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### INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON VAYISHLACH - 5784

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#### **Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog VAYISHLACH**

Many commentators over the ages have seen in the two confrontations between Yaakov and Eisav – first the struggle with Eisav's angel and then the meeting with Eisav in the flesh – the two-front war that Judaism and the Jewish people have been forced to fight over millennia in order to simply survive. The struggle with Eisav's angel, as described in the parsha, represents a spiritual and intellectual fight, a contest of ideas, beliefs and debate. The meeting with the physical Eisav in turn represents the struggle of the Jewish people to simply stay alive in a bigoted, cruel, and nearly fatal environment.

Yaakov does not escape unscathed from either confrontation. He is crippled physically and somewhat impoverished financially. Eisav's "evil eye" gazes upon his children and Yaakov is relieved to escape alive, even if damaged in body and purse, separating himself from Eisav physically and from his civilization and worldview.

The scenario is pretty much set for the long dance of Jewish history, with the Jews always attempting to survive in a constantly challenging and brutal society governed by Eisav. The rabbis of Midrash discussed the possibilities of coexistence and even cooperation with Eisav.

Though this debate did not result in any permanent or convincing conclusion, the opinion of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai that Eisav's hatred of Yaakov is completely irrational and implacable seems to be borne out by history, past and present. The anti-Semitism in today's seemingly enlightened world is so pervasive as to be frightening. And we seem to be powerless to do anything about it.

As is painfully obvious to all, these struggles for continued Jewish existence are ongoing and seemingly unending. All of the foreign ideas and current fads of Western society stand almost unanimously opposed to Torah values and traditional lifestyle. The angel of Eisav changes his program from time to time, but he is always opposed to Torah and moral behavior. He wavers from totalitarian extreme conservatism to wild liberalism but always is able to wound the Jewish psyche and body no matter what philosophy or culture he now advocates. We limp today from this attack on Jewish values and Torah study and practice.

Jewish parents in America sue school boards for anti-Semitic attitudes, policies and behavior. Yet they would not dream of sending their children to a Jewish school or giving them an intensive Jewish education. The lawsuit is the indicator of the limp inflicted upon us by Eisav's cultural angel.

All agree that Europe is currently a lost continent as far as Jews are concerned. The question most asked of travel agents by Jews today is "Can I wear a kippah on the street there?" Billions of dollars of Jewish treasure pillaged during World War II and immediately thereafter still lie in the hands of Eisav.

And yet we certainly would be satisfied if the world just let us alone but that seems to be a forlorn hope. So our struggle continues but the Lord's promise to us that we will somehow prevail remains valid and true. And that is our hope for continuing on as loyal and steadfast Jews.

Shabat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

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<https://jewishlink.news/israel-version-3-0/>

**Israel, Version 3.0 -- By Rav Moshe Taragin**

November 30, 2023

Being part of the "third" generation is difficult. The first generation innovates. The second generation consolidates. The third generation often squanders the achievements of the previous two. It is never easy being third.

A well-known study discovered that financial wealth is generally squandered by the third generation. Through hard work and entrepreneurship, the first generation accumulates wealth. Appreciative of these efforts, the second generation preserves wealth. By contrast, the third generation, taking its privileges for granted, squanders wealth. The curse of the third generation.

Sefer Bereishit showcases the religious challenges of the third generation. Avraham was a revolutionary who introduced bold new ideas to the human imagination. He discovered a one God who was responsible for the diversity and dichotomy of our vast world. Additionally, by discovering that Hashem was compassionate, Avraham transformed religious thinking. His life was dramatic and his impact was astonishing.

His son Yitzchak was tasked with locking in these revolutionary ideas and translating them into daily life. In contrast to his father, his life was unremarkable. While Avraham was a nomadic preacher, traveling from location to location, Yitzchak was a sedentary farmer who never traveled beyond the boundaries of Israel. Living a humdrum life without any wars and without visitations from angels, he formed a homestead, excavated deep wells and cemented his father's revolutionary ideas. Living through the first and second generation is straightforward and uncomplicated. Steering the third generation, Yaakov is challenged to protect these ideas and to sustain historical and religious thrust. Often, the third generation loses its momentum and the revolution grinds to a halt. Taking ideas and success for granted, the third generation often descends into petty rivalries and personal animosities. Far removed from the energy and idealism of the founding generation, the third generation can easily sink into apathy and aimlessness. Though his family is threatened by power struggles and personality conflicts, Yaakov heroically battles to preserve both family unity and Jewish destiny. He does not allow the third generation to deteriorate into dysfunction.

As the popular saying goes "hard times create strong men, strong men create good times, good times create weak men, and weak men create hard times." As the third generation inherits good times, they can easily become weak men. Yaakov works hard to keep making his children "strong men" so that they can continue to build history.

#### Fallen Kings

Throughout Jewish history, monarchs of the third generation were haunted by this curse. Jewish monarchy was launched through the exciting and dramatic rise of Dovid Hamelech. His son, Shlomo Hamelech institutionalized his father's gains by constructing a Mikdash and by globalizing Jewish influence. However, by the third generation our unity began to fray, as our state was split into two warring factions under the reign of Shlomo's son, Rechavam. Our people were badly divided into two hostile kingdoms, a split from which we never recovered. Hundreds of years later, Jewish monarchy, once again, faced the curse of the third generation. In the second Temple era, during the Chanukah miracles, heroic Hasmonean warriors defied mighty Greek armies, while valiantly defending Jewish sovereignty against all odds. We don't know much about the second Hasmonean generation, but the third generation was badly flawed. The Hasmonean successor, John Hyrcanus

defected to the Tzedukim faction and adopted policies which incited national discord. His successor, Alexander Jannus, launched a bloody civil war and executed scores of Tanaim. The curse of the third generation struck again.

#### The Third Generation of Israel

We are the third generation of the modern state of Israel. The first generation of pioneers fought numerous wars to reassert our rights to our national homeland. The first round of wars defended our basic rights to a homeland, while the second wave of wars solidified our borders and returned us to the biblical territories of Israel, including Yerushalayim.

The second generation of Israel achieved financial stability and, subsequently, built an economic superpower. In addition, the second generation advanced worldwide aliyah, beckoning Jews to return to the land of history, which had now started to flow with milk, honey, and with economic prospects. Finally, the second generation began the arduous process of forging peaceful relations with those Arab neighbors willing to embrace our presence in our rightful homeland.

Many doubted whether the third generation of Israel could sustain the idealism of the first two generations. The current "Tik Tok" generation was born into a prosperous country, and they didn't face existential struggles. How would this generation respond to adversity? Would they display selflessness and dedication to Jewish history? Were they too comfortable for patriotic spirit and too addicted to screens to care about long-term ideals? Would Israel suffer the curse of the third generation?

Though we faced a horrific tragedy, the current war has debunked most of these worries. Evidently, the third generation of Israel is more than capable of driving Jewish destiny.

So many people questioned whether this new generation would sacrifice personal comfort for national needs or for historical mission. Our enthusiastic response to the war effort has allayed these worries. The 150% enlistment rates of reserve soldiers and the images of Israeli travelers streaming home to join the war, signal that the spirit of sacrifice still beats loud in Israeli hearts. We are first encountering the countless stories of "first responders," soldiers, policemen and average citizens who initially and heroically fought off the assault by hundreds of terrorists preventing them from invading the heart of Israel and causing even greater casualties. Despite the false narratives which our enemies ceaselessly parrot, this third generation possesses moral and historical clarity. Our war is not a struggle between colonialists and suppressed indigenous populations. This is an existential battle over our homeland and a just war to eradicate murderers and barbarians. The third generation is prepared to sacrifice for the larger arc of Jewish history. So many wondered whether this generation could preserve national unity. During the awful past year of public discontent our social fabric was gradually torn apart. One by one the

clasps which held our people together began to break. One by one we abandoned the unifying narratives which had united us. Jews accusing other Jews of being “Nazis” signaled that the Holocaust was no longer a unifying narrative. Hopefully, after facing real modern-day Nazis, no Jew will ever, ever, hurl that term at another Jew. After Oct 7., that behavior is unthinkable. Similarly, the scene of Yom Kippur prayers in Tel Aviv being rudely interrupted for political motives signaled that the Yom Kippur experience was no longer a unifying narrative for both secular and religious.

As our fabric began to rupture, we feared that we had lost all unity and togetherness. This war has demonstrated that, deep down, our unity still runs strong. Our mass volunteerism, and our support for the victims, the hostages and our soldiers, has reassured us that what unites us is far greater than what divides us.

Finally, we wondered whether a secularized society had abandoned religious interest. Could secular and religious Israel still coexist side by side? This war has awakened Jewish spirit. For some that spirit is religious, for others it is traditional and for others it is historical. Either way, the resurgence of Jewish spirit is overwhelming, and it isn’t limited to Israelis. Across the world, Jews, facing venomous antisemitism, are looking back to our shared past and our national spirit to fend off the so-called “enlightened world.”

The third generation of Israel is doing just fine.

The writer is a rabbi at Yeshivat Har Etzion/Gush, a hesder yeshiva. He has smicha and a BA in computer science from Yeshiva University as well as a masters degree in English literature from the City University of New York

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### **Rav Soloveitchik on Vayishlach: A Model Penitent**

Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider (Excerpted from Torah United, Teachings on The Weekly Parashah From Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, and The Chassidic Masters (Ktav, 2023)

Following the death of Leah, her eldest son Reuven seems to commit a disturbing act: “It was when Yisrael was living in that land that Reuven went and lay with Bilhah, his father’s concubine. Yisrael heard, and Yaakov’s sons were twelve” (Genesis 35:22). Could Reuven have truly done something so despicable? According to Rashi, Reuven did not literally do this: When Rachel died, Yaakov took his bed which had always been placed in Rachel’s tent and no others and placed it in Bilhah’s tent. Reuven came and resented the insult to his mother and said, “If my mother was subordinate to her sister [Rachel], must she also be subordinate to her handmaid [Bilhah]?” Therefore, he mixed up [the bed.]<sup>1</sup> Reuven moved his father’s bed to Leah’s tent to express indignation at his father Yaakov’s treatment of her.

Unintended Consequences Although less offensive than what the literal words say, Reuven’s act is still reprehensible. In the verse quoted above, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik notes that the third Patriarch is twice called Yisrael, and then once Yaakov. Since the name Yisrael represents the free and powerful Jew, and Yaakov the subservient Jew, the verse appears to suggest that Reuven’s brazen conduct brought about a terrible change. Prior to Reuven’s act, our forefather was a man who commanded the honor he deserved; afterwards, he was reduced to a shell of his former dignified self. “Reuven’s actions altered a historical trajectory that was to be victorious, as represented by the name Yisrael, to one of servitude and dependence, as represented by the name Yaakov.”<sup>2</sup> With Yaakov’s authority in his own household undermined by his firstborn, the Rav argues that the rest of the brothers could run riot. Without a strong father figure to respect, they could entertain the unthinkable notion of killing their own brother and actually sell him into slavery.<sup>3</sup> This can explain why Reuven was not present during the sale of Yosef. The Midrash says that “he was busy with his sackcloth and fasting for mixing up his father’s bed.”<sup>4</sup> When he discovered that his brothers had murder on their minds, he realized now that his disrespectful conduct had a domino effect.

Dishonor for Dishonor? Reuven’s act of dishonor brought dishonor upon himself. As the firstborn, both kingship and the priesthood would have been rightfully his. Yaakov could now see that Reuven was not suited for either and characterized him as being “like water” (Genesis 49:4), which as a free-flowing liquid is very unstable. Reuven behaved impulsively and without counsel, when a leader must act calmly, deliberately, and wisely under pressure. The Rav suggests that being “busy with his sackcloth and fasting” at the critical moment of Yosef’s sale was a mistake. Someone made of leadership material would have been present and protected Yosef.<sup>5</sup> Despite this huge demotion, Reuven never loses his place within the family. The very verse which describes his transgression concludes with the phrase “and Yaakov’s sons were twelve” (Genesis 35:22). Although Yaakov knows what Reuven has done, he does not banish or disinherit him. To the contrary, Reuven continues to be listed first among his brothers, as emphasized by the very next verse: “The sons of Leah, the firstborn of Yaakov, Reuven” (Genesis 35:23).<sup>6</sup> Reuven’s standing is reaffirmed at the time of Yaakov’s death. Not only does he receive the first blessing, but after the final blessing the Torah emphasizes that “all these are the tribes of Israel, twelve” and that each was blessed according to his appropriate blessing (Genesis 49:28). At the end of the Book of Deuteronomy, when Moshe offers his final blessings to each tribe, he addresses the tribe of Reuven with a striking expression: “May Reuven live and not die, and may his people be numbered” (Deuteronomy 33:6). This curious blessing seems to indicate that Reuven’s legacy was still in question.

The Midrash says that this was because of the long shadow cast by the “episode of Bilhah” centuries earlier. Moshe affirms that Reuven is part of the Children of Israel like the rest of the tribes.<sup>7</sup>

**A Model Penitent** Considering the serious nature and repercussions of Reuven’s transgression, why wasn’t he cast out of Yaakov’s household or his tribe stigmatized? Rabbi Moshe Wolfson, mashgiach ruchani of Mesivta Torah Vodaas, cites a Midrash: The Holy One said to [Reuven], “No one has ever sinned before Me and repented, and you are first to repent. On your life, one of your descendants will be first to repent. And who was that? Hoshea, as it is written, “Return, Yisrael, unto Hashem your God [for you have stumbled in your iniquity]” (Hosea 14:2).<sup>8</sup> God rewarded Reuven for his quick penitence by placing the prophecy of repentance on the lips of his descendant Hoshea. His prophecy was chosen as the haftarah read on Shabbat Shuvah, the last Shabbat before Yom Kippur, at the height of the penitential season. Rabbi Wolfson further quotes the Peri Tzadik of Rebbe Tzadok ha-Kohen Rabinowitz of Lublin, who says that the Torah publicizes Reuven’s sin only because he is a role model for all who seek to repent. He sought to right his own wrongs, to contain the damage wrought by his own rash doings. Reuven opposed the fraternal cabal, and though he failed to protect Yosef in the event, he did make an effort. The Torah tells us that “he returned” (וַיָּשׁוּב) to the pit and then “he returned” (וַיָּשׁוּב) to his brothers (Genesis 37:29-30), the repeated word being from the same root as repentance (הַבִּישָׁתָּה). Apparently, the Sages saw in this repetition an intimation of Reuven’s true legacy—his efforts to repair relationships and make amends.<sup>9</sup>

**Exploring the Rav’s Insight** Unfortunately, Reuven’s miscalculations and failures had a detrimental effect on his own life and personal destiny. The Rav shows that, tragically, he lost all three coveted positions that were within his reach: priesthood, kingship and firstborn rights. He had to live with the ramifications of his mistakes. However, Reuven also possessed remarkable resilience. His sincere intentions and impressive determination to correct his faults had a purifying effect not only on his life but on his future generations. The Torah details his failings, but it also beautifully spotlights his redeeming qualities. Rabbi Yosef Dov ha-Levi Soloveitchik, the Rav’s namesake and great-grandfather, writes that what set Reuven’s repentance apart was his recognition that from a single sin a long, unforeseeable causal chain unfolds. Reuven’s descendant Hoshea imparted this precise message. In Rabbi Soloveitchik’s reading, Hoshea says “Return, Yisrael” from your present sins, “for you have stumbled in your iniquity” far beyond your original misstep.<sup>10</sup> Having established this understanding, we will always look up to the oldest brother, the tribe of Reuven, “the first to repent,” in seeking to properly right past wrongs. The eldest of the tribes of Israel will forever be a paradigm for perseverance and for what the Midrash

attests was his most magnificent accomplishment, complete and thorough repentance.

[1] Rashi on Genesis 35:22. [2] Chumash Mesoras Harav, 1:265. 8 YUTORAH IN PRINT • Vayeitzei 5784 Download thousands of audio shiurim and articles at [www.yutorah.org](http://www.yutorah.org) [3] Even according to the commentaries that claim that the brothers had convened a court and found Yosef guilty and deserving of capital punishment, the brothers were guilty of not conferring with their father and turning to their elder for guidance and direction. See Schachter, Mi-Peninei ha-Rav, 358–359. [4] Genesis Rabbah, 84:19 cited by Rashi on Genesis 37:29. [5] Chumash Mesoras Harav, 1:358. [6] Ramban on Genesis 35:22-23 and Seforno on Genesis 35:23, s.v. בְּיָמֵי יַעֲקֹב. [7] Rashi on Deuteronomy 33:6, quoting Sifrei, 347. [8] Genesis Rabbah, 84:19. [9] Tziyon ve-Areha, 21–22. [10] Beit ha-Levi, Vayeshev, s.v. Vayeshev Reuven el Habor.

<https://www.theyeshiva.net/jewish/9180/essay-vayishlach-the-meaning-of-chosen-people> **Rabbi YY Jacobson November 30, 2023**

### **Are Jews the Chosen People? Why the Obsession with Israel and Jews? Why the Obsession with Israel?**

I do not see a way of rationally explaining the obsessive hatred to Israel and Jews without the faith that Jews are G-d’s chosen people to make the world a place of goodness and kindness. The obsession with Jews, a people that does not even constitute a quarter of a percent of humanity, is going on for almost 4000 years. It makes no sense. 500,000 people were murdered in Syria, including tens of thousands of children, and I did not hear of one demonstration. Israel is trying to protect its children from being slaughtered, fighting an enemy that wants its own children to die, so Israel can be demonized, and yet the Jews are condemned.

Traumatized self-hating Jews and anti-Semites even have the chutzpah to call Gaza a Jewish “concentration camp,” when Israel expelled every last Jew from Gaza in 2005. Had the Gaza population not voted in Hamas in 2006 and chosen to spend all its resources to murder Jews, Gaza could have been the Singapore of the Middle East. They blame Israel for having checkpoints, which only exist because without them, there would be terrorists’ attacks on a daily basis. They want an airport in Gaza, so that planes can murder tens of thousands of Jews daily?

The obsession with Israel makes no sense unless you can appreciate the truth that we are G-d’s people. We were chosen to serve as a light onto the nations, a Divine flame lit on the cosmic way, hence we trigger the world in unimaginable ways. But this is not easy for Jews to accept, even though the world knows it. Virtually every other nation has perceived itself as chosen or otherwise divinely special. For example, China means “Middle Kingdom” in Chinese – meaning that China is at the center of the world; and Japan considers itself the land

where the sun originates (“Land of the Rising Sun”). The British thought they were chosen, and the Muslims and Christians of course see themselves as chosen. And they would love hearing it. But when you tell a Jew you are chosen, he says: “Me? Never. I am just a human being.”

Of course, Jewish chosen-ness cannot be racist because Jews are not a race; there are Jews of every race. What is more, any person of any race, ethnicity, or nationality can become a member of the Jewish people and thereby be as chosen as Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah, Maimonides, or the chief rabbi of Israel.

Can reason alone explain how a hodgepodge of ex-slaves was able to change history — to introduce the moral Creator we know as G-d, to devise ethical monotheism; to write the world’s most influential book, the Bible; to be the only civilization to deny the cyclical worldview and give humanity belief in a linear (i.e., purposeful) history; to provide morality-driven prophets; and so much more — without G-d playing the decisive role in this people’s history?

But we are still uncomfortable. Why did it have to be this way? Who needs this idea that one people is chosen? It seems unenlightened. To suggest that as Jews we are somehow closer to G-d than all other nation smacks of arrogance, elitism, and prejudice.

It’s because we don’t understand what “chosen” means.

The Rebbe’s 1798 Letter

This story takes us back some two centuries ago. In 1798, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812), founder of Chabad, known as the Alter Rebbe, was arrested and charged with treason, on the basis of petitions to the Czar by opponents of Chassidism. It was a devastating moment in Jewish history. He could have been given capital punishment, heaven forbid — and that would have been the end not only of Chabad, but of much of the Chassidic movement, as he was its chief defender, intellectual advocate, and most influential figure. After 53 days of imprisonment, he was exonerated of all charges and freed. The event — celebrated to this day on the 19th day of Kislev, this Shabbos December 2 — marked the decisive victory of the Chassidic movement and the onset of a new, expanded phase in the exploration and dissemination of the infinite spiritual depth of Judaism, embodied in Chassidism.

Upon his release, Rabbi Schneur Zalman dispatched a short but powerful letter to all his followers. It is one of the most extraordinary letters one can read. (It is published in Tanya, Igeres Hakodesh, chapter 2). The Rebbe suffered so much as a result of his opponents; they persecuted him and his followers even before the arrest; then came the arrest and his terrifying trial. Yet in this letter he warns his disciples against any display of haughtiness as a result of their victory. He instructs them not to denigrate, tease, and show disdain to those who craved their downfall.

The letter opens with the verse stated by Jacob in Genesis: “I have become small by all the kindnesses and by all the truth that You have done Your servant.” (This verse appears in the beginning of the Torah section of Vayishlach (Genesis 32:4-36:43), which was the Torah reading for the Shabbat preceding the day of Rabbi Schneur Zalman’s release, Tuesday, 19 Kislev, 5759-1798). The Alter Rebbe is perturbed by the obvious question. Why was Jacob humbled by all the kindness he was shown? Why did it not bolster his pride? If G-d gave this all to me, I probably deserve it!

תניא אגרת הקודש סימן ב: פי' שבכל חסד וחסד שהקדוש ב"ה עושה לאדם צריך להיות שפל רוח במאד, כי חסד דרועא ימינא. וימינו תחבקני. שהיא בחי' קרבת אלהים ממש ביתר שאת מלפנים. וכל הקרוב אל ה' ביתר שאת והגבה למעלה מעלה, צריך להיות יותר שפל רוח למטה מטה כמ"ש מרחוק ה' נראה לי. וכנודע דכולא קמ' דווקא כלא חשיב. וא"כ כל שהוא קמ' יותר הוא יותר כלא ואין ואפס וזו בחי' ימין שבקדושה וחסד לאברהם שאמר אנכי עפר ואפר. וזו היא ג"כ מדתו של יעקב... משא"כ בזלע"ז הוא ישמעאל חסד דקליפה. כל שהחסד גדול הוא הולך וגדל בגובה וגסות הרוח ורוחב לבו.

The Alter Rebbe conveys a profound idea.

Who Chose You?

In the Jewish understanding, chosenness leads not to arrogance, but rather to humility. If it were some human king that chose us to be his special people, then your assumption would be correct — we would become elitists. When a mortal power shows favoritism towards a subject, that subject will become more arrogant as a result — the closer you are to the king, the more significant you are, and the more significant you are the higher respect you feel you deserve.

But we were chosen by G-d. And the closer you are to G-d, the more you sense your insignificance. While being buddy-buddy with a human leader inflates your ego, a relationship with G-d bursts your selfish bubble. Because G-d is an infinite being, and all delusions of petty self-importance fall away when you stand before infinity. Being close with G-d demands introspection and self-improvement, not smugness.

In Judaism, G-d is the core of reality — the entire reality of existence. We are all part of reality, we are all in reality; we are all part of G-d, in G-d, in reality. There is an organic oneness that unites all of existence, all of humanity, all of the cosmos — and that organic unity is what we call G-d. “Hashem Echad,” G-d is one, does not only mean there is one G-d and not twenty gods; it means that G-d is synonymous with oneness. The word G-d is another way of saying that “there is only one.” There is oneness that pervades all of existence. We are all reflections of One reality; One core. We are all manifestations — diverse expressions — of a singular reality.

To be conscious of G-d means to never allow your ego to wrap you in its superficial imagination. “Ego” stands for Easing G-d Out. When I do not realize my true greatness and value, as a reflection of G-d’s infinite oneness, I must resort to my ego to feel good about myself and to put you down. Becoming G-d conscious means that at every moment I need not protect my



ego, as I become completely comfortable with my true reality, as an expression of Divine light. The more G-d conscious I am, the smaller I become and the greater I become: On one level I become nothing, as there is nothing but the organic oneness, the absolute infinity of G-d, which pervades all. At the same time—I become the greatest, as my life becomes a full and seamless expression of the higher, unifying, integrating, eternal consciousness of the eternal core of all reality. Being close to G-d summons you to respect others more, not less. The more G-d conscious, the more loving and charitable you become, as you are aware that G-d's light pervades every person and every creature. When in the name of chosenness a person becomes bigoted, disrespectful, elitist and arrogant—they missed the boat. When you become aware of G-d choosing you, it eliminates judgementalism we resort to in order to protect our egos and feel better about ourselves and our place in the world. Your success never equals my failure. I reflect one aspect of G-d, as you reflect another one. This is the idea of the Chosen People — a nation of individuals who have been given the opportunity to sense G-d's closeness, hear His truth and relay His message to the world. All agree that it was the Jews that introduced the world to monotheism and a system of ethics and morals that has shaped the modern view of life and its purpose. And it is the survival of Judaism to this day that attests to the eternal value of this system. Anyone from any ethnic background can convert to Judaism and become chosen. Jewish chosenness is not a gene, it is a state of the soul. Anyone wishing to take it upon themselves is welcome -- as long as they are ready to have their bubble burst. Anyone can join this group of “chosen people” as long as they are ready to experience themselves as nothing... And that is a Jew. And that is why so many people loathe the Jewish people. We have been chosen to teach each and every person alive that each of them has been chosen—to serve G-d and become an ambassador of love, light, and goodness to His world. What Did Chosen-ness Do To Us? When I look at our people, I ask myself one question: Has our belief that we are the chosen people turned us into murderous people who feel they have the right to abuse, persecute, target, and annihilate other cultures and peoples who are different? Or has it made us feel responsible to share, give, contribute, and help others? Has the idea of Chosen People turned us into people who are never introspective, or perhaps into the most self-critical and introspective nation on earth? (Often, the worst critics of Israel are Jews!) The true test of chosenness is how humble you are. Most Jews today have passed this test with flying colors. Their humility is so deep, it doesn't allow them to accept that they are chosen. While most other religious groups are quite comfortable claiming that they are the best, we Jews will do anything to say

that we are nothing special. Now that's what we call a Chosen People!

Katonti!

This, explained Rabbi Schneur Zalman, was the hallmark of Jacob. To the self-absorbed person, a kindness from G-d is proof of his own significance and worth. To the spiritually mature person, however, a kindness from G-d is, first and foremost, an act of divine love: G-d is drawing the person closer to Him. And the closer one comes to G-d, the more one realizes one's own insignificance in the face of the divine infinity.

This is what it means to think as a Jew. When you were blessed with a gift, when you were showered with a blessing—the first instinct of the Jew is: Katonti! I am humbled.

This, the Alter Rebbe taught, must be the response of his followers to the grace they have seen: to become far more humble, authentic, and Divine. To suspend their egos and become channels for Divine oneness.

When we realize we have been chosen, we cultivate a healthy confidence that comes not from ego but from humility. It is about respecting our role as Divine ambassadors for goodness and truth. Then we never duck to pressure of those who want us to compromise our eternal mission to eliminate evil and cultivate goodness.

(My thanks to Rabbi Aron Moss for his article on the topic: [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/160993/jewish/Are-the-Jews-the-Chosen-People.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/160993/jewish/Are-the-Jews-the-Chosen-People.htm)).

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from: Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org> to: ravfrand@torah.org

date: Nov 30, 2023, 8:48 AM subject: **Rav Frand - The Chochmas Adam Shares Wisdom of a (Former) Businessman**

By Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Vayishlach The Chochmas Adam Shares Wisdom of a (Former) Businessman

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion: #1271 – The Postponed Bris: Never On A Thursday? Good Shabbos!

Yaakov instructs the messengers that he sends to his brother Eisav to deliver the following message: “Thus says your servant Yaakov: Im Lavan gartee (I have dwelt with Lavan) and I have tarried there until now.” (Bereshis 32:5). Rashi cites two interpretations for the expression “Im Lavan gartee”. Rashi's second interpretation is that the word gartee (Gimmel Reish Taf Yud) is numerically equivalent to the number taryag (Taf Reish Yud Gimmel), six hundred and thirteen. According to this interpretation, the message Yaakov sent to his brother was, “although I lived with Lavan, I kept the 613 mitzvos of the Torah throughout that time and was not influenced by his

evil ways.” In effect, Yaakov told Eisav, “Don’t start up with me!”

Many meforshim ask: Given who Eisav was, why would he care in the least that Yaakov kept the 613 mitzvos and did not learn from Lavan’s evil ways? It is as if we were speaking to a heretic and we said to him “You should know, throughout my time with my evil uncle, I kept the laws of Cholov Yisrael and I kept the laws of Pas Yisrael.” What effect will it have on Eisav that Yaakov kept the 613 mitzvos in Lavan’s house? The Sefer Ateres Duda'im, written by Rav Dovid Zucker, the head of the Chicago Kollel, seeks an answer to this question based on a comment of the Kli Yakar. The pasuk says, “...and Eisav said in his heart, ‘the time of mourning for my father will soon be here, and I will then kill my brother Yaakov.’” (Bereshis 27:41) The Kli Yakar writes that Eisav was waiting for the moment when Yaakov would not be occupying himself with Torah, and that would be the propitious moment to kill him. Since a mourner is forbidden to learn Torah, Eisav planned to wait until Yitzchak died and Yaakov became an avel. At that time, Yaakov’s merit of occupying himself with Torah would not protect him.

The sefer Ateres Duda'im says that this helps explain what Yaakov Avinu is trying to tell Eisav here as well. Yaakov is telling his brother “You know that when I was in my father’s house I was a ‘tent dweller’ who learned day and night. When I left my home and went to the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever, I also learned day and night.” Now Yaakov has returned from his sojourn with Lavan. What has he been doing for the last 22 years? He has been raising cattle. He has been working for a living. Eisav thinks to himself, “Maybe my brother learned by Shem and Ever and maybe he learned in my father’s house, but for the last 22 years, he has been in business. He is in the cattle business and has done very well for himself in the cattle business. Now is my chance.”

According to the Ateres Duda'im “Taryag mitzvos shamarti” does not mean I kept the 613 mitzvos. The truth of the matter is that Yaakov did not keep the 613 mitzvos. He married two sisters. There are other things he could not fulfill living outside of Eretz Yisrael. The word shamarti is similar to the expression “V’Aviv shamar es haDavar” (Bereshis 37:11) (and his father anticipated the fulfillment of the matter, he longed to see the time when Yosef’s dreams would be fulfilled). Yaakov acknowledged that while in the house of Lavan he spent time out in the fields, tending to sheep day and night. But that entire time, I anticipated, I longed for the time that I could get back to the Beis Medrash.

When a person is in the workplace but he anxiously awaits getting back to the Beis Medrash, that gives him the merit of Torah as well. Rabbi Zucker, in this connection, cites the introduction that Rav Avram Danzig wrote to his sefer Chochmas Adam. Rav Avram Danzig was a mechutan to the Gaon of Vilna. He was a businessman until he went bankrupt.

At that point he acquiesced to the demands that he become a dayan (judge) in Vilna. Much of the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch by Rav Shlomo Ganzfried is based on Rav Danzig’s earlier works the Chayei Adam and the Chochmas Adam.

The author of the Chochmas Adam, thus, was a businessman. He was born in the city of Danzig, Poland, but he did his business in the city of Leipzig. He writes as follows in his introduction to the Chochmas Adam:

I know that people are going to whisper about me and ask “Is Shaul also one of the prophets?” (Shmuel I 10:11) We know this fellow is a businessman for the past 15 years who sold his wares in Leipzig and in Frankfurt. When did he possibly learn Torah (that he now feels qualified to write Halachic compendiums on the laws of Orach Chaim and Yoreh Deah)? After all, the Torah testifies about itself “It is not found on the other side of the river” (Devorim 30:13). The Torah says about itself that it is not to be found by merchants and by businessmen. You should know my brothers, that my travelling great distances (from home) was not, Heaven forbid, to accumulate wealth. The Master of All will testify for me. I was only trying to support my family.

This is the fact with every Jewish man: If a person abandons Torah, distances himself from it, and gives up the practice of intensive Torah learning, then Torah will also distance itself from him and he will no longer possess the ability to be innovative in Torah. But if a person’s intent is not to leave Torah but due to circumstances beyond his control, he cannot cling to it with the same intensity that he once could, then Heaven forbid that the Torah should leave him! One who in the midst of his business dealings longs for the opportunity to return to his Torah learning and be married once again to it, that power of Torah creativity will remain in his soul.

This is what I say about myself. Even though it is true that I traveled to faraway places while engaging in my business dealings, my Torah wisdom has remained with me. Whenever I traveled on my routes, my thoughts were with Torah. When I was in the store my thoughts were with Torah. Let me be given credit for the fact that even while engaged in buying and selling, many times my thoughts were in fact involved with Torah. My fellow businessmen will testify about me that even while travelling to Leipzig, I never failed to take with me a Gemara, Mikra, and Mishna. Even during the times of the Great (trade) Fairs, I learned a daf and a half of Gemara daily, besides Mishnayos.

Therefore, that is how I can write these Halachic compendiums – because “Taryag mitzvos shamarti,” because I longed to go back to the Beis Medrash.

Whenever I travel and I see people taking out their ArtScroll Gemaras or putting on their headsets and listening to shiurim on a plane or a train, I recall what Rav Avraham Danzig writes in his introduction to the Chochmas Adam. A person may need to be in the business world, but as long as he longs for Torah





Eisav received only מְכִרָה בְּיָדוֹ, goods which can be bought and sold, Israel (Yaakov) exhibited submissiveness and inferiority.

“But when Eisav wanted a gift of Yaakov’s sacred objects – the holiness of family life, Shabbos, kashrus, beliefs and traditions; when Eisav demanded that Yaakov compromise his Torah way of life – a remarkable transformation occurred within Yaakov. Suddenly, the quiet, unassuming Jew became a hero, full of strength and stubbornness. The crooked back straightened, the pitiful eyes began to spit fire, and Yaakov refused Eisav’s request with chutzpah and determination... Yaakov told those who represent him in that dark Diaspora night, in the kingly palaces of Germany, Poland, and Russia: Eisav will begin to debate with you, to ask you about your beliefs, hopes, and ideals. He will propose, ‘let us take our journey together’ (Gen.33:12). He will suggest that his religion and Judaism can easily merge, that all can live peacefully. Tell him that we can cooperate, as long as we are dealing with profane matters, with business, with politics, with science, with goats, camels and mules, with precious stones and pearls. If he wants a gift of ‘that which he had in hand,’ he can have it; ‘it is a gift sent to my master, to Eisav’ (v.19). “But the moment he demands more and begins to ask for souls, for the purity of my family, my Shabbos, my G-d, you must give a different response... You should answer sharply and with pride [32:19]. I myself, my soul, my heart, my feelings, my hopes, and my beliefs belong not to you, but to Judaism. This is what Yaakov announced throughout the generations to all his representatives and politicians. And when Eisav persisted and demanded things that were sacred, then the passive man, the coward, the man who said three times a day ‘and to those that curse me let my soul be silent, let my soul be unto all as the dust,’ became a fighter who resisted Eisav with great stubbornness” (Chumash Masores HaRav, Bereishis, p.243-245).

Amichai Shindler of Kibbutz Kerem Shalom miraculously survived the October 7th massacre but was left with severe injuries. Kerem Shalom is a mixed religious-secular kibbutz that is less than 100 meters [.06 miles] from the Gaza Strip. That Shabbos/Simchas Torah morning, Amichai, 33, and his wife and six children went into their safe room when they heard rocket sirens blare early in the morning. When they heard the sound of terrorists shouting in Arabic inside their home. Amichai ran to the door and held it shut, while his wife and small children huddled inside. Amichai held the door shut for hours, fending off the terrorists but eventually, the Hamas animals threw an explosive device at it. The resulting blast seriously injured Amichai, blowing off one of his forearms, breaking his other arm, and crushing his face and jaw. Amichai fell to the floor of the room – still conscious but bleeding profusely. He lay there for three and a half hours until IDF

soldiers reached the kibbutz and evacuated Amichai to the hospital. His wife and children were physically unharmed. Amichai is now undergoing rehabilitation at Sheba Hospital, learning to live with his severe injuries, with one arm cut off right below the elbow and the other severely injured. One of his first requests after regaining consciousness was to meet with Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein shlita. Once Amichai was in rehabilitation, he had two more requests – to meet the Gerrer Rebbe, HaGaon HaRav Shaul Altar, whose Torah he’s enjoyed in recent years, and to start using Rabbeinu Tam Tefillin. HaRav Altar went to visit Amichai last week and told him “וַיְהִי יָדָיו אֲמוּנָה” (Shemos 17:12) – you can learn emunah from your hands.”

They also spoke about tying tefillin and how Amichai will light Chanukah candles – Amichai related that he asked the physical therapists to practice lighting candles with him. The Rebbe was moved, saying that it’s a “מְצוּה לַפְּרָסָם” that these are the requests of a Jew in such a situation.

Regarding Amichai’s injuries, the Rosh Yeshivah said: “It’s not an individual tza’ar – it’s a tza’ar of all of Klal Yisrael. But we know that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is in charge.”

<https://www.theyeshivaworld.com/news/israel-news/2241882/a-jews-request-after-arm-blown-off-rabbeinu-tam-tefillin.html>

When Eisav wants chattel, that which one ‘holds in his hands’, he can have it and to save a life the Jew will freely part with such goods. But when he wants the emunah that defines us, Shabbos, kashrus, masorah, kedusha, the same Jew becomes a courageous warrior who will never concede defeat. “וַיְהִי יָדָיו אֲמוּנָה” (Shemos 17:12) – you can learn emunah from your hands.”

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Tidbits in memory of Rav Meir Zlotowitz Ztl • Parashas Vayishlach

Ira Zlotowitz <Iraz@klalgovoah.org>

Parashas Vayishlach • December 1st • 18 Kislev 5784

This Tuesday, December 5th at Maariv, we begin saying V’sain Tal U’matar in Bareich Aleinu (those in Eretz Yisrael previously began on 7 Cheshvan). If one forgets V’sain Tal U’matar there, he can make it up by saying it in Shema Koleinu. If one remembers his omission after passing Shema Koleinu, one must go back to the berachah of Bareich Aleinu. If one has already finished Shemoneh Esrei, he must repeat Shemoneh Esrei. If one is unsure what he said, until thirty days have passed (Maariv on Thursday, January 4th, 2023), we assume that he did not say V’sain Tal U’matar. However, one who repeats the phrase “V’es Kol... V’sain Tal U’matar” ninety times (ideally 101 times) is thereafter - in case of doubt - halachically presumed to have said it properly and thus would need not repeat if unsure.

Daf Yomi - Friday: Bavli: Bava Kamma 29 • Yerushalmi: Shevi'is 55 • Mishnah Yomis: Yevamos 11:1-2 • Oraysa: Next week is Yoma 36b-38b.

Make sure to call your parents, in-laws, grandparents and Rebbi to wish them a good Shabbos. If you didn't speak to your kids today, make sure to connect with them as well! Chanukah begins next Thursday evening, December 7th. Shabbos Chanukah is next Shabbos, Parashas Vayeishev, December 9th.

VAYISHLACH: Yaakov sends Malachim to Eisav who is approaching with 400 men • Yaakov prepares for his confrontation with Eisav with gifts, prayer, and readying for war • Left alone on one side of the Yabok River, Yaakov battles and defeats the ministering angel of Eisav • Yaakov is given the name Yisrael • Yaakov encounters Eisav and they part in peace • Dina ventures out into the city of Shechem, and is assaulted by its leader's son, Shechem • The Shevatim are outraged and plot revenge • Shechem and his people agree to be circumcised • Shimon and Levi annihilate the male inhabitants of the city of Shechem • Yaakov builds an altar in Bais-El • Rachel passes away during the birth of Binyamin • Reuven moves Yaakov's bed to Leah's tent • Yitzchak passes away at 180 years of age, and is buried by Yaakov and Esav • The descendants of Eisav and the kingdoms of Edom. Haftarah: Ovadiah (1:1-21) relates the prophecy about the rise and fall of the Kingdom of Edom, the descendants of Esav. Ovadiah was himself a convert from Edom.

Parashas Vayishlach: 154 Pesukim • 1 Prohibition  
1. It is forbidden to eat the Gid Hanashev (the sciatic nerve) of a kosher animal.

Mitzvah Highlight: Yaakov was saved from the Malach of Eisav, escaping with merely a wound to his thigh. This mitzvah reminds us that despite the constant and ongoing persecution by Esav's descendants, our nation will ultimately be spared and redeemed (Sefer HaChinuch).

“וַיִּהְיֶה לִי שׂוֹר וָחֲמֹר” “And I acquired an ox and a donkey” (Bereishis 32:6)

Rashi explains that it is “Derech Eretz” to reference many oxen in a singular form. Rav Moshe Feinstein z”l explains that when a person references his own possessions, it is proper to be modest and not needlessly boast about them. Thus, Yaakov modestly used the singular form “ox,” although he had many oxen.

We find as well that Eisav proclaims to Yaakov “Yesh Li Rav,” “I have an abundance,” and Yaakov replies to Eisav, “Yesh Li Kol,” “I have everything.” An “abundance” is measured relative to what is common in society. Eisav looked to the world around him to measure his success and was only content when he exceeded societal standards. Yaakov, however, confidently proclaimed “I have everything,” as he was satisfied that all his needs were met. Yaakov saw no need to boast about his abundance, as he attached little importance

to the status associated with material success and instead focused on everything he was given.

This concept can be illustrated by a true incident which occurred in a ballroom in the United Kingdom. In attendance at the event were many of the UK's dignitaries, including the Queen of England herself. Suddenly, a commotion erupted, as Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher entered the hall. The reason for the commotion? Madam Thatcher was wearing a dress identical to the Queen's! The very next day, the Prime Minister's office sent a letter to the Queen expressing her apologies over the incident. The response from the Queen's secretary was curt and quick in coming: “The Queen of England does not notice what other people are wearing.” Similarly, when we are aware of our own inherent importance and dignity, we are not threatened by the successes, possessions or achievements of others.

Halachos of Chanukah Menorah: How to Light?

Common practice is to light the candle in the rightmost position on the first night. From the second night and on, the candles are added from right to left; lighting begins with the newest candle and moves to the right. The neiros mitzvah should not be used to light one another; rather the shamash or another flame source should be used to light all the neiros. One should have a lit candle in his right hand prior to reciting the berachos, and should position his hand so that the lit shamash is positioned closest to the night's new ner (so that he does not ‘pass over’ any other neiros when lighting the newest ner). Those who light adjacent to a doorway may light the rightmost candle first as it is closest to the doorpost. The berachos of L'hadlik Ner Shel Chanukah and She'asa Nissim are recited, as well as Shehecheyanu on the first night. Following the Hadlakah, Haneiros Hallalu and Ma'oz Tzur are recited or sung. One should be sure that one wick is reliably aflame before reciting Haneiros Halalu (so as not to create a hefsek between the berachos and the lighting). One may not derive benefit from the menorah lights; for this reason the additional shamash is left lit adjacent to the Menorah lights.

Please reach out to us with any thoughts or comments at: [klalgovoah.org](mailto:klalgovoah.org)

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**Rav Kook on VaYishlach: The Conflict Between Jacob and Esau**

**Rabbi Chanan Morrison** <[chanan@ravkooktorah.org](mailto:chanan@ravkooktorah.org)> U  
Thu, Nov 30, 2:

VaYishlach: The Conflict Between Jacob and Esau  
The central theme of VaYishlach is Jacob's struggle to find his unique path, especially in relation to his brother Esau. This was not just a family feud. The Sages saw in Esau a symbol for Rome, and more broadly, a non-Jewish worldview

alien to the Torah's outlook. The high point of the narrative unfolds as Jacob engages in a nighttime battle with a mysterious stranger, identified by the Sages as Esau's guardian angel.

"Jacob remained alone. A stranger wrestled with him until daybreak. When he saw that he could not defeat him, he touched the upper joint of [Jacob's] thigh. Jacob's hip joint became dislocated as he wrestled with the stranger." (Gen. 32:25-26)

What is the significance of this unusual wrestling match? Why did Esau's angel decide to injure Jacob's thigh, and not some other part of his body?

Esau's World of Hedonism

Many years earlier, Esau rejected his birthright, selling it for a bowl of lentil stew. "I am going to die!" he exclaimed. "What good is a birthright to me?" (Gen. 25:32) What motivated Esau to sell his birthright?

We must understand the significance of this ancestral birthright. It was a legacy from their father Isaac, a spiritual charge to lead a life dedicated to serving God. For Esau, holiness is incompatible with a conventional lifestyle. He saw the birthright as a death sentence; it threatened the very foundations of his hedonistic way of life. It was because of this birthright and its responsibilities that Esau felt that he was going to die.

Esau's viewpoint resurfaces during his reunion with Jacob.

When Esau saw Jacob's family, he was astounded. "Who are these to you?" (Gen. 33:5) You, Jacob, who chose our father's birthright and its otherworldly holiness – what connection can you have to a normal life? How can you have wives and children?

Esau was unable to reconcile his image of a life dedicated to Divine service with establishing a family and raising children. In the nocturnal struggle between Jacob and Esau's guardian angel, the attack on Jacob's thigh symbolizes this clash of viewpoints. The angel's message was unmistakable: if Jacob wanted to pursue holiness and devotion to God, he must detach himself from the realm of family and the ordinary aspects of life. The dislocation of the thigh, the source of progeny, signified this separation.

The Elevated Torah of the Patriarchs

Jacob rejected Esau's views on living a life of holiness. Jacob exemplified, in both outlook and actions, the harmony of nature with holiness. And Jacob's Torah was revealed in the natural world.

The Midrash teaches that "The Holy One looked into the Torah and created the universe" (Bereishit Rabbah 1:1). This implies that the universe is a result and a manifestation of God's contemplation of the Torah. If we examine the world carefully, we should be able to uncover the underlying principles of the Torah. If Adam had not sinned, there would

have been no need for a written Torah; life itself would be ordered according to the Torah's principles.

The Patriarchs endeavored to rectify Adam's sin. Their Torah and mitzvot belonged to the era before the Torah needed to be written down. For them, the Torah was naturally revealed in the universe. This is also the Torah of the angels, whose sole function is to fulfill the mission of their Creator in the world. "Bless God, His angels, mighty in strength, who fulfill His word" (Psalms 103:20).

Who were the messengers that Jacob sent to inform Esau of his arrival? The Midrash interprets the word *malachim* literally: Jacob sent angels to his brother. A messenger is regarded as an extension of the sender; it is as if the sender himself accomplished the mission. If so, the sender and the messenger must share a connection on some basic level (see Kiddushin 41b).

By utilizing these unusual emissaries, Jacob sent a powerful message to Esau. You, Esau, claim that holiness and physical life are fundamentally contradictory. But my Torah is the Torah of the angels. For me, there is no division between holiness and the natural world. God Himself is revealed within His creation. (Adapted from Shemuot HaRe'iyah 9, VaYishlach 5630 (1929))

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From: Esplanade Capital <jeisenstadt@esplanadecap.com>  
date: Nov 30, 2023, 11:17 PM

**Rabbi Yisroel Reisman's Chumash Shiur**

Rabbi Reisman – Parshas Vayishlach 5784

1 – Topic – A Dvar Halacha and a Remez that comes from the Posuk

As we prepare for Shabbos Parshas Vayishlach and prepare for the upcoming Yom Tov of Chanukah which we hope will be a time of great Ohr for all of Klal Yisrael. In this week's Parsha we find in 35:26 after the list of the children of Yaakov Avinu, the Posuk says (אֵלֶּה בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב, אֲשֶׁר יָלַד-לוֹ בְּפָדֵן אֲרָם). These are the children of Yaakov that were born to him in Padan Aram. A Peledik Posuk. What are you talking about? Binyamin was not born in Padan Aram, Binyamin was born in Eretz Yisrael! Rachel died in childbirth. We know where Rachel is buried. What do you mean (אֲשֶׁר יָלַד-לוֹ בְּפָדֵן אֲרָם), it is a Dvar Pele! It must be that some of the Meforshim talk about it.

I did see in the Taima Dikra (page Mem Daled), that Rav Chaim Kanievsky writes that it seems that the Torah considers (אֲשֶׁר יָלַד-לוֹ בְּפָדֵן אֲרָם) because she was expecting and she became pregnant with him in Padan Aram. Rav Chaim Kanievsky is Maskim that it doesn't fit with all of the Chazals to say that that is what happened, but nevertheless it is a Pshat. If we can understand that from when they left Padan Aram until his birth was 9 months or less, then it makes sense (אֲשֶׁר יָלַד-לוֹ בְּפָדֵן אֲרָם). This is a Pshat in the Posuk. It is more than a Pshat in the Posuk.

If we go with such a Pshat, then we have a Mekor for a Mechudush'dika idea that is brought in the Poskim. What is that? Normally I would understand that a person is alive from the time that he is born. The rest of time he is not considered to be a separate person. There is a Lashon in Chazal that U'ber Yerech Imo, that the U'ber is a piece of the mother. It is a Safeik L'halacha if we even Pasken that way. Yet, we do find in Halacha certain Halachos for a baby where the mother became pregnant still as a non-Jew and the birth was as a Jew. We do find different Halachos. The language that the Roshei Yeshiva use in the case of such a person, is a language of Yichus Yisrael B'li Kedushas Yisrael. The idea that when the pregnancy begins as a non-Jew the baby needs Geirus because he is missing Kedushas Yisrael. But since he is born to a Jewish mother he has Yichus Yisrael, he has Dinim of Yichus Yisrael. You are going to say what is the Nafka Mina?

One Nafka Mina is, that he is related to his mother. Even if the Geirus takes place later, if the mother is Megayeir too, and that is what it means Lai'daso B'Kedusha, that the mother was Megayeir. Even though the child's Geirus is not complete until the Bris Milah, but he is related to his mother. Not only that, if twins are born, Chazal say that the twins are related to each other. But they need Geirus?

That is a riddle, how can you have somebody who is born and needs a Bris Milah for Geirus and yet is related to his brother? If twins are born, and they have to have Bris Milah to complete their Geirus, nevertheless, they are related to each other. How could that be? Ger Shenisgayeir K'koton Shenolad Dami?

The answer is the person has Yichus Yisrael, a person who is born to a Jewish mother, the mother is his mother. The brother is his brother. He is missing Kedushas Yisrael. It could be that the pregnancy began in Chutz L'aretz so the beginning of the pregnancy is when Kedushas Hav'lad begins. This is a concept we find in Chazal, and this would be a nice source for it or at least an Asmachta for it. That is says that Binyamin was born in Padan Aram although he was born in Eretz Yisrael and he wasn't born in Padan Aram. So we see that L'gabey Kedushas Hav'lad the fact that the pregnancy began in Chutz L'aretz is still missing something in the full Kedusha of somebody that has the pregnancy in Eretz Yisrael and Lai'da in Eretz Yisrael, perhaps this is a Remez or an Asmachta for that concept.

## 2 – Topic – The Chashivus in Saying Nefillas Apaim

As you know, by Tachnun the main point of Tachnun is when we fall on our arm and say Tachnun. The Minhag of Ashkenazim is to say the 6th Perek of Tehillim and the Minhag of Sefardim is to say the 25th Perek of Tehillim when they say Nefillas Apaim, but one Minhag is the same. That is, before we start we say (רחום ורחמים עלי וקבל) (רחום ורחמים עלי וקבל). That is not a Posuk anywhere. It is a Memra of Chazal of Techina that goes back a very long time.

Rabbeinu Chananel Derech Agav in Maseches Megillah 24b mentions that we say (רחום ורחמים) by Nefillas Apaim. So this

must be a very Yesodosdika sentence that we say, and I think that maybe we skip over it to callously. We should try to understand what is this (רחום ורחמים) that we say.

Al Pi Zohar, a person has to say Viduy between Shemoneh Esrei and Nefillas Apaim. That is the source of the Minhag of Nusach Sfarad to say (אשכנזי) before we say Nefillas Apaim and that is based Al Pi Zohar to say Viduy before Nefillas Apaim.

In one of the earliest Siddurim, the Siddur of Rav Shabsi which was a Talmid of the Levush who wrote one of the earliest Siddurim, he said that saying (רחום ורחמים) is based on the Zohar. It is a type of a Viduy that we say. (רחום ורחמים) is a Hakdama for Nefillas Apaim. Even if you Daven Nusach Ashkenaz it is a type of a Viduy. This is what it says there and this idea of the Viduy is a significant one.

I have a Kasha. One of the rules of Viduy is that you say it only standing. In Hilchos Yom Kippur it says that when you say Viduy you shouldn't even be leaning on something and if you are leaning fully on something it is not good. Viduy has to be said M'umad. We all stand when we say the Al Cheits. It is supposed to be said standing. Yet, in that Rabbeinu Chananel who introduces (רחום ורחמים), he says that it is said B'nefila. Why is it said B'nefila? It is a Shver Kasha.

The Mekor Chaim of the Chavas Yo'ir in Siman Kuf Lamed Aleph, S'if Vav asks this Kasha. Why is it said B'nefila. That is something that really needs a satisfactory explanation to really have a good understanding of it. Perhaps, if we understand Nefillas Apaim and appreciate it better, we would understand it.

I would like to explain as follows. The Radak in Perek Vav of Tehillim, on this Kappital, says that Dovid wrote Tehillim in general and he is writing about what we say in Nefillas Apaim, he is saying that it was written by Dovid to be said by any individual about himself. Dovid wrote the language about himself, he said it regarding his feelings and (למנצח בגנינות, על-) (השמינית; מזמור לדוד) is how Perek Vav starts. When we say Nefillas Apaim we leave that out. Why do we leave out the first Posuk? When we say Ashrei – Uva L'tzion we say (למנצח, (מזמור לדוד)). Why over here shouldn't we start the whole Kappital?

The Emes is that the Radak says that that is supposed to be said as a personal Tefilla. Dovid wrote it that anybody can say it as his own Tefilla. When you say Nefillas Apaim you are supposed to say it as your own personal Bakasha to HKB"H. not as Dovid's Tehillim.

I once said publicly that you are allowed to add personal Bakashos into Nefillas Apaim and people were very surprised. You can add your own personal Bakashos in Nefillas Apaim? The Tur's language is Noflim Tzibbur Al P'neihem, Mevakshim Rachamim V'shoel Kol Echad Bakashaso. It is amazing, the Ikkur Nefillas Apaim is that it should be a personal Tefilla. It should be said Kol Echad Bakashaso. Every

person his own Lashon. Therefore, Nefillas Apaim is a personal Tefilla. It is not a Tefillas Hatzibbur. Shemoneh Esrei is a Tefillas Hatzibbur. Nefillas Apaim is a Tefilla of an individual.

It is no surprise that as a personal Tefilla it is said as Nefillas Apaim, it is said in a very private way and in a way that underscores the privacy of it. Therefore, we really have to double down on the opportunity. Shemoneh Esrei is long and very often it is a challenge to have Kavana. Nefillas Apaim is a very short Tefillah, so it should be easier for a person to be able to have Kavana in Nefillas Apaim. If you want to make personal Bakashos, it is a good place to make those personal Bakashos. That idea, that Chashivas Hadavar, the Chashivas Ha'inyan of a person being able to say his own Tefillos in a Tefilla that is Mekubal B'ezras Hashem by the Ribbono Shel Olam, that tremendous opportunity, don't miss the opportunity by Nefillas Apaim.

If you have a Shul where they don't say Tachnun by Mincha or someplace Chas V'shalom where they skip it callously by Shacharis, you are missing an opportunity. Chap a' Rein. It is a Chashuve Tefilla, a Tefilla that will be answered.

And so, two significant thoughts. One is a Halachic thought regarding Horaso Shelo Bik'dusha, V'laiduso Bik'dusha.

Which literally means when someone's pregnancy was as a non-Jew and birth as a Jew, and a second thought regarding the Chashivus of Nefillas Apaim. Let's use it, let's understand it, and let's make the most of it

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TORAH STUDIES: Parshat Vayishlach

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**Adapted by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks; From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

In this week's Sidra Jacob, after his struggle with the angel, is told that his name is now to be Israel. And yet we find him still referred to, on subsequent occasions in the Torah, as Jacob. Yet after Abraham's name was changed from Abram, he is never again called in the Torah by his earlier name. What is the difference between the two cases? The Rebbe explains the meaning of the names of "Jacob" and "Israel," of the two stages in the religious life that they represent, and of their relevance to us today.

**1. Why Jacob Remains**

Concerning the verse, "And your name shall no longer be Jacob: Instead Israel shall be your name,"<sup>1</sup> the Talmud<sup>2</sup> poses the following problem: Anyone who calls Abraham, Abram transgresses the command, "And your name shall no longer be called Abram."<sup>3</sup> If so, surely the same applies to one who uses the name Jacob to refer to Israel, for it is written, "And your

name shall no longer be Jacob?" The Talmud concludes that the name Jacob is different from the name Abram in this respect, that after G-d gave Abraham his new name, the Torah never thereafter refers to him by any name other than Abraham. Whereas Jacob is so called in the Torah even after he has been given the name of Israel.

Why does the name Jacob remain?

There is a Chassidic explanation<sup>4</sup> that the names "Jacob" and "Israel" denote two stages in the service of G-d, both necessary at different times in the religious life of every Jew. "Israel" denotes a higher achievement, but it does not supplant or remove the necessity for the service signified by "Jacob."

**2. The Inner Meaning of "Jacob" and "Israel"**

The difference between them is this. The name "Jacob" implies that he acquired the blessings of Isaac "by supplanting and subtlety"<sup>5</sup> (the name in Hebrew, Ya-akov, means he supplanted). He used cunning to take the blessings which had been intended for Esau. "Israel," on the other hand, denotes the receiving of blessings through "noble conduct (Serarah, which is linguistically related to Yisrael, the Hebrew form of Israel), and in an open manner."<sup>6</sup>

However the Torah is interpreted, its literal meaning remains true. And the blessings of Isaac referred to the physical world and its benefits: "G-d give you of the dew of the heaven and the fatness of the earth."<sup>7</sup> Jacob and Rebecca made great sacrifices and resorted to deceit to acquire them. Jacob had to dress himself in the clothes of Nimrod,<sup>8</sup> whose kingdom turned the whole world to rebellion,<sup>9</sup> in order to take and transform the elements of the physical world to holiness (to release their "buried sparks of holiness").

The deeds of the Fathers are a sign to their children.<sup>10</sup> And the implication for us of Jacob's act is that we have to use cunning in our approach to the acts of our physical nature. The cunning man does not reveal his intentions. He seems to be following the path of his opponent. But at the crucial point he does what he had all along intended. The Jew in his involvement with the material world appears to be preoccupied with it. He eats, drinks, transacts business. But he does so for the sake of heaven. His objectives are not material ones. He wears the "clothes of Esau," but his implicit purpose is to uncover and elevate the "holy sparks."

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

This distinction can be seen in the difference between a Shabbat and a weekday meal. Eating a weekday meal embodies the tension between a physical act and its spiritual motivation for the sake of heaven. This discrepancy between outward appearance and inner intention is a form of cunning.



But eating a Shabbat meal in itself fulfills a commandment. The holiness of the physical is manifest.

In the light of this we can understand the meaning of the verse, “Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel, for you have contended with G-d (Elokim) and with men and you have prevailed.”<sup>11</sup> “Elokim” in this context means “angels,”<sup>12</sup> and generally connotes the “seventy heavenly princes” through whom flow the Divine emanations which sustain physical existence, and who thereby act to conceal G-dliness.<sup>13</sup> “Men” signifies a still greater concealment, for men are capable of denigrating the Jew for performing G-d’s will, and this is a harder concealment to bear. For this reason, the first paragraph of the entire Shulchan Aruch warns us “not to be ashamed of men who ridicule.” And this is the basis of the whole of a Jew’s service—to break down the concealment of G-d.

This was the virtue of Israel, to have “contended with Elokim and with men” and to have prevailed over their respective concealments of G-d. They are no longer barriers to him; indeed they assent to his blessings. He not only won his struggle with the angel (the guardian angel of Esau) but the angel himself blessed him. This is the achievement of which the Proverbs speak: “He makes even his enemies be at peace with him.”<sup>14</sup>

### 3. The Struggle

This distinction accords with the explanation given in Likkutei Torah<sup>15</sup> of the verse, “He has not seen sin in Jacob nor toil in Israel.”<sup>16</sup> At the level of “Jacob” the Jew has no sin, but he still experiences “toil”—his freedom from sin is achieved only by tension and struggle for he has concealments to overcome. This is why he is called “Jacob, my servant”<sup>17</sup> for “service” (in Hebrew, *avodah*) has the implication of strenuous effort to refine his physical nature (his “animal soul”). He does not sin but he still experiences the inclination to sin, which he must overcome. But “Israel” encounters no “toil,” for in his struggle “with Elokim and with men” he broke down the factors which conceal G-dliness and silenced his dissenting inclinations. Israel no longer needs to contend with those forces which oppose the perception of G-dliness. His progress lies entirely within the domain of the holy.

### 4. Partial and Complete Victory

There is a story told by the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, about the Tzemach Tzedek (the third Rebbe): Once in the middle of a Chassidic gathering the Tzemach Tzedek jumped onto a table in great excitement and said: “What is the difference between something which is killed completely and something which is only partially killed? (This refers to a statement in the Talmud:<sup>18</sup> that to have ‘partially’ killed something is to have killed it.) The Tzemach Tzedek giving the halachic point a Chassidic meaning, applies it to the ‘killing’ of the inclination to sin. Even a ‘partial’ killing is a killing, but at the very least we must partially kill it.” After some time had passed in speaking and dancing, he continued:

“At the moment that one has reached the point of ‘killing’ (the moment of which the Psalms<sup>19</sup> speak in the words, ‘My heart is void within me’) one’s life has taken on a new character.”

These two statements of the Tzemach Tzedek refer to the two levels of “Jacob” and “Israel.” At the level of “Jacob” there is still a struggle against one’s inclinations, a life of tension—a partial killing. But at the level of “Israel” when the killing is “complete,” life is transformed into a new serenity and spiritual pleasure.

### 5. Levels in the Life of the Tzaddik and the Benoni

These two stages of service pertain to two levels within the “G-dly soul.” “Jacob” can be analyzed into the letter Yud and the word *ekev* (the heel). Here the perception of G-d (symbolized by the letter “Yud”) has reached only the lowest levels of the soul, creating the possibility of a concealment which has to be broken down. On the other hand “Israel” contains the same letters as “*Li Rosh*” (“The head is mine”). The whole soul, to its highest capacities, has been permeated by the awareness of G-d, and no concealment is possible, no struggle necessary.

In general terms, “Israel” denotes the Tzaddik (the stage of complete righteousness) and “Jacob” the Benoni (the intermediate level, attainable by every man<sup>20</sup>). And in particular, within this intermediate level, that “Jacob” represents the weekday service, and “Israel” the service of Shabbat. Even within the stage of complete righteousness, there are still analogues of both “Jacob” and “Israel.” This is clear from the fact that Israel himself was still occasionally called Jacob after his change of name. Within him, and indeed in every Jew, “Jacob” remains as a necessary element in the service of G-d.

### 6. The Contemporary Meaning of “Jacob”

From the fact that, as we mentioned before, the level of Jacob is without sin, and yet involves continual effort, it follows that the Jew—though his struggle with contending desires is difficult and fraught with risk—has the power to achieve victory and remain free from sin. For he is “a branch of My planting, the work of My hands,”<sup>21</sup> and “a part of G-d above.”<sup>22</sup> As nothing can prevail over G-d, so can nothing prevail over the Jew against his will. And he has been promised victory, for we are told, “His banished will not be rejected by Him”<sup>23</sup> and “All Israel has a share in the world to come.”<sup>24</sup>

This promise (like all the words of Torah) is relevant to our present spiritual concerns. The assurance of ultimate victory should strengthen our joy in the act of service, and this joy will itself contribute to the victory over our physical natures, and shorten the battle. The previous Rebbe said:<sup>25</sup> though a soldier confronts danger, he goes with a song of joy, and the joy brings him victory.

This is why we say, after the end of Shabbat, “Do not fear, My servant Jacob.” For, as we explained above, during Shabbat the

Jew stands at the level of Israel; beyond the Shabbat, when we return to the level of “Jacob, My servant,” and to the toil of the weekday service, we are told, “Do not fear.” This is not merely a command but also a source of strength and of the joy that will shorten the work and hasten its reward—to the point where we are worthy of the time which is “an eternal life of Shabbat and rest.”(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. III pp. 795-9)

FOOTNOTES 1. Bereishit 32:29. 2. Berachot, 13a. 3. Bereishit 17:5. 4. Cf. Likkutei Torah on Balak. Sefer Hamaamarim-Yiddish, p. 122. 5. Rashi, on Bereishit 32:29. 6. Ibid. 7. Bereishit 27:28. 8. Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer, ch. 24. Bereishit Rabbah, 65:16; cited in Rashi, on Bereishit 27:15. 9. Eruvin, 53a. Rashi, Bereishit 10:8. 10. Cf. on this theme, supra, p. 13 ff. 11. Bereishit 32:29. 12. Cf. Targum Yonathan, ad loc. Chullin, 92a. 13. Cf. Tanya, Part IV, ch. 25. 14. Proverbs 16:7. 15. Parshat Balak, 72b. 16. Bamidbar 23:21. 17. Isaiah 44:1. 18. Baba Kama, 65a. 19. 109:22. Cf. Tanya, Part I, ch. 1. 20. Tanya, Part I, ch. 14. 21. Isaiah 60:21. 22. Job 31:2 (Tanya, Part I, ch. 2). 23. II Samuel 14:14. Shulchan Aruch Harav, Hilchot Talmud Torah, 4:3; Tanya, Part I, end of ch. 39. 24. Sanhedrin, 90a. 25. Sefer Hamaamarim 5710, p. 191.

#### YUTORAH IN PRINT • Vayeitzei 5784

Haftarat Vayishlach: Esav: From Edom to Rome Dr. Moshe Sokolow (From From Within the Tent: The Haftarah, Essays on the Weekly Haftarah from the Rabbis and Professors of Yeshiva University, YU Press, 2011)

The book of Ovadiah is an anomaly among the books of Tanakh: It is only one chapter long! It is also anomalous in an additional sense: While we have few of the actual prophecies of such well-known prophets as Shmuel and Eliyahu, here we have the verbatim record of a prophet so little-known that exegetes cannot even agree on who he was or when he lived. We shall attempt, first, to establish the literary and historical context of Ovadiah, and, in the process, make a significant point about the provenance of prophetic oratory. Following that identification, we will address the association between the prophecy of Ovadiah and the clash between Yaakov and Esav that evolves, typologically, throughout talmudic, midrashic, and medieval literature.

Part I: Dating Ovadiah Two views dominate the exegetical discussion of Ovadiah: Rashi and Ibn Ezra. (a) Rashi shares the talmudic-aggadic view of Ovadiah: Why did Ovadiah [prophecy] uniquely on Edom and have no other prophecy? Our Sages said: Ovadiah was an Edomite proselyte (Sanhedrin 39b). God said, I shall undo them from within: Let Ovadiah – who lived among two wicked people, Achav and Izevel, and yet was not influenced by them – come and exact what is due from Esav – who [in contrast] lived among two righteous people, Yitzchak and Rivka, and yet was not influenced by them. According to Chazal and Rashi, then, Ovadiah the prophet is one and the same as “Ovadiah the majordomo” of

Achav (Melakhim Aleph 18:3), ruler of the Northern Kingdom of Israel c. 869–850 bce. (b) Ibn Ezra, however, rejects this identification, arguing: We cannot say that he is the one mentioned in the book of Melakhim during the era of Achav, because that Ovadiah is called “God fearing,” but if he were the prophet himself, how could he be called [only] “God fearing” and not “a prophet” since prophecy is the nobler of the two [epithets]? Instead, Ibn Ezra offers an alternative identification: In my opinion, “We heard a rumor” refers to this prophet, Yirmiyahu, Yeshayahu, and Amos, who [all] prophesied on Edom. Hence the use of [the plural]: “We heard.” While Ibn Ezra’s opening remark: “lo yadanu doro” – “we know not his era,” indicates a reservation of some sort, it is clear, nevertheless, that he would have us situate Ovadiah within the larger historical context of the other prophets he mentions, all of whom lived considerably later than the Ovadiah of Achav. Yeshayahu and Amos were roughly contemporary (c. 750–700 bce), while Yirmiyahu was even later (c. 625–586 bce).

An Independent Approach: We propose, here, to take an independent approach to determining the date of Ovadiah, which we will then merge with the exegetical record. We will compare the text of Ovadiah with a very similar Biblical text and evaluate their correspondences, situating Ovadiah within the literary and historical context that both of these texts reflect. The most striking correspondences to the text of Ovadiah occur in the book of Yirmiyahu, chapter 49. The striking overall similarity, underlined by significant verbal and literary nuances, is highly reminiscent of the correspondences enjoyed by the texts of Hoshea, Yeshayahu, Amos, and Michah, four prophets who lived at relatively contemporaneous times. Logic dictates that just as the correspondences between Hoshea, Yeshayahu, Amos, and Michah are best understood as the result of their contemporaneousness, so should the correspondences between Ovadiah and Yirmiyahu be accounted for by the assumption that they were contemporaries. Treating Similarities in Prophetic Literature The assumption of contemporaneousness is borne out by a significant observation of Don Isaac Abarbanel (1437–1508) that appears, not coincidentally, in his commentary on Yirmiyahu 49:19: Behold! The text of this prophecy is the same as that of Ovadiah. How can this be? Did not our Sages teach that, “No two prophets use the same style”? Rather this means that the other prophets did not prophesy in the same manner as Moshe. For Moshe received, prophetically, from God, not the subjects alone but the actual words as well. Just as he heard them, so he wrote them, verbatim, in the Torah. Other prophets, however, in their prophecies, would see only the general outlines that God instructed them and they would transmit and record them in their own words. 15 Consequently, upon witnessing the same phenomenon they would often knowingly phrase it in the same

words and style as had been employed by other prophets. According to Abarbanel, then, the fact that Ovadiah and Yirmiyahu utilized “the same words and style” indicates that they were “witnessing the same phenomenon.” Just what phenomenon was that?

**The Historical Context** If we knew nothing more about Yirmiyahu and Ovadiah than what we can extract from the two chapters we excerpted above, where would we place them chronologically? The answer is: We would situate them in the context of a war that was being waged against Israel (הַיָּהוּדָה, קְוִינְקוּמָן הַמָּה לַ מְלִכָה יִלְעַ) in the course of which, Edom, shamefully disregarding its fraternal relationship to Israel, joined in the attack on Jerusalem. Adding insult to injury, the Edomites joined in the celebration over Israel’s defeat, participated in the destruction of the walls of Jerusalem and stood at the crossroads to either kill the survivors ( ) or to hand them over to their enemies ( ). Such events are consistent with the Biblical narratives of the Babylonian assault on Jerusalem in 586 bce in the books of Melakhim and Yirmiyahu, as well as with the poetic references found in Eikhah (4:22): “[God] will punish your iniquity, O daughter of Edom, He will uncover your sins,” and, somewhat curiously, in Psalm 137 verse 7, “Recall, O Lord, on account of the Edomites, the day of Jerusalem; how they said ‘raze it raze it unto its foundation.’” We may then conclude this section by asserting that Ovadiah was a contemporary of Yirmiyahu, prophesying at the close of the era of the First Temple and may, like Yirmiyahu, have been an eye-witness to the Edomite perfidy he describes. We shall next observe how the Sages extended that perfidy through their identification of the destroyers of the First Temple with those who were later responsible for the destruction of the Second Temple.

**Part II: Ovadiah, Esav, and Yaakov** “Saviors shall ascend Mt. Zion to judge the mount of Esau and sovereignty shall be the Lord’s.” (Ovadiah 1:21) The Biblical and rabbinic worldview saw the elimination of evil as a necessary prerequisite for the establishment of the dominion of God. Just as that is symbolized in Ovadiah by Mt. Zion’s (Israel’s) judgment of Mt. Esav (Edom), so too, it is symbolized in Talmud and Midrash by the termination of the fraternal conflict between Yaakov and Esav. The reunion confrontation between Yaakov and Esav narrated in Vayishlach – to which our text serves as a haftarah – triggered a clutch of historical and legendary associations for the Sages of the Talmud and Midrash: Yaakov as Israel and, subsequently, Judaism; Esav/Edom as Rome, Byzantium and, subsequently, Christendom. In light of this, it is not difficult to imagine the Sages considering the destruction of the Second Temple as a reiteration of the destruction of the First Temple and casting the Romans in the role of the Edomites. “Scripture named Edom, and history pointed at Rome. By the most elementary syllogism, the two became one.”

**Rome:** The earliest explicit evidence we have for this association appears in the wake of the Roman emperor Hadrian’s defeat of the forces of Bar Kokhba towards the middle of the second century CE. The Jerusalem Talmud reports: R. Yehudah bar Ila’i said: Rabbi would expound on the verse: “The voice is Yaakov’s voice but the hands are Esav’s hands” [as follows]: The voice of Yaakov cries out on account of what Esav’s hands did to him at Betar. (Ta’anit 4) R. Akiva, in designating Bar Kokhba the messianic king, invoked the verse: “darakh kokhav mi-Yaakov” – “a star will step forth from Jacob” (Bemidbar 24:17), whose continuation includes the prognosis: “he will annihilate the survivors of Ir.” To the Sages, Ir, a city par excellence, was none other than Urbs Roma, the city of Rome, capital of the evil empire. His disciples followed suit. R. Meir punned on the word ראמים (Yeshayahu 34:7, wild oxen) to produce מיימר (Romans) and read מירמשה (Rome) for משאמהך (Dumah) in Yeshayahu 21:11. Another student, R. Shimon bar Yochai, referring to “calling to me from Seir” in the same verse, designates Edom as Israel’s final exile. More significantly, however, he is cited as coining a proverb: “It is a well-known axiom: Esav hates Yaakov.” (Sifrei Bemidbar 69) Other Tannaim adduced homilies supporting similar associations. On the Torah’s description of an infant Esav as “admoni” – “ruddy complexion” (Bereishit 25:25), R. Abba bar Kahana states: “kulo shofekh damim” – “they are all bloodthirsty” and R. Elazar bar Yosi treats the Latin word “senator” as an abbreviation for three Hebrew words: אֶנְשׁ, קָמָן, טָרָנָן (hostile, vindictive, and vengeful).

**Byzantium:** When the Roman Empire in the fourth century, under Emperor Constantine, adopted Christianity, the identification of Esav as Rome extended to encompass Byzantium. A striking example of this identification occurs in a passage from the Nistarot Shel Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, a medieval apocalypse, which has been dated to the era of the Arab conquest of the Land of Israel in the early seventh century. Here is the pertinent passage from that work: The second king of Yishmael will conquer all the kingdoms. He will come to Jerusalem and there he will bow [to the God of Israel]. He will wage war against the Edomites [Byzantines] who will flee before him, and he will rule stoutly. He will be a lover of Israel; he will seal their breaches and the breaches of the Temple; he will excavate Mt. Moriah and level it all off; [he will summon Israel to construct] the Temple. In his days, Judah will be saved and the flower of the son of David will blossom upon it. A similar identification is made in the liturgical poetry of that era. In a piyyut by Shimon bar Magus (Israel; seventh century), we find the following closing lines, which take Yitzchak’s blessing to Yaakov (Bereishit 27:28 ff.) as a prophetic prognosis. [Yaakov] heard, “they will serve you” and “bow before you” those apparitions “Be the master” of the arrogant Edomites. May “those who curse you be

cursed” refers to the Agagite And “those who bless you will be blessed” refers to the Benjaminite. Here, in addition to the “standard” identification of Edom with Rome, we are invited to make yet another insidious identification: Esav as Amalek. Just as Haman the Agagite [Agag was the King of Amalek during the reign of King Shaul (Shmuel Aleph ch. 15), who foolishly spared his antagonist’s life] was brought down by Mordechai the Benjaminite [ostensibly, a descendant of Shaul], so will contemporary Edom be humbled by Israel. The Holy Roman Empire: Following the earlier paradigms of Edom=Rome and Edom=Byzantium, Ashkenazi Biblical exegetes in the Middle Ages identified Edom with the Holy Roman Empire. Rashi (France, 1040–1105), for instance, interprets Eikhah 4:22: “[God] will punish your iniquity, O daughter of Edom, He will uncover your sins” (see supra.), as follows: Yirmiyahu prophesied about the destruction of the Second Temple, which would be destroyed by the Romans. In the same spirit, Rashi also identifies the “fourth kingdom” of Nebuchadnezzar’s vision (Daniel 2:40 ff.), whose downfall would usher in the Messianic Age, with Rome: “In the days of these kings:” While the kingdom of the Romans is extant. Manoach ben Chizkiyah (Chizkuni; France, thirteenth century), who continued in the exegetical tradition of Rashi, notes similarly (Devarim 28:50): “A nation of fierce countenance:” This is the Kingdom of Rome, to wit: “At the End of Days, when evildoers perish, there will rise up a king of fierce countenance.” Nachmanides (1194–1270), too, is heir to this exegetical tradition. Witness his commentary on Bereishit 47:1, locating his own contemporary situation within the typological framework recognized by Rashi in Daniel: I have already noted (Bereishit 43:14) that Yaakov’s descent to Egypt [ foreshadows] our present exile at the hands of the fourth creature (Daniel 7:7): evil Rome. While acknowledging the typology of Edom=Rome, Nachmanides seems somewhat ambivalent about the historical implications of that equation. On the one hand, he extends the equation backwards into an historical period that even precedes the birth of Esav! In commenting on the battle waged by Avraham against four Mesopotamian kings (Bereishit 14:1), he identifies the “יִם־גַּמְלִיךְ,” literally: “the king of the Nations,” as follows: He was the king over various nations who made him their chief and officer. This is an allusion to the king of Rome who was set to rule over a city assembled from among many nations: Kitim, Edom, and others. On the other hand, he is critical of Rashi’s blanket assertion of that equation. In the genealogical lists and “king lists” of Edom, he has the following to say about “Magdiel” (Bereishit 36:43): Magdiel is Rome. This is Rashi’s interpretation, but I find it unintelligible. If we were to say that it is a prophecy for the distant future, there were many kings who ruled over Edom until the Roman Empire. [Furthermore,] Rome is not a chieftain [of Edom], but a large,

fearsome and extremely powerful empire, with no peer among kingdoms.

Epilogue: The continuing association of the Biblical Esav/Edom with imperial Rome, classical Byzantium and the medieval Holy Roman Empire attests to the power of exegesis to transform the current and contemporary into the timeless and perpetual. Here, to close the main part of our study, are the opening lines from a famous poem by Yehudah Ha-Levi (1075–1141) that reflects the status of the Land of Israel as part of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. They indicate that even in countries ruled by Islam, the equation of Edom with Rome, and the anticipated destruction of Rome as the signal of the ultimate redemption, remained vibrant.

My heart is in the East – and I am at the edge of the West. How can I possibly taste what I eat? How could it please me? How can I keep my promise or ever fulfill my vow, when Zion is held by Edom and I am bound by Arabia’s chains?

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from: Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu> date: Nov 30, 2023, 1:40 PM subject: Talmud Tips - **Bava Kama**

### **Greeting the Shabbat**

Rabbi Chanina had the custom of announcing, “Let us go out to meet the queenly bride”. Rabbi Yannai would wear a special garment, and stand in his place, saying: “Come to me, my bride, come to me, my bride.”

The manner in which our great Torah Sages would welcome the beginning of Shabbat are the source of central words and themes that are incorporated into the prayer/song of “Lecha Dodi”, which is part of the Kabbalat Shabbat prayer service on Shabbat eve.

The Maharsha explains a number of key lessons that we learn from these Sages: Why is Shabbat called our “bride,” why it is called a “malka” (queen), why did Rabbi Chanina “go out” (quickly, in the context of the gemara) to greet the Shabbat bridal queen, whereas Rabbi Yannai called to “her” to come to him, and why did Rabbi Yannai repeat his call to the Shabbat bride?

Shabbat is the bride of the Jewish People. The Midrash states that when Hashem created the world and established seven days in a week, “Shabbat” complained that each day of the week had a “mate” (the next day), but Shabbat was without a mate. Hashem replied that Shabbat would be the mate and “bride” of the Jewish People, her “groom.” And since all Jews are considered “royalty,” our “bride” is a “queen.” Rabbi Chanina felt that just as it is customary for a groom to go out to greet his bride at the marriage ceremony, so too we should “go” to greet and welcome our Shabbat bride.

Rabbi Yanai, however, thought and taught otherwise. From the place where he stood, he called out with an invitation to the Shabbat bride to come to the wedding chupa, and then afterwards to come to his home. And just as every bride is welcomed twice in this manner to complete the marriage,

likewise Rabbi Yannai would say twice say to the Shabbat bride “to come” — “Come to the chupa and then come to our home.”

### **Bava Kama 32 a, b**

from: Torah Musings <newsletter@torahmusings.com> date: Nov 29, 2023, 10:02 AM subject: Torah Musings Daily Digest for 11/29/2023 **Unicycles on Shabbat by R. Daniel Mann**  
Question: Is it permitted to use a unicycle on Shabbat?

Answer: We have, in the past, discussed bicycles (forbidden) and tricycles (permitted), and the sources on the two can help us analyze the less common unicycle, which we have not found discussed by the poskim. We will refer to riding indoors or within an eiruv. Otherwise there are serious carrying issues (see Living the Halachic Process VI, C-12, regarding the similar but not identical case of a rickshaw).

When bicycles became popular, poskim discussed their use on Shabbat, and almost all forbade it, for one or more of the following reasons. 1) Uvdin d'chol – This is a weekday-like activity, for, amongst other reasons, it is a mode of transportation that takes people to places, often for purposes that are not appropriate for Shabbat (see Tzitz Eliezer VII:30). 2) Bicycles often need repairs, notably including fixing the inflatable tubes of the tires, which a rider might perform while forgetting about Shabbat (see ibid. and Yaskil Avdi III, Orach Chayim 12). 3) One might ride outside the techum Shabbat (boundaries of travel outside the city). 4) When riding on ground, one makes grooves (Shut R. Azriel Hildesheimer I:49). While Rav Yosef Chayim of Bagdad (Rav Pe'alim I, OC 25) dismissed the issues and permitted riding a bicycle (some say he later changed his mind), the consensus of both Ashkenazi (see Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata 16:18) and Sephardi poskim (see Kaf Hachayim 403:8) and the broad minhag is to forbid it. While, in theory, Rav Ovadia Yosef did not consider the halachic issues formidable, he agreed that one should not ride a bicycle on Shabbat (see Yabia Omer, OC 55:29 and Chazon Ovadia IV, p. 40).

Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata (ibid.) says that children can be allowed to ride tricycles – but not bicycles. He cites two distinctions between the two (see ftnt. 53). 1) Tricycle wheels do not have an inflatable tube. 2) A tricycle is clearly a form of recreation, as opposed to serious transportation. It is also likely that he factored in that the average tricycle rider is a child. How should we view a unicycle? A classic unicycle shares features with a bicycle, including an inflatable tire, so reason #2 to forbid bicycles applies. However, when it is used as a hobby or for non-professional exhibition, elements of uvdin d'chol and going out of techum Shabbat would not apply. (We are not referring to use for the uncommon sport of unicycles on mountain trails, where #4 could apply.) Also, unicycles did not exist when the original bicycle minhag began, and they are not used interchangeably with a bicycle. Therefore, one could

argue against extending the bicycle minhag/ruling to unicycles. In Bemareh Habazak (IX:8), albeit under circumstances that include significant need, we entertained the possibility of distinguishing even between clearly different models of bicycles, based on the different likelihood of problems in one versus the other.

On the other hand, given similarities in name and design and given that some of the explanations of the prohibition on bicycles do apply to it, it is likely that poskim would not allow it, especially since the need for it on Shabbat is rarely significant. If a child under bar mitzva wanted to use it, that would be significantly more lenient because of his lower level of obligation in mitzvot, which encourages leniency (see this column, Vayeira 5777).

My basic research indicates that “unicycles” are nowadays also used for transportation, which can make the issues for bicycles of uvdin d'chol and techum Shabbat applicable. On the other hand, that is apparently mainly with electric unicycles (which are anyway forbidden because of the electric element) that are used for transportation. It is doubtful, though, that we must be more machmir due to the existence of electric unicycles, especially since their design is totally different.

In the final analysis, we do not recommend allowing unicycle riding on Shabbat, but for someone (especially a child) who uses it only for private recreation, leniency is conceivable.

לעילוי נשמת יואל אפרים בן אברהם עזיאל זלצמן ז"ל