

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYISHLACH · 13 KISLEV 5771 · NOV. 20, 2010 · VOL. 18 NO. 8

PARSHA INSIGHTS

M.T.V. = A.D.D.

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

We live in an era of distraction. Television advertising and music video driven by big BPM (bucks-per-minute) have accelerated the cutting rates of film and video to the microsecond.

The ubiquitous cell phone interrupts our thoughts, our conversations, our lives. We don't think anymore; we just surf through our thoughts.

Now this. Now this. Now this.

How long can you hold an idea in your head? Try it. Whoops! Try again! How long you can concentrate on an idea without any other thought intruding? Ten seconds? Twenty?

Two minutes of uninterrupted focus on one thought is pretty Olympic in my experience.

In this week's Torah portion, an incorporeal spiritual force (*transl.* 'angel') attacks Yaakov and wrestles with him until the dawn. This 'angel' was the protecting force of the nation of Esav. Why didn't the angel of Esav attack Avraham or Yitzchak? Why did he wait for Yaakov?

This world stands on three pillars: kindness, prayer and Torah. The three Patriarchs represent these three pillars. Avraham is the pillar of kindness, Yitzchak is the pillar of prayer and Yaakov is the pillar of Torah. The

Torah is the unique possession of the Jewish people. No other nation in the world has the Torah. Thus the attack on Torah is the one that hits at the heart of Judaism.

The angel of Esav attacked Yaakov because he knew that the most effective way to destroy the Jewish People is to deter them from learning Torah.

Even though the angel of Esav was unsuccessful in his fight with Yaakov, he managed to damage him in the thigh. The thigh is the place in the body that represents progeny and the continuation of the generations – Jewish continuity.

In the era before the coming of Mashiach, Esav will try to make it very difficult to educate our children with Torah. Torah demands commitment, application and concentration. The essence of Talmudic thought is to be able to contain several ideas in one's head and to synthesize and counterpoint these ideas. You can't learn Torah if you are distracted. We live in an era where distraction has become an industry.

In the generation before the Mashiach in which we find ourselves, maintaining a minimal attention span will be a gigantic battle in itself.

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

Returning home, Yaakov sends angelic messengers to appease his brother Eisav. The messengers return, telling Yaakov that Eisav is approaching with an army of 400. Yaakov takes the strategic precautions of dividing the camps, praying for assistance, and sending tribute to mollify Eisav. That night Yaakov is left alone and wrestles with the Angel of Eisav. Yaakov emerges victorious but is left with an injured sinew in his thigh (which is the reason why it is forbidden to eat the sciatic nerve of a kosher animal). The angel tells him that his name in the future will be Yisrael, signifying that he has prevailed against man (Lavan) and the supernatural (the angel). Yaakov and Eisav meet and are reconciled, but Yaakov, still fearful of his brother, rejects Eisav's offer that they should dwell together. Shechem, a Caananite prince, abducts and violates Dina, Yaakov's daughter. In return for Dina's hand in marriage, the prince and his father suggest that Yaakov

and his family intermarry and enjoy the fruits of Caananite prosperity. Yaakov's sons trick Shechem and his father by feigning agreement. However, they stipulate that all the males of the city must undergo *brit mila*. Shimon and Levi, two of Dina's brothers, enter the town and execute all the males who were weakened by the circumcision. This action is justified by the city's tacit complicity in the abduction of their sister. G-d commands Yaakov to go to Beit-El and build an altar. His mother Rivka's nurse, Devorah, dies and is buried below Beit-El. G-d appears again to Yaakov, blesses him and changes his name to Yisrael. While traveling, Rachel goes into labor and gives birth to Binyamin, the twelfth of the tribes of Israel. She dies in childbirth and is buried on the Beit Lechem road. Yaakov builds a monument to her. Yitzchak passes away at the age of 180 and is buried by his sons. The Parsha concludes by listing Eisav's descendants.

ISRAEL Forever

THE THIRD STRATEGY

In his preparations for meeting with his archenemy Esav, the Patriarch Yaakov developed three strategies to avoid being destroyed by his hate-filled brother and his four hundred henchmen.

In this week's Torah portion we learn of his dividing his camp into two as a military strategy, of his sending a generous gift of animals as a diplomatic gesture, and of his praying to Heaven for deliverance from the hands of Esav.

In the history of the State of Israel we have tried both war and diplomacy to achieve peace for the nation which, like Yaakov, finally returned to its homeland. The ongoing tension with our neighbors proves that neither of these has totally achieved this goal.

What about trying prayer?

The Israel government recently released the minutes of the Cabinet meeting which took place 34 years ago in

which it was decided to go ahead with the daring rescue attempt to free Israeli hostages held by Arab terrorists in Uganda. There was great concern about the chances of success of this undertaking which proved to be the miraculously successful Entebbe Operation. Yisrael Galili, a secular leftist minister, asked that the religious ministers should pray for its success.

In the Ohr Somayach Beit Midrash, as in many synagogues throughout Israel and the world, special Psalms are daily recited for the safety of Jews living in Israel, in addition to the prayer said thrice daily by every praying Jew for the redemption of Israel. Perhaps if Jews like the late Yisrael Galili would themselves join in such praying, we would soon see the peace which Israel seeks forever.

S U B S C R I B E !

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What sort of messengers did Yaakov send to Eisav?
2. Why was Yaakov both “afraid” and “distressed?”
3. In what three ways did Yaakov prepare for his encounter with Eisav?
4. Where did Dina hide and why?
5. After helping his family across the river, Yaakov remained alone on the other side. Why?
6. What was the angel forced to do before Yaakov agreed to release him?
7. What was it that healed Yaakov’s leg?
8. Why did Eisav embrace Yaakov?
9. Why did Yosef stand between Eisav and Rachel?
10. Give an exact translation of the word *nisa* in verse 33:12.
11. What happened to the 400 men who accompanied Eisav?
12. Why does the Torah refer to Dina as the daughter of Leah and not as the daughter of Yaakov?
13. Whom should Shimon and Levi have consulted concerning their plan to kill the people of Shechem?
14. Who was born along with Binyamin?
15. What does the name Binyamin mean? Why did Yaakov call him that?
16. The Torah states, “The sons of Yaakov were twelve.” Why?
17. How old was Yaakov when Yosef was sold?
18. Eisav changed his wife’s name to Yehudit. Why?
19. Which three categories of people have their sins pardoned?
20. What is the connection between the Egyptian oppression of the Jewish people and Eisav’s decision to leave the land of Canaan?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 32:4 - Angels.
2. 32:8 - He was afraid he would be killed. He was distressed that he would have to kill.
3. 32:9 - He sent gifts, he prayed, and he prepared for war.
4. 32:23 - Yaakov hid her in a chest so that Eisav wouldn’t see her and want to marry her.
5. 32:25 - He went back to get some small containers he had forgotten.
6. 32:27 - Admit that the blessings given by Yitzchak rightfully belong to Yaakov.
7. 32:32 - The shining of the sun.
8. 33:4 - His pity was aroused when he saw Yaakov bowing to him so many times.
9. 33:7 - To stop Eisav from gazing at her.
10. 33:12 - It means “travel”. It does not mean “we will travel.” This is because the letter *nun* is part of the word and does not mean “we” as it sometimes does.
11. 33:16 - They slipped away one by one.
12. 34:1 - Because she was outgoing like her mother, Leah.
13. 34:25 - Their father, Yaakov.
14. 35:17 - His two twin sisters.
15. 35:18 - *Ben-Yemin* means “Son of the South.” He was the only son born in the Land of Israel, which is south of Aram Naharaim.
16. 35:22 - To stress that all of them, including Reuven, were righteous.
17. 35:29 - One hundred and eight.
18. 36:2 - To fool Yitzchak into thinking that she had abandoned idolatry.
19. 36:3 - One who converts to Judaism, one who is elevated to a position of leadership, and one who marries.
20. 36:6 - Eisav knew that the privilege of living in the Land of Israel was accompanied by the prophecy that the Jews would be “foreigners in a land not their own.” Therefore Eisav said, “I’m leaving — I don’t want the Land if it means I have to ‘pay the bill’ of subjugation in Egypt.”

- The animal designated for *korban Pesach* and not sacrificed
- Slaughtering a sacrificial animal with an intention to apply its blood for another sort of sacrifice
- Relationship of the *chattat* and *asham* atonement sacrifices
- Blood of sacrifice which entered the *kodesh* sanctum
- The *korban Pesach* slaughtered before the proper time
- The sinner who temporarily becomes an apostate before offering his atonement sacrifice
- Wrong intention while performing, receiving or applying the blood of a sacrifice
- When the disqualification of *pigul* applies
- The role of transporting the blood from reception to application

A MINI-MOVEMENT IS ENOUGH

The blood of a sacrifice must be received by a *kohen* in a sacred vessel and brought to the altar for application, which must also be performed by a *kohen*. How about the transporting of this blood from the reception stage to the application one – must it also be performed by a *kohen* actually walking to the altar?

This question is discussed at length in our *gemara* and the conclusion stated by Rabbi Yochanan is that if there is no movement made by the one transferring the blood from the receiver to the applier the sacrifice is disqualified.

A challenge to this approach is presented from a *mishna* in *Mesechta Pesachim* (64a). In describing the process of offering the *korban Pesach* the *mishna* states that after the

kohen received the blood from the throat of the slaughtered animal, he passed it to a *kohen* standing next to him, who would then repeat this step, and this would go on from *kohen* to *kohen* until the blood reached the one who would apply it to the altar. This would seem to indicate that the blood was transported without any movement on the part of the *kohen* involved.

The response to this challenge was that even though there was a long line of *kohanim* involved in passing the blood in order to accommodate the large number of Jews offering that sacrifice, each of them made a slight movement towards his neighbor in order to fulfill the requirement of walking with the blood.

• *Zevachim 14b*

What the SAGES Say

“Akiva, leaving you is like leaving life.”

• *Rabbi Tarfon to Rabbi Akiva after he solved his problem - Zevachim 13a*

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RABBI INCOGNITO

From: David

*Dear Rabbi,
I had a very embarrassing situation recently. There was a well-known rabbi visiting our community who I ended up treating not particularly politely because I didn't know who he was. To be honest, the friction was really not his fault at all, but mine. So when I realized it was him when he was introduced to speak at shul on Shabbat, I was so embarrassed. What should I have done, and what can I do now that he's already left?*

Dear David,

As I'm sure you're aware, it's a mitzvah to treat every person politely and respectfully. So you should have treated this visitor to your community in a more appropriate fashion not only as a guest and rabbi but simply as a fellow person. The fact that you regretted having acted that way when you found out he's a rabbi is good insofar as it shows that you have a respect for Torah scholars, but it also might indicate that you need to increase your awareness of the Torah's teachings about treating other people in general.

Once you were stirred to regret your behavior, you probably should have found some opportunity to apologize to the rabbi. You could have made mention of the fact that no one should be treated that way, all the more so a visiting rabbi. Now that he's left town, you should still apologize either by phone, letter or email. You might also want to make the incident and your apology known to those of the community who invited him, such as the rabbi of the shul and those who hosted him.

This whole incident reminds me of a story about two great Chasidic Masters, the brothers Rabbi Zusha and Rabbi Elimelech, who are known to have undertaken self-imposed exile incognito, traveling around by foot.

Upon arriving in a particular town, they were directed to a certain wealthy man's home to ask for lodgings. The respectable gentleman took one look at these seemingly poverty-stricken vagabonds and promptly had them removed from his property. Ultimately, they were taken in by a very poor and simple Jew hovelled on the outskirts of town.

Some years later, after the rabbis had "returned to themselves", they happened upon the same town. However, this time, they traveled by horse-drawn carriage and their arrival in town was greeted with a great, honorable welcome as befitting such illustrious guests, headed by the wealthy patron of the town who insisted they lodge in his mansion.

Later, to everyone's astonishment, Rabbi Zusha and Rabbi Elimelech took up lodgings at their poor host's hovel on the outskirts of town while they sent the horses on to be put up at the mansion. When the rich man heard what happened, he immediately ordered his carriage to the hovel, and indignantly demanded an explanation.

The rabbis responded quite simply: "On our previous visit here, not only did you not come out to receive us, you literally kicked us out into the street. Now you insist we lodge with you. We thought to ourselves, 'What could possibly be the difference between that visit and this?' We came to the conclusion that it must be because of the horses. So this poor man who showed interest only in us and not the horses, he will house us and not the horses. You, however, who showed no interest in us but only in the horses, will need only house the horses but not be burdened with caring for us."

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

SHLOMO – THE FIRST USE OF WISDOM

One of the best known stories of Jewish history recorded in the sacred writings of the Prophets concerns the first application by King Shlomo of the extraordinary wisdom granted to him by Heaven.

Two women came before the king holding onto a baby. They told him that each had given birth to a child in the same home but that one of the babies had died. Each of them claimed that the surviving child was hers and called upon the king to award the disputed baby to her.

The king summed up their claims by declaring "This one says the living child is mine and the dead one is yours while the other one says it is your son who is dead and mine that is alive." He then made the dramatic move of ordering the baby to be cut in half so that each of the claimants could have their share. One mother protested that she would rather

relinquish her claim than see the child die while the other insisted that he be cut in half so that neither of them would have the disputed child.

The famous judgment rendered by the king to award the baby to the mother who opposed the splitting of the child because she was the true mother is commonly understood as being based on her altruistic reaction to Shlomos proposal. But how did Shlomo anticipate such a reaction?

The commentaries point out that in summing up the conflicting claims, Shlomo stressed that the first mother first mentioned the live child while the other first mentioned the dead one. He was therefore convinced that the one who stressed life rather than death was the true mother and only made the dramatic gesture of splitting the child to demonstrate the correctness of his deduction.



AN HONEST BROKER

Question:

A real estate broker is an agent for selling a house which he knows has some defects of which the potential buyer is unaware. Does he have a responsibility to inform the buyer even though this may ruin his prospects for making this transaction?

Answer:

In the Talmud (*Mesechta Bava Metzia 50b*) a distinction is made in regard to the remuneration responsibility of a seller or buyer who overpaid or underpaid depending on the discrepancy between the normal price and the amount paid. If this difference is more than a sixth the transaction is null and void. If it is an exact sixth the deal is valid but the difference must be returned to the injured party. If the difference is less than a sixth we assume that the injured party forgives such a slight discrepancy and there is no need for compensation.

Based on this rule it would seem that the broker would not be required to reveal the defect if it lowered the value of the house by less than a sixth. There are two

considerations, however, which compel us to conclude that he must make the disclosure.

First of all there is the question raised in *Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat 227:6* as to whether it is permissible to deceive someone in regard to a sum less than a sixth of the value of the object sold even though he cannot compel him to make remuneration. In addition there is the ruling of the halachic authority "Kiryat Sefer" (Chapter 15 of Laws of Sale) that the concept of a buyer forgiving a discrepancy of less than a sixth applies only to a situation in which the seller deceived the buyer in regard to the *price*. Should he deceive him, however, in regard to weight, size or any other deficiency there are no grounds for assuming that the buyer waives his right for redress.

Since the broker is an accomplice to such deception it is incumbent upon him to reveal the house's defect if knowledge of such a defect would have discouraged the buyer from purchasing the property at the stipulated price.

• *Adapted from the Response of Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein, Rabbi of the Ramat Elchanan community in Bnei Brak.*

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

"MAMA RACHEL"

Two Yahrzeits were observed in Israel on the 11th day of Marcheshvan, October 19th this year. Traditional Jews flocked to the Bethlehem tomb of the Matriarch Rachel to pray there on the anniversary of her passing just as she entered Eretz Yisrael.

The secular media, however, focused on another Yahrzeit, the fifteenth anniversary of the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin.

There is an interesting historical anecdote linking these two. Back in 1995 two Knesset Members met with Rabin

concerning plans for turning over the Rachel Tomb area to the Palestinians. While Hanan Porat was stressing the security and nationalistic ramifications of such a move, Menachem Porush stood up, approached Rabin, embraced him and burst into tears, sobbing and shouting. "It is Mama Rachel, how can you give away her grave?"

Rabin was sufficiently moved to reexamine the issue and to decide to retain Israeli control over this sacred site. A few months later he was assassinated - on the eve of Rachel's passing.

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