess the field of Ephraim, and

the field of Samaria; and Benjamin shall possess Gilead... And liberators shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be of HaShem.

Shabbat Shalom,
Nachman Kahana

Rabino Pynchas Brener
Conectandote al Judaismo

Vayishlach :: Yaacov Fights An Angel

The patriarch had been absent from his parents' home because he feared the justified wrath of his brother Esav. Hadn't he unlawfully obtained the patriarchal blessing to the detriment of his brother? His parents warned him of possible fraternal revenge and Yaacov found refuge in the home of his uncle Lavan, where he married his two daughters. Including the concubines awarded to him. Yaacov became the progenitor of twelve children who, in turn, fathered the twelve tribes of Israel.

After twenty years of absence from the parental home, the moment of return arrived. In recent days, Yaacov had concluded that Lavan's influence had rubbed off on him and that the time had come to face reality: his brother's anger. But this time he was accompanied by twelve men, a multitude of servants and thousands of heads of animals that made up his herd. The scouts he sent reported that Esav was coming to meet him with four hundred men, a number that augured a warlike confrontation. Yaacov had to prepare.

The night before the meeting he went out alone, probably to ponder the possible outcome of the following day. He ran into an ish, an enigmatic human or angel whom he had to fight until dawn. Who was this iconic figure? Was he a man, a devil or an angel? If he was indeed an angel, what had been his mission? There are those who think that it was Esav's protective angel who came to wound Yaacov to weaken him before the next day's meeting between the brothers. Others believe that he was Yaacov's protective angel, whose mission was to train him and teach him how to overcome Esav.

Rambam thinks that this episode happened in Yaacov's brain. It was a dream. Such as the donkey of Bileam who, years later, would speak only in the mind of the prophet. A kind of fantasy that had a prophetic quality. According to Rambam, the biblical text perhaps refers to the fight that Yaacov had to wage against himself. The dream had had a real impact because it injured his thigh.

Rabbi Yosef Karo considers the experiences of the patriarchs to augur the future of the Hebrew nation. Abraham's journey to Egypt in response to the Canaan famine predicted the exile of his descendants into Egyptian slavery. The events that accompanied the life of Yitschak correspond to the exile in Babylon, and Yaacov exemplifies the millennial exile of the Hebrew people. Now, Esav demands the return of the paternal blessing and the rights of the firstborn that Yaacov took away. Esav knows he has no merit for it and sends his protective angel to fight Yaacov. Yaacov comes out victorious of the encounter and the angel blesses him and thus confirms who owns the blessing that the old patriarch Yitschak had given.

The case of the primogeniture is different: Karo thinks that the wound that Yaacov receives in the thigh is a sign that this matter has not been resolved. With the gifts that Yaacov offers to Esav in this anticipated meeting, the full payment for the birthright is fulfilled, since Esav knows that he does not possess the moral integrity to assume the religious leadership of the family, a primordial function of the primogeniture. Yaacov's limp is cured after Esav accepts his brother's gifts.

Shaul Regev quotes Rabbi Elicer Ashkenazi, who believes that the birthright was legally acquired by Yaacov. He even received a document signed by Esav which, as was the custom, he tied around his waist and this is the reason why the angel attacked him in that area of his body. The idea is that Yaacov did not acquire that right through a stratagem, behavior that is derived from the etymology of his name Yaacov. Therefore, the angel changed his name from Yaacov to Israel, whose meaning is authority.

Abarbanel, who points to Rambam's interpretation that everything had happened in the course of a prophetic stupor, differentiates between "dream" and "vision." In the case of a "prophetic vision," the events take on a tangible reality, as in the case of the three characters who appeared before the convalescent Abraham after his circumcision.

For Abarbanel, he was not just a person who wanted to eliminate Yaacov; the angel represented a nation and, therefore, the fight against Israel did not end with that episode. The Jewish people will not be defeated, but they will be wounded. As long as Israel resides in Esav's territory, while it is in exile, it will have to suffer injuries. But when the final redemption comes, the other peoples will have to offer him a blessing and, in this way, they will confirm the authenticity and legitimacy of the original blessing Yaacov received from the elder Yitschak.

Posted on Thursday, December 3, 2020

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Vayishlach

For the week ending 5 December 2020 / 19 Kislev 5781

Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

Insights

Air Thin

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

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

And if you could go further than that, beyond the microscopic, if you'd go beyond the limits of human vision itself, you'd be even more amazed and possibly more than a little frightened.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: *Lev Eliyahu*

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Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

He is Not a Candyman

I was privileged to have had several informal conversations with a well-known sage from a previous generation. I will share two of those conversations with you, dear reader, but since they were "off the record," I will not mention his name.

Our discussion centered upon one of his favorite topics, Jewish education. He felt that there was much to be proud of in the then-current state of early elementary education, for students of age six to ten years.

The problem, he insisted, was from that age onward through the range of stages of human life.

"We cannot allow teenagers to remain with the understanding of the stories of the Torah that they first heard when they were kindergarteners. They then heard what the world refers to as 'Bible stories,' and teenagers cannot take 'Bible stories' seriously. We must teach them a more mature understanding of the stories of Chumash if their Torah studies are to have an impact upon their minds and souls."

He went on to argue that if the lessons learned in early grade school are irrelevant, at best, to teenagers, those lessons can certainly not satisfy the intellectual appetites and moral sensitivities of individuals in their twenties, thirties, sixties, and seventies.

I vividly recall leaving his apartment after that conversation. From that moment, I resolved to assure that my lessons, to adolescents as well as to senior citizens, would contain interpretive material adequate to their developmental stages. I would no longer limit my lectures to the surface meaning of Torah texts but would search carefully for deeper meanings, meanings that would resonate with my students "where they were at."

At a much later conversation, the aforementioned sage told me that he had something to add: "It is not just in teaching texts that we must adjust our teaching to the maturity level of our audience. We must do so all the more when we discuss the nature of the divine. Very young children are taught to do good deeds, and that then the Almighty will reward them. They come to think of the Almighty as a grand old candyman who distributes candies to good little boys and good little girls. We cannot allow the kindergartner's perception of the Almighty to persist into adolescence, adulthood, and beyond. Our understanding of the nature of the Lord must grow as we grow older."

I took this conversation even more seriously than I took the earlier one. It was then that, in my own teaching and writing, I began to speak of the need for "spiritual maturity."

Since then, I have discovered numerous texts which speak of "spiritual maturity," albeit in a different terminology. Let me share some of these texts with you.

One text is authored by the great medieval moralist, Rabbenu Yonah of Gerona. His classic work, Shaarei Teshuvah, or "Gates of Repentance," contains these words:

"...Say not to yourselves, 'The Lord has enabled us to possess this land because of our virtues...' It is not because of your virtues and your rectitude..." (Deuteronomy 9:4-5). We have hereby been exhorted not to attribute our success to our righteousness or the uprightness of our hearts, but to believe and to know within our hearts that it derives from the lovingkindness of the Exalted One and from His great goodness, as Jacob our father, may Peace be upon him, said, "I am not worthy of all the mercies and of all the truth" (Genesis 32:11).

Note that this marvelous teaching has its roots in the words of Jacob in this week's Torah portion, Parshat Vayishlach (Genesis 32:3-36:43). There Jacob returns to the Land of Israel after years of exile. He prefaces his prayer of gratitude with these memorable words: "Katonti—literally, I am too small—to have merited all of the mercies and all of the truth that You have bestowed upon me..."

Rabbenu Yonah insists that these words in Deuteronomy are not merely spoken to the generation of the Children of Israel near the end of their sojourn in the wilderness. Nor are Jacob's words just for the historical record. Rather, there is a message here for each of us for all eternity. As the author of the work known as Sma"k (Sefer Mitzvos HaKatan) states so clearly: "One must never be a tzadik in one's own eyes."

In the eloquent words of the author of the Derashot HaRan (Sermon 10): "When the Children of Israel are victorious against a mighty enemy, the Almighty is not concerned that they will attribute their victory to their own might. After all, the enemy was much mightier than they. He is much more concerned that, although they will concede that their victory was due to His intervention, they will credit themselves for His assistance, believing that it was their piety that caused Him to perform miracles on their behalf... Man attributes his successes to himself, one way or another."

Rabbi Bahya ben Asher comments on the verse in this week's parasha: "We must all reflect, in our prayers, upon our own insufficiencies and deficiencies in contrast to the Master whom we serve. We deserve nothing. He owes us nothing. Whatever we receive from Him stems from His pure lovingkindness."

The Almighty is not just a "candyman" who doles out goodies to us because of our paltry piety. The successes we experience are drawn from His otzar matnat chinam, His treasure house of freely given gifts.

In our contemporary jargon, we must recognize that our successes are from His "pocket full of freebies." Then we achieve "spiritual maturity." "Spiritual maturity" also informs our personal prayers. We must understand that we need the Lord's help not only for our physical requirements, our health, wellbeing, and material success. Additionally, we need His help to achieve "spiritual" benefits. We need His support to control our darker passions. We need His encouragement to become better people. We need His help to untangle difficult passages in the course of our Torah studies. We must pray for His succor as we struggle with the moral, ethical, and, yes, political challenges of our times.

Rabbi Avraham Godzinsky, a Holocaust victim, said it well in an essay written shortly before his murder, posthumously published in the collection of his writings, Torat Avraham:

One must never delude himself into thinking that the spiritual aspects of his life are in his control, that he is the one who improves his behavior, that he is the one who repairs his character, since after all he has free will, and he chooses his way in life on his own. The truth is that all a person can do is to will and to commit to the good. But good actions are ultimately not in his control. Life and health are necessary for effective action, talent and skill are necessary to perform mitzvot, inner strength is necessary to overcome the evil urge. But for life and health and talent and skill, man is utterly dependent upon divine assistance.

After all, we pray daily and give thanks for our intelligence, for our mental capacity to study Torah, for our ability to articulate prayers, for our courage to repent, and so man recognizes that even the spiritual part of him is not his. Man directs his eyes upwards to the Lord as he says in his prayers, "Enlighten our eyes in Your Torah, connect our hearts to Your mitzvot, and direct our hearts to love and to fear Your Name."

Is it not poignantly painful, but profoundly edifying, that we owe these elevated words describing "spiritual maturity" to a man whose life was brutally extinguished soon after he wrote these words?

May we all take to heart the need to mature spiritually. Hopefully, we will do so with the help of the words of both a Holocaust martyr and a deliberately unnamed sage who escaped the Holocaust.

Each taught me of the urgency to grow spiritually as we age physically.

Drasha Parshas Vayishlach - Ask Me No Questions Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya

One of the Bible's most famous battles was not between two armies or two nations. It was between mortal man and his immortal counterpart — an angel.

Leaving his family's encampment to retrieve some small items, Yaakov Avinu (Jacob) lingered alone in the pre-dawn hours, and a man approached him. The man engaged him in battle, and in the struggle, Yaakov dislocated his sciatic nerve. Nevertheless, he was able to lock the mysterious man in a fast hold. "Send me away," cried the foe, "dawn is approaching."

Yaakov realized that this combatant was no ordinary wayfarer, in fact he was a heavenly messenger — the Angel of Esav — and Yaakov made a condition for release. "I will not release you unless you bless me," he demanded.

The Midrash explains that everyone has an angelic representative. Yaakov, who had Divine inspiration, met his angelic opponent as a prelude to the face-to-face encounter with his adversarial mortal brother. The Talmud explains that the angel had celestial responsibilities that began at dawn. He therefore begged Yaakov to allow him to return to those duties.

In response to Yaakov's demand, the angel asked Yaakov his name to which he declared. "Your name will no longer be Yaakov but rather Yisrael (Israel), as you fought with angels and with men (Lavan & Esav) – and won" (Genesis 32:26-29).

Then Yaakov asks the angel for his name. The response is enigmatic. "Why do you ask my name?" There is no further response. The angel blesses Yaakov who, badly injured, limps back to his family (Genesis 32:30).

The obvious question is: What is the meaning of the angel's response? Why did he answer Yaakov's question with a question? Why did he refuse to divulge his name? Or did the angel actually tell Yaakov an answer with that question?

At our supper table one evening each of our children took turns trying to stump me and my wife, with riddles. Some of the brain twisters were quite tricky, but my wife and I managed to figure out the answers. Then my daughter announced that she had something to say that would stump everyone.

After prefacing her remarks by telling everyone to listen to the clues carefully, She started her riddle.

She began by telling us that China had 1.2 billion people, it occupied approximately 3,700,000 sq. miles, and its population density was 327 people per sq. mi. She continued by listing China's principal languages: Mandarin, Yue, Wu, Hakka, Xiang, Gan, Minbei, Minnan. Then she stopped, and with a probing tone in her voice announced quite smugly: "How long is a Chinaman's name."

We all took the last statement as a question and looked at each other. We were stumped. How did the previously stated facts correlate with the length of a Chinaman's name? How would the fact that China had over a billion people explain how long a Chinese name was?

Again she just stood up and repeated. "How long is a Chinaman's name."

In unison, we all shrugged our shoulders. "O.K.," we conceded, "How long is a Chinaman's name?"

My daughter just smiled. "I don't know either. I never asked you a question all I wanted to tell you, in addition to all the other facts that I compiled about China, is that How Long, is the name of a Chinese man!"

Sometimes, "why do you ask" is a questions, sometimes it is an answer as well. The angel that wrestled with Yaakov responded to Yaakov's question in a very intriguing way. My name is, "why do you ask my name." Rabbi Yehuda Laib Chasman, the Mashgiach (dean of ethics) of the Hebron Yeshiva, explained that the angel of Esau sent a very poignant message through Yaakov. Those who struggle with Jacob do not want us to question them. They want us to act without thought, rhyme or reason. Their motto is, "Why do you ask?" If we do not ask questions, Esav's angel will surely overcome. If you ask no questions, no answers are necessary. Actions go unchecked, and there is never an accounting.

Throughout history, Jews always asked for names. When Moshe first encounters G-d in the Egyptian dessert he asks of Him, "when the Jews ask me what is His Name what should I tell them." Hashem responds, "I shall be As I Shall Be" (Exodus 3:13-14). The Jews were asking for an anthropomorphic quality that G-d's name personified. Yaakov, too, wanted to understand the very essence of the angel who personified the struggles he would eternally encounter.

The answer was simple – My name is – Why-do-you-ask-my-name. That name may be a little confusing at times. It may be difficult to comprehend. It may even sound like Chinese. But if we don't ask, and if we are satisfied with the response, "why even ask?", then we will never have an answer. In fact, we won't even have a clue.

Dedicated in honor of the 11th Wedding Anniversary of Dr. Blair and Andrea Tuttle Skolnick. by Drs. Irving and Vivian Skolnick

Good Shabbos!

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky is the Dean of the Yeshiva of South Shore.

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Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Vayishlach

Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya

Rashi's Double Interpretation: A Mixed Message or Two Sides of the Same Coin?

At the beginning of Parshas Vayishlach, the pasuk records Yaakov's charge to his messengers: "Thus shall you say, to my lord, to Eisav, 'So said your servant Yaakov: I have sojourned with Lavan and have lingered until now...'" [Bereshis 32:5]. Yaakov is preparing for his fateful meeting with his brother, and he knows that Eisav harbors ill will towards him, so he sends Malachim to prepare Eisav for their upcoming encounter.

Rashi brings two interpretations of the phrase "Im Lavan Garti" (I have resided with Lavan). The first interpretation focuses on the relationship between the word garti and the word ger (stranger). Yaakov sends the message to his brother: "I have not become an officer or an important personage; I have remained a stranger. You have no reason to hate me for the fact that our father blessed me that I should be a lord over my brother, for this blessing never materialized." This is a message of submission. Eisav, you have nothing to be jealous about. I, your brother, have remained a nothing in life.

Then Rashi brings a second interpretation: Garti equals in Gematria (adding the numerical value of each letter), the value of Taryag (613), hinting at the fact that "I lived (Garti) with Lavan and I kept the 613 (Taryag) mitzvos, and did not learn from his wicked behavior." According to this interpretation, Yaakov is not being submissive. On the contrary, he maintains, "I remained a Tzadik for twenty years without succumbing to Lavan's bad influence in the slightest way."

The Kli Yakar asks that these are two contradictory messages: One claims "I am nothing, I am like a ger." The other claims "I am a Tzadik. I kept all 613 commandments! So, you better watch out." It is rare that Rashi brings two interpretations that are diametrically opposed—that send out contradictory messages. Which is it

The Kli Yakar has his own answer to this question, but I saw an interesting twist, a totally different take on things, from Rav Leib Gurvitz, the Rosh Yeshiva in Gateshead. His interpretation is that these are not mixed messages. In fact, they are the same message. "You should know that I have nothing, and I am nothing." When Yaakov says "I kept the 613 commandments and did not learn from Lavan's evil ways" what he is telling Eisav is that "I kept the mitzvos, but they were very, very lacking because I did not learn from his evil ways." In other words, while living with Lavan, I saw what passion is and what devotion and mesiras nefesh mean. The way Lavan went about his activities, there was no stopping him. He brought to his evil intentions such a dedication and enthusiasm, that my performance of mitzvos paled in comparison to Lavan's passion and hislahavus!

Let us give an example. We are currently holding around Thanksgiving time. After Thanksgiving is "Black Friday." We may read the stories about the Door-Buster sales. We may read about how people camped out in Walmart's parking lot. The doors open at 6:00 am and people will leave their Thanksgiving Dinners and the Thanksgiving football games so that they can go camp out in the Walmart parking lot to be among the first ones inside the store when the doors open, to grab up the limited quantity big-ticket items that go on sale on "Black Friday." Why do they do this? To get an 83-inch-wide screen plasma TV for \$150!

There is nothing that would cause me to camp out in a parking lot of Walmart, ever! I would not do it for a shiur! Their hislahavus (enthusiasm) for the wide-screen TV is more than my hislahavus for my mitzvos. This is an indictment. That is what Yaakov is telling Eisav: True, I kept the 613 mitzvos but I did not learn from Lavan's passion and enthusiasm in his approach to his evil ways, to apply that enthusiasm to my mitzvos. Thus, Rashi's two comments are not diametrically opposed messages. They are in fact the same message.

Expressions of Gratitude are the Mark of a Great People

After Yaakov Avinu meets Eisav, the pasuk says: "Then Yaakov journeyed to Succoth and built himself a house, and for his livestock he made shelters; therefore, he called the name of the place Succoth. Yaakov came intact to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, upon his coming from Paddan-aram, and he encamped before

the city (VaYichan es pnei ha'ir)." [Bereshis 33:17-18] What does this expression "VaYichan es pnei ha'ir" mean?

The Pesikta Zutrasa says on this phrase: What does this teach us? We learn from here that a person must show gratitude and appreciation to a place from which he derives benefit. So, what did Yaakov do? He sent presents to the people who ran the city—the City Council, the Governor, the Mayor—to show his appreciation. The Pesikta Zutrasa then gives a second interpretation: He created a marketplace and sold merchandise cheaply. (He created the first Walmart! He created a large shopping center and brought down the price of commodities for the townspeople.) Why did he do this? To express gratitude to the city!

The Yerushalmi interprets VaYichan es pnei ha'ir similarly: Rav Yochanan says, "He established public bathhouses for them." Rav says, "He established a monetary system of coinage (matbeyah) for them." Shmuel says, "He created markets for them." Why did he do this? To demonstrate appreciation to the city!

This is a novel concept: Gratitude and appreciation must be shown not only to individuals who have benefited us, but even to a location, a place, that has benefited us!

There was a Jew named Rav Yisrael Zev Gustman. He was a Dayan on the Beis Din of Rav Chaim Ozer in Vilna when he was only in his twenties! He came to the United States of America and started a Yeshiva in Brooklyn called Netzach Yisrael. He later moved the Yeshiva to Eretz Yisrael and ran the Yeshiva there. He was a great individual. He wrote sefarim. He was a gaon olam in the full sense of the word. It was his practice that he would water the trees and the bushes that were planted in front of his Yeshiva. When Bochrin would ask him, "Why is the Rosh Yeshiva watering the plants?" he would tell them the following story (which itself is incredible):

Rav Chaim Ozer passed away in 1940. When Rav Gustman served on his Beis Din in the 1930s, the two would take walks together in the forests of Vilna. Rav Chaim Ozer would tell Rav Gustman "Look at the berries of this plant. You see this plant – it is poisonous. You see this plant? These berries are edible." Rav Gustman could not figure out why Rav Chaim Ozer was giving him a lesson in botany!

He later found out why. When Rav Gustman was running away from the Nazis, he had to hide in the forest. It was those trees that kept him alive, and it was Rav Chaim Ozer's instructions of which berries were edible and which were poisonous that saved his life." He hid among those bushes. Therefore, for the rest of his life he felt hakaras haTov to bushes. Mind you, the bushes of the forests of Vilna were not the same bushes that were growing outside his Yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael. But such was his sense of hakaras haTov that a person needed to express appreciation to any place or thing that provided benefit to him. The mark of a decent human being is his level of hakaras haTov. The greater the person, the greater is his demonstration of appreciation.

I will conclude with one last story about hakaras haTov that I recently heard from Rav Simcha Bunim Cohen. He told me over the following story, which itself also contains important lessons:

When Rav Elazar Shach [1899-2001] was still in Europe, he felt that he was not learning so well. (It is hard for us to imagine what that means!) He felt that he needed talmidim and to start saying a shiur, which would force him to develop himself as a serious Torah teacher. He went to Rav Issar Zalman Meltzer and asked him if he could prevail upon his son-in-law to let him say a shiur in his Yeshiva. Rav Issar Zalman's son-in-law was Rav Aharon Kotler, who was the Rosh Yeshiva in Kletsk (Minsk region of Belarus). Rav Aharon rejected the request. He felt that he had a certain style of learning which differed from that of Rav Schach. He did not want to confuse the bochrin in his Yeshiva by exposing them to different styles of learning, and consequently did not allow Rav Schach to say a shiur in the Yeshiva in Kletsk. This is background information. Now listen to the next part of the story.

Many years later, Rav Schach was sitting in Bnei Brak and a Jew came into him and introduced himself as Rav Yaakov Chiger. Rav Schach immediately asked him if he was related to Rav Moshe Chiger. The Jew confirmed that he was the son of Rav Moshe Chiger. Rav Schach excitedly said, "I must see your father. For forty years I have been

wondering – what happened to Moshe Chiger?" Rav Yaakov Chiger told Rav Schach that his father was in Yerushalayim and Rav Schach said "Take me to Yerushalayim!" Rav Yaakov hesitated: "This is not right. Rav Schach is the Rosh Yeshiva. He lives in Bnei Brak. I will bring my father to see you in Bnei Brak."

He brought his father to Rav Schach, and Rav Schach said to the elder Rav Chiger: "A great thank you to you" (A grayser yasher koach). Why? Because after that first refusal, when Rav Aharon told him he could not say a shiur in Kletsk, Rav Schach resumed learning by himself, but he still felt he was not making the proper progress in his learning. He went back to Rav Isser Zalman. He begged him: "Please, prevail upon Rav Aharon to let me say a shiur in Kletsk!" After his father-in-law twisted his arm, Rav Aharon said, "Okay. You can take a small Chaburah—a handful of boys—and say a shiur to them. But, be aware that they will not listen to you. They won't let you say a shiur. The only way you will be able to say a shiur to them is if you can get one of the older students (an eltere bochur) in the group to pay attention to you and let you say a shiur to them."

Who was that "eltere bochur" in Kletsk who convinced the younger students to sit in on and pay attention to the shiurim of the young Elazar Schach? It was Rav Moshe Chiger! Rav Schach said that for forty years he had been looking for Moshe Chiger to thank him. "Because of what Moshe Chiger did for me forty years ago, today I am the Rosh Yeshiva of Ponnevitz. Without him, I would not be who I am today!"

For forty years, Rav Schach kept this thought in his pocket: I need to express my gratitude to this man! If not for him, what would have become of me?

This is what I have been saying this evening: The mark of any decent human being is that he should be an appreciative person. The mark of a great person is the extent of how far this hakaras haTov will go. With Yaakov Avinu, it goes to the city. With Rav Yisrael Zev Gustman, it goes to the bushes in Yerushalayim. And with Rav Schach, it is waiting forty years to say "Thank you!"

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Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Dvar Torah Vayishlach - The hidden challenge facing the Jewish people

What are the three greatest challenges facing the Jewish people?

Realistically, there are many more than three, but if I were to focus on three, I would identify 'the three A's'. So what are the three challenges which all start with the letter A? Before I explain, let's have a look at Rashi, at the commencement of Parsat Vayishlach.

Yaakov Avinu, Jacob our Patriarch, sent messengers to his twin brother Esau just before the two brothers were to meet. Yaakov declared, "Im lavan garti," – "I have been living with Lavan."

What was it that Yaakov wished to convey with these words? Rashi tells us that the word garti has a gematria, numerical equivalent, of 613. Indeed, if you rearrange the letters of garti then you get taryag, 613. So what was it that Rashi was saying?

Says Rashi,

"Im lavan harasha garti," – "I have been living with Lavan the Wicked," "V'taryag mitzvot shamarti." – "and despite living in that environment, I have kept all 613 commandments,"

"V'lo lamadti mima'asav hara'im," – "and I didn't learn from Lavan's bad ways."

Now those concluding sentiments seem to be redundant. If Yaakov was keeping all the commandments, that means that he didn't learn from Lavan's ways.

The Chofetz Chaim, as brought down by his talmid, his student, Rav Elchonon Wasserman, gives the following peirush: Yaakov constantly strove to raise his levels of spiritual attainment and in this regard he was self critical because he always wanted to do better. Yaakov noticed that when Lavan went out to perform an aveira, an evil deed, he was filled with passion and enthusiasm for that task.

Yaakov therefore meant to say, “I haven’t carried out my mitzvos in the way that Lavan carries out his aveiros. I didn’t learn from his evil ways.”

From Yaakov Avinu we can learn an important lesson. If we are to successfully convey the wondrous qualities of the mitzvot to the coming generations, we need to perform them with passion and enthusiasm.

And this now brings me to my three A’s.

The three greatest challenges that we as a people face today are:

Antisemitism, Assimilation and Apathy.

The first two are obvious. One is a threat from within, the other a threat from without. The third one, apathy, is a hidden danger. We need to learn from the ‘Lavans’ of this world and the way in which they carry out their aveiros how passionate and enthusiastic we should be when it comes to our mitzvot.

Shabbat shalom.

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Vayishlach: The Pain of Uncertainty

Ben-Tzion Spitz

Doubt is a pain too lonely to know that faith is his twin brother. - Kahlil Gibran

Jacob had escaped from the land of Canaan and his brother Esau’s murderous wrath, to spend 20 years with his uncle Lavan (who would later become his father-in-law as well). Now that Jacob is returning to Canaan, he’s not sure if his hot-headed brother still wants to kill him or not.

The Bechor Shor on Genesis Chapter 32 analyses Jacob’s predicament and how he navigates the dilemma. Verse 8 states that Jacob was very afraid and it pained him. The Bechor Shor explains that what pained Jacob was the uncertainty. The best scenario, would of course be if Esau had forgiven him, allowing Jacob an amicable return to Canaan. The second-best scenario would be to know if Esau still meant to kill him and Jacob could prepare himself accordingly, either running away from Esau or finding a fortified city where he can get out of reach of Esau and his warriors. However, not knowing Esau’s intentions kept Jacob in a fearful and painful state of uncertainty. Not knowing can be psychologically more distressful than knowing a certain negative outcome. When one knows the facts, one can start to deal with the situation. But a cloud of doubt and uncertainty can be painfully paralyzing.

On one hand, Jacob would love to have a peaceful resolution to the ill will Jacob had generated 20 years earlier by stealing Esau’s blessings. On the other hand, he wanted to protect himself and his large clan which included four wives, twelve children (eleven sons and one daughter, at that point), many servants, and significant flocks and herds.

If there was a chance for reconciliation, Jacob wanted to do whatever he could to make that happen. Jacob sends messengers ahead to Esau to inform him of his return to Canaan, and to try to gauge Esau’s state of mind. However, the messengers return with inconclusive reports: Esau is coming to meet Jacob, together with 400 of his men. It’s not clear if this is a war outing or the entourage that would normally accompany Esau. It could be that Esau was coming to honor his long-absent brother. If Jacob would choose to run away, Esau may interpret that negatively and perhaps pursue and attack as opposed to having a warm brotherly reunion. If Jacob runs, he may ruin any chance of reconciliation. Yet, if he meets Esau, he may be opening himself up to the death and destruction of himself and his entire family.

Jacob sends multiple deliveries of his flocks and herds as gifts, in the hopes that it will soften Esau’s heart as well as to see if Esau lashes out against Jacob’s gifts. However, until the very last moment, Jacob has no idea if the reunion will be bloody or friendly. Upon seeing Esau, Jacob bows profusely, demonstrating his subservience. In the end, Esau proves to be peaceful and Jacob is surely relieved by both the warm reunion and the resolution of the uncertainty.

May we often know the joy of the resolution of doubts.

Dedication - To the men and women responsible for the removal of our enemies.

Shabbat Shalom

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Rav Kook Torah

VaYishlach: Reuben’s Sin

In an enigmatic passage after the death of Rachel, the Torah harshly condemns Reuben: “Reuben went and lay down with Bilhah, his father’s concubine” (Gen. 35:22).

According to Talmudic tradition, what actually transpired was far less shocking. Reuben was in fact protecting his mother’s honor and place in the family. When Rachel was alive, Jacob kept his bed in Rachel’s tent. After she died, Jacob moved his bed to the tent of Rachel’s handmaid, Bilhah.

But Reuben, Leah’s first-born, was upset. Perhaps his aunt Rachel could displace his mother as Jacob’s primary wife; after all, Rachel had been the woman that Jacob intended to marry. But surely Rachel’s handmaid held a lower position in the household than his mother Leah! So Reuben removed his father’s bed from Bilhah’s tent and placed it in the tent of his own mother, Leah.

The Talmud in Shabbat 55b explains that we should not think that Reuben literally slept with Bilhah; rather, he “disturbed Bilhah’s sleeping arrangements.” The Sages could not accept the idea that one of Jacob’s sons was guilty of incest. Furthermore, the verse immediately continues, “Jacob had twelve sons.” Surely we know this already! The Torah is emphasizing that, even after this disruption in Jacob’s household, all twelve were still sons of the tzaddik Jacob; all twelve were equally righteous.

Still, we need to understand. If the incident in Jacob’s house occurred the way the Sages described, why did the Torah not write it that way? Why does the Torah ‘mislead’ us into thinking that Reuben had performed such a serious offense?

Two Perspectives on One Event

Rav Kook wrote that the Torah describes events in a particular way so that they will make a certain desired impression. Every detail in the Torah is carefully measured, so that the narrative will suitably affect us. Sometimes a story, when written in a straightforward fashion, cannot be properly appreciated by those reading it, especially if they are greatly removed from the incident in time and place. From afar, we may not be properly sensitive to the moral outrage that took place. In such instances, divine wisdom dictates the precise fashion with which to clothe the story, in order that it should make the appropriate impression on the reader.

Together, the two Torahs, the Oral and the Written, paint a complete picture of what occurred. The Written Torah gives a simpler account, providing the emotional impact to which we are accustomed from our youth. The Oral Torah adds to the written account a more insightful understanding that is acquired through careful examination.

The activities of the Patriarchs deeply influenced, and continue to influence, the Jewish people. The spirit of Jacob’s house lives with us to this day; the light of his family will forever illuminate our hearts. Any dimming of that light, any inner strife or moral imperfection, will also be felt by us. In fact, even more so: any minor eclipse of light from that time will reach us from afar as a serious and deeply disturbing darkness.

For us, the true extent of Reuben’s offense — upsetting the delicate balance in his father’s household and eroding Jacob’s authority in his own home — is as if Reuben had actually committed incest with Bilhah. The literal account of the written Torah corresponds to our natural feelings of hurt and indignation.

But if we wish to accurately evaluate this offense in terms of Reuben’s moral level, we must return to the Talmudic version of this event. Here the Midrashic insight reveals the event as it actually occurred: Reuben disturbed the sleeping arrangements in his father’s house, in order to protect his mother’s honor.

(Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 75-77. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. IV, pp. 43-44)

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Parashat Vayishlach 5781

Jacob and Israel – Two Names, Two Spiritual Attitudes

In this week’s Torah portion, Vayishlach, we read about Jacob’s name being changed:

And he said, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, because you have commanding power with [an angel of] G-d and with men, and you have prevailed.” (Genesis 32, 29)

Jacob's name was changed to Israel. But, as opposed to Abraham whose name was changed from Abram to Abraham and the name Abram was erased, Jacob's name was not. He was still sometimes referred to as Jacob and other times as Israel. This points to the possibility that these were two names referencing two identities that merged in the personality of Jacob-Israel.

The name Jacob was given to him at birth, but to understand it, we must go back to the months prior to his birth. After Rebecca became pregnant, she began to feel odd movements in her belly, as it says: "And the children struggled within her, and she said, 'If [it be] so, why am I [like] this?'" (Ibid 25, 22). Rebecca went to ask the prophets Shem and Ever, and they told her that, "'Two nations are in your womb, and two kingdoms will separate from your innards, and one kingdom will become mightier than the other kingdom, and the elder will serve the younger'" (Ibid Ibid, 23). She discovered that the struggle she felt in her womb was only the beginning of the struggle between two nations.

When Rebecca gave birth, one baby came out first and his twin brother emerged after him while clutching his brother's heel. Apparently, he was trying to get the first baby back into his mother's womb so he could be the firstborn. The first one was called Esau and the second Jacob, for the Hebrew word for "heel." Actually, in that first struggle, Jacob failed and came out second. Years later, he bought the birthright of the firstborn son from Esau for a bowl of stew. The name Jacob symbolizes his spiritual position in facing his brother; someone who grabs his brother's heel and tries to chase and catch up with him.

Now, decades later, Jacob is returning from the home of his father-in-law in Aram Naharayim and is about to meet his brother Esau again. He is very nervous about this meeting since the reason he escaped his father's house twenty years earlier was because Esau threatened to kill him. Jacob planned for this meeting with Esau in several ways: He sent him gifts ahead of time to appease him; he divided his camp into two to prepare for war; and he turned to G-d in prayer:

"Now deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I am afraid of him, lest he come and strike me, [and strike] a mother with children." (Ibid 32, 12)

Did G-d respond to Jacob? That same night, Jacob transferred his wives, children, and belongings across the river and returned alone to the other side to get the belongings that remained there. When there alone, he experienced a violent encounter with an anonymous person who later identified himself as an angel. All through the night, they wrestled with one another with Jacob calling upon his best skills and strength not to be taken down by the stranger. As dawn broke and the battle ended, the angel said to him, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, because you have commanding power with [an angel of] G-d and with men, and you have prevailed." The angel told him to change his attitude in regards to his brother – no longer clutching a heel, no longer pursuing a chance to overtake the older brother. He had reached the goal he had set and now had the ability to fight. After Jacob proved he could take an active stand, his name was changed to Israel as he prepared for the meeting with his brother.

The greatest sages of the Hassidic movement learned from these two names – Jacob and Israel – that there are two emotional/spiritual attitudes that one must be prepared to have in dealing with forbidden desires, with our "yetzer hara." One attitude requires a negotiation with these desires, a stand that assumes a diminished position and tries to attain the maximum – an attitude of Jacob. But sometimes a person needs to fight, to have faith in his ability to overcome his desires and not give up on his spiritual aspirations. This is an attitude of Israel. A person, therefore, must identify the situation he is in and his emotional abilities and act accordingly.

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https://www.torahweb.org/torah/2020/parsha/rkoe_vayishlach.html

Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg

The True Grandeur of Klal Yisrael

The Torah describes how after Shimon and Levi kill all the inhabitants of Shechem, Hashem tells Yaakov to return to Beis El and make a mizbei'ach (Vayishlach 35:1). Yaakov directs his household to remove

all of the avodah zara they still possess from the booty of Shechem, to cleanse themselves and prepare to travel to Beis El. The possuk continues that when they set out to Beis El, there fell a G-dly terror (chitas haElokim) on the cities around them, and those living there did not pursue Yaakov's children (35:5). Earlier, Yaakov had criticized Shimon and Levi for their actions precisely because he was afraid that those living in the area would rise up against his family and destroy them (34:30). And yet, the exact opposite occurred; a G-dly fear took hold of the people and they did not chase after Yaakov and his family.

But the possuk does not explain why those living in the surrounding cities were gripped with such terror. The Sforno comments that in fact Yaakov's concern was warranted, so he needed divine protection. It would appear that the Sforno understands that the chitas haElokim was a supernatural feeling that Hashem instilled in the hearts of those living in the area to prevent them from attacking Yaakov's family. This idea is also expressed by the Midrash Tanchuma (Vayishlach 22) that Hashem placed His fear on the surrounding cities, in fulfillment of the Torah's promise, "And all the nations of the earth will see that the Name of Hashem is proclaimed over you, and they will fear you" (Ki Savo 28:10). Hashem placed His aura as it were over Yaakov's family and that made others afraid to pursue them.

But the Malbim explains differently. He suggests that the members of Yaakov's household demonstrated yiras shamayim by removing all of their avodah zara and preparing their hearts to serve Hashem in Beis El. It was that yiras shamayim that spread to those living in the surrounding cities and caused them to have yiras shamayim as well, which is why they did not chase after Yaakov and his family. The chitas haElokim, the fear of Hashem, in the hearts of Yaakov's children had a ripple effect on the people in the surrounding cities and it gave them a newfound respect and awe for Yaakov and his family.

This could be the deeper meaning behind the Torah's promise in Parshas Ki Savo that all the nations will see that the Name of Hashem is proclaimed over you and they will fear you. It is not simply an expression of divine mercy that Hashem will cause the nations of the world to fear Klal Yisrael despite the fact that they are undeserving. To the contrary, the Torah is saying that if we study Torah with energy and excitement, and we observe mitzvos scrupulously and joyfully, that will earn us the respect and the awe of all people.

The Torah says earlier, "And you shall safeguard and perform them (the mitzvos), for it is your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nations, who shall hear all of these decrees and proclaim..." Which is a great nation that has proper decrees and laws such as the entire Torah? (Va'eschanan 4:6,8)" When Klal Yisrael is careful to observe both negative and positive commandments - to safeguard and perform (u'shmartem va'asisem) - they earn the respect and admiration of all people because the proper observance of mitzvos purifies and elevates a person, and the special sense of refinement that is exuded by a Torah Jew is impressive and inspiring even to a non-Jew.

Chazal explain that these two pesukim (in Va'eschanan and Ki Savo) are alluded to in the ultimate bracha the Torah offers to Klal Yisrael when it is true to its mission. The Torah declares, "Hashem has distinguished you today to be for Him a treasured people, as He spoke to you, and to observe all His mitzvos, and to make you supreme over all the nations that He made, for praise, for renown, and for splendor" (Ki Savo 26:18-19). Chazal comment in the Midrash (Psikta Zutrasa ibid), "To make you supreme: supreme in Torah, supreme in mitzvos, as it says, 'And which is the nation that has proper decrees and laws?' (Va'eschanan) Supreme, as it says, 'And all the nations of the earth will see that the Name of Hashem is proclaimed over you and they will fear you.' (Ki Savo)" The Torah warns that Klal Yisrael's prominence is not an automatic gift. Rather, only when Klal Yisrael elevates itself through talmud Torah and shmiras hamitzvos does it connect with the Name of Hashem, and earn the respect and the awe of all people.

On Chanukah, we celebrate the victory of Torah values over Greek culture. The Greeks enacted many harsh decrees to persecute the Jewish people spiritually. They tried to prevent them from studying Torah and observing mitzvos (Al Hanissim). According to one source, they singled

out Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh and bris milah (Megillas Antiochus). But how did all this persecution begin? The Bach (Orach Chaim 670) writes that initially Hashem allowed the Greeks to have the upper hand because Klal Yisrael neglected the avodah of the Beis Hamikdash - hisrashlu b'avodah. So middah k'neged middah, the Greeks abolished the korban tamid and the lighting of the menorah in the Beis Hamikdash. And later, they issued decrees against other mitzvos as well. (see Shem M'Shmu'el, Chanuka and Parshas Mikeitz, who elaborates on the idea of the Bach). When Klal Yisrael observes mitzvos with dedication and love - when they connect with the Name of Hashem - they are respected and admired by all. But when they become disinterested and apathetic in their observance of mitzvos - when they experience a hisrashlus b'avodah - then they are ridiculed and persecuted. This Chanukah, let us rededicate ourselves to the avodah of talmud Torah and shmiras hamitzvos. Let us strengthen our relationship with the Ribbono Shel Olam and reap the benefits of that connection.

https://www.torahweb.org/torah/2004/parsha/rsch_vayishlach.html
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National Pride
Rabbi Herschel Schachter

In the days of Yehoshua, Eretz Yisroel was divided among the shevatim. With the exception of shevet Levi, each of the other shvatim got an equal share in the land. When Bnai Yisroel crossed over the Jordan, it took the first seven years to conquer the land from the thirty one kings, and then another seven years to divide the land among the tribes, families, and individuals. The rabbis had a tradition that the mizbeach in the Beis Hamikdash may not be located in the section that belonged to shevet Yehuda. The kings were to come from Yehuda, the mizbeach represented the religion, and it was deemed inappropriate that the religion be under the control of the government. (This is one of the weak points of the Chief Rabbinate in Israel; since it is a branch of the government, it is basically under their control.)

This should have left the possibility open for the mizbeach to be located in the area of any of the remaining eleven tribes. But the tradition had it that only the area of shevet Binyamin qualified. This was already ordained by Yaakov Avinu and by Moshe Rabbeinu when each of them expressed their blessings to each of the shvatim before they died.

Why was Binyamin singled out? The Medrash gives two suggestions, which perhaps really blend together to become one: 1) When the entire family of Yaakov met up with Esav, they all showed their respect by bowing down to him, except for Binyamin (who was not yet born.) 2) All of the other children of Yaakov were born outside of Eretz Yisroel, except for Binyamin, who was born in Eretz Yisroel; he was the only "sabara".

As long as the Jewish people lived in foreign lands they had no choice other than to be respectful and conciliatory to their enemies. Everyone had to bow down to Esav. But as soon as the Jewish medinah was established, they could no longer be conciliatory to these enemies. An independent sovereign state must act with pride! Yes, the possuk in Tehillim describes Eretz Yisroel as "geon Yaakov", "the pride of the Jewish people", and sometimes they are even obligated to go to war (and obviously, to sacrifice human lives) to maintain their sovereignty over the medinah! Many will ask, does it really make any sense to lose human lives merely for the sake of "pride"? And the answer is "yes"! The Tehillim refers to Eretz Yisroel as "the pride of the Jewish people." Every country in the world has the right to go to war to maintain sovereignty over its land; and the Jewish people not only have the right, but even the obligation.

G-d considers "arrogance" to be an abominable trait. But Binyamin who was born in Eretz Yisroel was a "sabara", and he had "national pride." This "national pride" was what was needed to have the mizbeach built in his section. Arrogance pushes one away from G-d; but a healthy sense of independence and national pride brings one closer to G-d. The individual who is subservient to other human beings can not fully be subservient to G-d.

Only the Jews who live in Eretz Yisroel have the mitzvah of aliyah laregel; to come closer to G-d. The Jew with the galus mentality can not be fully subservient to G-d, and thus only the free men in Eretz Yisroel have this mitzvah. The Torah expresses itself by stating that three times a year all the Jewish men must come to visit "the Master" Hashem. The Talmud understood this to mean that slaves who are subservient to their human masters don't have this mitzvah. They can not succeed in becoming fully subservient to Hashem, which is the purpose of the aliyah laregel.

Binyamin, of course, must be careful that his "national pride" not lead to the abomination of "arrogance". If the sabra's independence and "national pride" will bring him closer to Hashem, there will be no room to develop any arrogance. The closer one comes to Hashem, the more humble he will become.

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Chalav Akum – Non-Jewish Milk

Rabbi Avraham Rosenthal

This week's parsha mentions the mitzvah of gid hanasheh, the first mitzvah commanded to the Jews germane to kashrus. This article will examine a different area of kashrus, the rabbinic injunction against chalav akum – non-Jewish milk.

In the course of preparing this article, it has come to my attention that different communities understand various terms connected to this subject in different ways. For this reason, I wish to clarify the meaning of certain key phrases that will be used extensively throughout this article.

Chalav Akum – Literally, this means "milk of a non-Jew," and it refers to milk that was milked by a non-Jew without any supervision whatsoever, not even by any government agency, nor in a way that industry standard can guarantee what species of mammal was milked.

Chalav Yisrael – This is milk where the milking process was supervised by a Jew.

Chalav Stam – Literally, "unspecified or regular milk." This refers to milk that was milked by a non-Jew, but, based on oversight of government agencies or checkable industry standards, the assumption is that it is milk of a kosher species.

Non-kosher milk – This refers to milk obtained from a non-kosher animal.

The Premise for the Injunction

The starting point for Chazal's injunction against chalav akum is actually a Torah prohibition. Let us begin with a passage from the Mishnah (Bechoros 5b): "If a kosher animal gives birth to a type of non-kosher species, it is permissible to eat. If a non-kosher animal gives birth to a type of kosher species, it is forbidden to eat. For whatever comes from non-kosher is non-kosher, and whatever comes from kosher is kosher." In other words, if a kosher animal produces an offspring whose hooves are not split, it is nevertheless kosher. Similarly, if a non-kosher animal, such as a camel or llama that chew their cud, bears an offspring bearing split hooves, such that the offspring now has both kosher signs – it has split hooves and it chews its cud -- it is non-kosher.

The Gemara (ibid. 6b) derives that milk or anything else derived from a non-kosher species is forbidden according to Torah Law from the word "gamal," camel, that appears in the Torah (Vayikra 11:4). Furthermore, the Gemara derives from a repetitive pasuk in Devarim (14:7) that not only is the camel itself forbidden, but also its milk.

The Injunction against Chalav Akum

The Mishnah (Avodah Zarah 35b) lists several non-Jewish foodstuffs that are prohibited to eat, but one is allowed to derive benefit from them. One of these items is "milk that was milked by a non-Jew without a Jew's supervision."

One of the reasons why Chazal made this injunction was out of concern that the non-Jew added milk from a non-kosher animal (ibid.). He may have done so in order to increase the volume of milk he has to sell (Meiri, ad locum). Alternatively, perhaps the non-Jew was not careful that the utensil into which he began milking was clean of prohibited product such as milk from non-kosher species (Mordechai, Avodah

Zarah #826; Semak #223; Biur Hagra, Yoreh Dei'ah 115:4). It should be noted that according to this opinion, the concern specifically is that some non-kosher milk will be mixed in with the kosher milk. The Gemara states that there is no concern that the non-Jew will attempt to sell pure non-kosher milk to his Jewish customer, as one can easily differentiate between the two, based on its appearance (Avodah Zarah 35b).

Gilui – Uncovered Liquids

Before proceeding with the next reason why chalav akum is prohibited, a brief introduction is required. Chazal forbade drinking three liquids – water, wine and milk, as well as eating various types of fruits, that were left uncovered (Mishnah, Terumos 8:4-6). This injunction is referred to as “gilui” – “uncovered.” The concern was that perhaps a snake may inject poisonous venom into the drink or food, rendering it dangerous for consumption.

Accordingly, another reason why non-Jewish milk is forbidden is because of the prohibition against gilui (Yerushalmi Avodah Zarah 2:8). Since non-Jews may not be particular about gilui, there is concern that the perfectly kosher milk was left uncovered, and some poisonous venom found its way into the milk.

The Rishonim raise the question why Chazal limited their injunction to chalav akum. If the concern is gilui, it should be forbidden to buy water from a non-Jew, as well, for the same reason. (Obviously, wine is not relevant to the discussion, as non-Jewish wine is forbidden in any event.) The answer is that although non-Jews were not concerned about gilui, they are and were concerned about cleanliness. Therefore, when it comes to water which is drunk “as is,” they are careful to keep it covered and clean. Milk, on the other hand, is usually not consumed as is, but is first strained or homogenized (and, in today’s world, pasteurized). Therefore, the non-Jew will not be as concerned to keep it covered. Although the straining might be sufficient to satisfy the non-Jew’s concern for cleanliness, it does not remove the concern of venom (Tosafos, Avodah Zarah 35a, s.v. mishum nikur).

Although some Rishonim (Tosafos, Avodah Zarah 39b, s.v. ee; Tosafos, ibid. 35a, s.v. mishum) maintain that one needs to take into account the reason of gilui, most Rishonim (Rif and Rosh, Avodah Zarah chap. 2; Rambam, Hilchos Maachalos Asuros 3:13), as well as the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Dei'ah 115:1) rule that we are only concerned about the non-Jew mixing in milk of a non-kosher animal.

Davar Shebeminyan

Before proceeding to the next part of our discussion, we need to introduce a new topic. Throughout Shas, we find that many decrees put into place by Chazal were voted on by a gathering of sages. Such decrees are referred to as “davar shebeminyan.” Although most will recognize the word “minyan” as referring to a quorum of ten for davening, it can refer to anything that is counted, and in this case, it means the votes cast by the sages to determine whether or not to institute a specific decree.

The Gemara (Beitzah 5a) sets forth a rule, derived from pesukim, that “kol davar shebeminyan, tzarich minyan acher lehatiuro.” This means that whenever Chazal had a reason to put a particular piece of legislation into place – and it was voted on -- if it will ever occur that the reason is no longer applicable, we cannot merely ignore the law, but, rather, another gathering of sages must vote to rescind the law.

Now, let us see how this applies to chalav akum.

There is a disagreement among the early authorities whether the injunction against drinking chalav akum is a davar shebeminyan or not. Some maintain that it is and, therefore, even when there is no concern that a non-Jew added non-kosher milk, it would still be forbidden to drink. According to this approach, the original prohibition was instituted only when no Jew supervised the milking. Chazal themselves included in the decree that when a Jew watches the milking process, the milk is permitted (Shu”t Mahari Bruna #78, citing Rabbeinu Yonah).

Other authorities contend that the injunction against chalav akum was never a davar shebeminyan. This means that Chazal recognized a concern, and ruled that each individual is obligated to make sure that he is consuming kosher milk. However, if we know for a fact that there is

no non-kosher milk, the milk is permitted (Shu”t Radvaz, vol. IV, #1147).

We will see that several Acharonim apply the latter approach and therefore rule leniently at times.

Definition of “Seeing”

The Mishnah (Avodah Zarah 39b) states that if a Jew watches the process, the milk of a non-Jew is permitted. The Gemara explains that it is unnecessary for the Jew to observe the milking process from start to finish; as long as he has the capability to watch, the milk is kosher. The Gemara notes that this is true even in a situation where the non-Jew has a non-kosher animal in his herd whose milk could easily be added to the “kosher” milk. Nevertheless, since the non-Jew knows that the Jew can observe the milking at any time, we can assume that he will not add milk from the non-kosher animal, since he knows that if he is caught he will lose the sale.

The Rishonim add two stipulations to this: 1) The non-Jew is milking the animal for the benefit of the Jew and 2) he is aware that Jews do not drink the milk of a non-kosher animal. If he is not aware of these two points, he will not be afraid to mix in non-kosher milk (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Dei'ah 115:1).

The Gemara’s example of the Jew being able to see the milking at his whim is where the Jew is sitting near the herd. While sitting, he cannot see the non-Jew milking, but when he stands up, he can. In this scenario, the non-Jew is afraid to be caught adding non-kosher milk. The Rishonim extend this lenience and they rule that the Jew does not have to “sit next to the herd” the entire time. Rather, he can be “yotzei venichnas,” “go out and come in.” In other words, the Jew is allowed to leave his post while the non-Jew is milking his herd; since he can reappear at any moment without warning, it is not necessary for the Jew to be in the immediate vicinity at all times (Semak #223; Issur Veheter 45:2; Shach, Yoreh Deah, 115:4).

Clean Utensils Only

Several Rishonim maintain that although the Jew does not have to watch the entire milking process, he must be there before the milking commences in order to ascertain that the pail had no non-kosher or unsupervised milk beforehand (Semak #223; Mordechai, Avodah Zarah #886, citing Rabbeinu Peretz; Issur Veheter 45:1; Rema, Yoreh Dei'ah 115:1).

Furthermore, there is a custom to be stringent and not use the utensil usually used by the non-Jew during the milking. This is out of concern that there is some non-kosher milk residue in the utensil that will go unnoticed (Issur Veheter 45:2; Rema, Yoreh Deah 115:1).

Bidi’eved, if the non-Jew’s usual milking utensil was used, the milk is permitted, provided that the utensil was inspected beforehand (Issur Veheter 45:2). If it was not examined before the milking, there is a disagreement among the Acharonim whether the milk can be used (Rema 115:1; Shach 115:8).

No Non-Kosher Species

There is a disagreement among the Rishonim concerning the milk of a non-Jew who has no non-kosher mammals in his possession. Some maintain that when the non-Jew does not possess any non-kosher animals and he milks his herd without supervision, the milk is permitted (Shaarei Dura #82, citing Bnei Romi). Others argue that no distinctions can be made, and if a Jew does not observe the milking, or at least have the capability to do so, the milk is forbidden (ibid, citing Rashi).

According to a third opinion, although the Jew must be on the premises during the milking process (or minimally, yotzei venichnas), where there are no non-kosher animals, he does not need to see the actual milking. The reason why this is sufficient is that since there are no non-kosher animals, the only concern is that the non-Jew will bring non-kosher milk from another place. Since the Jew is on the premises, the non-Jew will be afraid to do so (Toras Habayis Hakatzar, 3:6, page 90b; Meiri, Avodah Zarah 35b). This view is codified by the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Dei'ah 115:1). In any event, as we mentioned earlier, the Jew must be there at the beginning of the milking to ascertain that the utensils used are clean of any non-kosher milk residue (Rema ad loc.).

Early Leniencies

We will soon discuss the famous ruling of Rav Moshe Feinstein regarding the consumption of non-chalav Yisrael milk. However, it should be noted that, prior to Rav Moshe, there were other lenient rulings proposed by great Acharonim. One of these was issued by the Pri Chadash, who lived during the second half of the seventeenth century. He ruled that in a city where non-kosher milk is not found, or that it is more expensive than milk from a kosher animal, one may drink milk of a non-Jew, even if a Jew did not supervise the milking. He writes that this was the custom in Amsterdam, and that he, himself, followed this practice (Pri Chadash, Yoreh Dei'ah 115:6).

It should be noted that this ruling follows the view cited above that the prohibition against chalav akum is not a davar shebeminyan. In other words, the Pri Chadash's ruling is applicable only if we maintain that once the reason behind the prohibition does not apply, the injunction no longer applies either. Not everyone agrees with this premise and, for that reason and others, many Acharonim did not accept the leniency of the Pri Chadash.

Government Regulation

Rav Moshe Feinstein (Shu"t Igros Moshe, Yoreh Dei'ah #47) writes that in places where the dairies are under government regulation which does not allow them to adulterate cow's milk -- and anyone caught doing so will be fined -- such milk is permitted. It does not have the status of chalav akum, since we have the right to assume that it is one hundred percent cow's milk, equivalent to actually seeing the milking. Rav Feinstein calls this knowledge an "anan sehadi," a Talmudic term that literally means, "We testify." It refers to the idea that anyone can be a virtual witness to this fact, even though he has no visual proof of it being true.

Rav Feinstein concludes that although this is the halachah, it is proper for a baal nefesh, a conscientious person, to act stringently and drink only milk that was supervised by a Jew (see also Chazon Ish, Yoreh Dei'ah 41:4). Nevertheless, in his own household in the United States, he allowed the use of non-cholov Yisrael milk, although he did not drink it himself.

The Coining of a Phrase

Rav Feinstein, in his responsum, sometimes refers to this type of milk as "stam chalav" -- "unspecified or regular milk." From that, the term "chalav stam" came into being. It cannot be called chalav akum, as chalav akum is forbidden and this is not. On the other hand, it also cannot be referred to as chalav Yisrael, for that term is reserved for milk that had Jewish supervision.

Rav Feinstein's Ruling in Modern Times

There has been some discussion during the last several years whether Rav Moshe Feinstein's lenient ruling concerning chalav stam is still applicable today. Government guidelines have changed in recent years, and the question is whether these changes affect the ruling. In the past, it was common for government agencies to verify at the dairies that the milk being processed was, indeed, cow's milk. This was accomplished by testing fat or casein ratios in milk samples. Nowadays, however, these tests are generally not done. The milk is tested only for bacteria count and the presence of antibiotics. Additionally, while in former times it was common for dairies to have on-site farms and inspectors who would physically see the animals present, nowadays, this is no longer the case. This leaves us with the question as to what creates the given -- the anan sehadi -- that the chalav stam is, indeed, cow's milk?

I found on the website of the Orthodox Union (OU) an article entitled, "Rav Moshe zt"l's Heter of Chalav Stam Revisited," which discusses this issue. What follows in italics are either direct quotes from the article or paraphrased sentences:

Currently, the government inspects all milk farms 2-6 times per year.

Governmental (state) farm inspection protocol specifically includes a provision that only cows are in the farms' milking parlors and/or cow-yard. This provision (formulated in terms of swine) is part of the standard farm inspection form.

Government inspectors track the intake and output of all milk at dairies. Thus, the source farms are identified by the inspectors, and they must correlate with farms approved by the government.

Furthermore, the OU was told by state farm inspectors that they have never encountered horses, pigs or other livestock (besides cows) on dairy farms, and that were they to do so, they would immediately report it as part of their responsibilities.

In light of this current state of affairs, the farms are indeed uniformly inspected for non-kosher animals, and the dairy plants' inspectors work with the farm inspectors' data. Rav Yisrael Belsky ruled that the heter of chalav stam applies for those who wish to rely on it, albeit based principally on farm inspections rather than on dairy inspections. The correlation of data between the farm and dairy inspections extends the farm inspections' efficacy to the dairies, and therefore retains its permissibility.

The Lesson of Chalav Akum

Boruch Hashem, most religious Jews today live in countries where chalav akum is not an issue. If one wishes to rely on the ruling of Rav Moshe Feinstein and use chalav stam, most Westernized countries have some type of government regulation on the milk. It should be noted, however, that prior to traveling, an individual should inquire ahead of time from experts in the kashrus field regarding the milk sold in those locales. For example, in many countries, camel's milk is used in coffee interchangeably with cow's milk.

And, if one wants to be stringent and drink chalav Yisrael, that is also readily available in the majority of situations. So, the question that remains for us is what lesson can we learn from the concept of refraining from drinking chalav akum.

One possible idea is that, too often, many people will say, regarding a particular food item, "What could be wrong with...?" The injunction against chalav akum is put in place to get us to think differently, as one could also say, "What could be wrong with milk?" Chazal are telling us: "Think again! Even the simplest food item could have kashrus issues! Be careful what you eat!"

Weekly Halacha :: Parshas Vayishlach

Medications On Shabbos Part 1 Of 3

Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya

One of several rabbinic decrees that our Sages enacted in order to guard the sanctity of Shabbos concerns the use of medications. In the opinion and experience of the Rabbis, easy access to medicine could lead to the transgression of certain Shabbos Labors. While issuing the decree, however, the Rabbis were bound by the halachic principle of being as lenient as possible with those suffering pain or distress. Thus, they established guidelines for determining when it is permitted to take medication on Shabbos and when it is not. Towards the end of this discussion, we will list many common conditions which normally require medication and how they are dealt with on Shabbos.

Explanation of the rabbinic prohibition

To determine when one is allowed to take medicine on Shabbos for non-life-threatening conditions, we must focus on two separate halachic considerations. First of all, we must ascertain that none of the thirty-nine Shabbos Labors is being transgressed in any way, either Biblical or rabbinic. For instance, we cannot prepare medication by either grinding raw material or mixing it; we cannot buy medication at a drug store; we cannot put on a light to see where medication was stored, and so on. In this regard in determining that there is no transgression of the thirty-nine forbidden Shabbos Labors there is no difference between this Shabbos prohibition and any other.

However, the prohibition against using medication on Shabbos is also governed by a rabbinic decree against using medication on Shabbos even when no forbidden Shabbos Labor is performed. The Rabbis prohibited unrestricted use of medication on Shabbos for fear that it would lead to the violation of one of the thirty-nine Shabbos Labors. The Labor which concerned the Rabbis most was Grinding, since grinding some substance is a prerequisite for almost every medicinal preparation[1].

Once the Rabbis prohibited using medicine on Shabbos, they included in this prohibition any kind of treatment or procedure which could involve

the use of medicine-even if medicine was not actually being used. The classic example in the Shulchan Aruch is the prohibition against the old-time remedy of sweating for medicinal purposes[2]. Sweating can be induced in one of two ways: 1) by taking certain medicines which are prepared by grinding, and 2) by performing certain types of exercises. Even though exercise is totally unrelated to taking medicine and cannot possibly lead to Grinding, it is still forbidden to induce sweating through exercise on Shabbos[3] since one could also induce sweating by the first method-taking certain medicines which are prepared by grinding[4].

If, however, the goal of the treatment or procedure can only be achieved without the use of medicine, then it is permitted to avail oneself of that treatment or procedure. For example, it is permitted to press on a bump with a knife, since the goal, which is to reduce or prevent swelling, cannot be achieved by taking medicine. Similarly, braces may be worn on Shabbos because there is no medicine for aligning teeth properly. Included in the rabbinic prohibition are only actions which heal a wound or alleviate pain. If the action merely serves to protect a wound from infection[5] or to shield a healed wound from being re-injured[6], it is allowed. It is permitted, therefore, to clean and bandage a wound or to pour hydrogen peroxide over it. The rabbinic prohibition includes medications only. Food and drink, however, are permitted even when they are being consumed for medicinal purposes. It is permitted, therefore, to drink tea for a sore throat, to eat almonds to relieve heartburn and to chew vitamins which serve as a food supplement[7].

Question: Why did the Rabbis suspend the prohibition against taking medicine when one feels weak all over or bad enough to lie down?

Discussion: The Rabbis suspended many of their decrees for a person who can be classified as “ill,” even if not dangerously so. Thus, for example, it is permitted to instruct a non-Jew to do anything which an ill patient may require on Shabbos, since instructing a non-Jew is a rabbinic prohibition. Since taking medication on Shabbos is a rabbinic prohibition, it is suspended when the patient can be classified as “ill.” The poskim agree that when one has fever, feels weak all over or feels bad enough to require bed rest, he can be classified as a “patient not dangerously ill” and he is permitted to take medications[8]. Since “requiring bed rest” and “weak all over” are subjective terms, it is up to each individual to determine his personal pain threshold. Consequently, one who feels that he must lie in bed for his condition may take medication on Shabbos even though other people in the “same” condition would not go to bed. There is no requirement to be overly stringent when judging the degree of illness[9]. In addition, healthy infants and babies until the age of three[10] (and according to some poskim even older children till the age of six[11] or nine[12]) are also halachically classified as “patients not dangerously ill,” which means that the rabbinical prohibition against taking medication is suspended. They are permitted to take all forms of medicine[13], provided that no Biblical prohibitions are transgressed.

Question: Nowadays, when medicine is always prepared at a pharmacy, there is no longer any fear that using medicine will lead to Grinding. Why, then, is this rabbinic prohibition still in effect?

Discussion: Although contemporary poskim debate whether nowadays we can be more lenient with taking medication on Shabbos because of the change in technique[14], the general consensus is to reject this argument. Some of the reasons offered are as follows:

Generally, a rabbinic decree, once enacted, is not repealed even when the reason behind it no longer applies[15].

There are several homeopathic remedies, such as natural herbs and spices, which are still prepared at home and require grinding. In fact, these types of medications are gaining popularity.

In underdeveloped countries, people have never stopped preparing medicines in their own homes.

Some modern-day medication may lead to other Biblical Labors, such as Smoothing, Kneading, Cooking or Carrying. In spite of the above, there are some poskim who feel that nowadays we can be somewhat more lenient when interpreting the rabbinic decree. Although all the poskim agree that we may not do away with the rabbinic decree altogether, we may, nevertheless, find some room for leniency in case of severe distress or pain (even if the pain is localized and does not require bed rest)[16].

Note: Although one who is not classified as “ill” may not begin taking medicine on Shabbos, still, one who requires daily medication for an ongoing condition may continue doing so on Shabbos as well[17]. Some poskim go even further and permit continuing taking medicine on Shabbos, even if the patient is not medically required to take the medicine on a daily basis[18].

1. Mishnah Berurah 327:1.

2. O.C. 328:42 and Beur Halachah, s.v. kedei.

3. If the purpose of the exercise is to work up an appetite, it is questionable if it is permitted; see Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 301:9. If the exercise is for pure enjoyment, it may be permitted according to the basic halachah, although it may be considered *uvda d'chol*, “a weekday activity”; see Shulchan Shlomo 328, note 110, and Chut Shani, vol. 4. 89:2. Physical therapy is also permitted; Shulchan Shlomo, 328:66-2; Ohr l'Tziyon 2:36-12.

4. Mishnah Berurah 328:130.

5. O.C. 328:23, as explained by Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 35, note 20). [See Tzitz Eliezer 11:37, who permits drinking certain oils (like castor oil) to aid in the elimination process.]

6. O.C. 328:27. See Igros Moshe, O.C. 3:54.

7. Note, however, that the purpose of many vitamins is not to serve as a food supplement but rather to strengthen a weak body or to relieve certain symptoms. In the opinion of many poskim, those vitamins may not be taken on Shabbos; see Igros Moshe, O.C. 3:54, Minchas Shlomo 2:37 and Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 34, note 86, quoting Rav S.Z. Auerbach. See, however, Tzitz Eliezer 14:50, who takes a more lenient approach concerning vitamins on Shabbos.

8. Entire paragraph based on O.C. 328:17 and 37 and Mishnah Berurah, *ibid*. [Note that although Shulchan Aruch rules that a *shinui* is required for rabbinic prohibitions to be suspended, the general consensus of the poskim is that this restriction is waived when taking oral medication. When using other medications, however (such as ointment), it is proper to employ a *shinui*; see Mishnah Berurah 328:85 and 130.]

9. See Tzitz Eliezer 14:50-7 and 17:13.

10. Chazon Ish, O.C. 59:3, Rav S.Z. Auerbach in Nishmas Avraham 328:54, and Rav Y.S. Elyashiv in Eis Laledes, pg. 57, quote the age of 2-3.

11. Tzitz Eliezer 8:15-12.

12. Minchas Yitzchak 1:78. In the final analysis, it all depends on the strength and maturity of the child.

13. Rama, O.C. 328:17. Note, however, that not all of a baby's needs are exempt from the prohibition against medication; see, for instance, Mishnah Berurah 328:131. See Tehillah l'David 328:24 and Minchas Yitzchak 4:124 who deal with this difficulty.

14. The complex preparation that manufacturing modern medicine entails is another reason for leniency, since it may be argued that the Rabbis were fearful that “simple” and quick Labors such as Grinding would be transgressed; they did not fear that someone would engage in the lengthy and involved processing required today.

15. See Igros Moshe, O.C. 2:100 for a general explanation of this rule.

16. See Minchas Shabbos 91:9; Ketzos ha-Shulchan 134:7; Chelkas Yaakov 4:41; and Tzitz Eliezer 8:15-15. See also Minchas Yitzchak 3:35, who permits taking aspirin for a headache when one is in severe distress.

17. Chazon Ish (oral ruling, quoted in Imrei Yosher on Moed 97); Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 34, note 76). See a dissenting opinion in Igros Moshe, O.C. 3:53.

18. Rav S. Kluger (Sefer ha-Chayim 328:10 and Shenos Chayim 1:152); Minchas Shabbos 91:9; Tzitz Eliezer 8:15-15:15; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Koveitz Teshuvos, O.C. 1:40, and oral ruling, quoted in Refuas Yisrael, pg. 14).

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לע"נ

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה
ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה