

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYISHLACH · FOR THE WEEK ENDING 18 KISLEV 5760 · NOV. 27, 1999 · VOL. 7 NO. 8

PARSHA INSIGHTS

ODDS-ON FAVORITE?

*“Therefore the Children of Israel are not to eat the displaced sinew on the hip-socket to this day.” (32:33)*

Imagine you’re a bookmaker. Not someone who is a member of the time-honored craft of binding precious tomes in leather, but rather someone who will give you 100 to 8 on “Greased Lightning” in the 3:00 pm.

Imagine you were asked for the odds on the survival of a small and broken people from the eastern end of the Mediterranean who were banished from their ancestral homeland after their country and the entire apparatus of government were smashed. What odds would you give for them surviving 100 years? How about 500? How about 2000?

Let’s up the odds a bit. What would the odds be of this fragmented people, who are incidentally persecuted and rejected in the vast majority of their host countries, enjoying financial prosperity and pre-eminence amongst those same host countries?

Calculating those odds would give even a bookie pause.

And yet the odds came up.

When G-d commanded Moshe to take the Children of Israel out of Egypt, He called to Moshe from the burning bush. The burning bush marked the beginning of events that would lead to the Exodus and to Sinai, and to the Jewish People being appointed as a holy nation of priests. It is apt then, that this beginning should mirror the very history of the Jewish People. And so it was. The bush burned, but it was not consumed by fire. Just as the bush

“Just as the bush burned but wasn’t consumed by the fire, so too the Jewish people will never be consumed.”

burned but wasn’t consumed by the fire, so too will the Jewish people burn in the fires of the nations of the world, but we will never be consumed.

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

Yaakov will always be alone. He will wrestle with an incorporeal spir-

itual entity whom he perceives as a man. This entity, this *malach*, is the *malach* of Esav. Throughout history there will be an adversarial and symbiotic confrontation between the offspring of Esav and the offspring of Yaakov. For the vast majority of history, Esav will do his best to annihilate Yaakov.

At the root of the mitzvah not to eat the sinew of the thigh-vein lies a daily assurance to the Jewish People that, throughout all Esav’s pogroms and persecutions, throughout all the Holocausts, the hell and high water of history, we will never perish. Keeping the mitzvah of the *gid hanasheh* serves as a constant testimony that though the body of Yaakov is damaged, we survive. It reminds us to stand firm in our faith despite all we endure.

Esav has wounded us. He has made us limp through history. But he cannot destroy us. Eventually the healing rays of the sun’s dawning will heal Yaakov’s limp. Mashiach must come. And Yaakov will then be healed forever, just as those dawn rays healed him on that morning three and a half thousand years ago.

Sources:  
Bereishet Rabba 76:8,  
Sefer HaChinuch - Mitzvah 3,  
Rabbi Yehoshua Bertram

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

**R**eturning home, Yaakov sends angelic messengers to appease his brother Esav. The messengers return, telling Yaakov that Esav is approaching with an army of 400. Yaakov strategically divides the camps, prays for assistance, and sends tribute to mollify Esav. That night, Yaakov is left alone and wrestles with the Angel of Esav. Yaakov emerges victorious but is left with an injured sinew in his thigh (which is why the Torah forbids eating the sciatic nerve of a kosher animal). The angel tells him that his future name will be "Israel," signifying that he has prevailed against man (Lavan) and the supernatural (the angel). Yaakov and Esav meet and are reconciled, but Yaakov, still fearful, rejects Esav's offer that they dwell together. Shechem, a Caananite prince, abducts and violates Yaakov's daughter Dina. 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*. Dina's brothers Shimon and Levi 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. Hashem commands Yaakov to go to Beit-El and build an altar. His mother Rivka's nurse, Devorah, dies and is buried below Beit-El. Hashem appears again to Yaakov, blesses him and changes his name to "Yisrael" — Israel. While traveling, Rachel goes into labor and gives birth to Binyamin, the 12th 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 age 180 and is buried by his sons. The Parsha concludes by listing Esav's descendants.

## HAFTARAH

### ET TU BRUTÉ

**T**he final exile is known as "The Exile Of Edom." This exile spans the thousands of years from the rise of the Roman Empire to the coming of Mashiach.

Edom is synonymous with Esav. Esav, whose destiny was prophetically defined

by his father Yitzchak with the words "by your sword shall you live," stood for the glory and splendor inherent in power. It is this thirst for power that characterized the Roman Empire, the forerunner of the "Edom exile." Conquer nations, build grand structures, all to further exalt the great and mighty name of the Empire.

Esav's philosophy is anathema to the Yaakov/Israel Torah perspective. While Edom focuses on quantity, Israel looks towards quality. This means raising the spiritual self to personify G-d's Will.

The Prophet Ovadiah envisions the fall of Edom: When Edom attempts to destroy Israel, G-d intervenes. G-d will, one day, so expose Edom's emptiness that even her allies will stab her in the back. As Edom falls, Israel will flourish, proclaiming G-d's sovereignty over all the nations.

### OVADIAH 1:1 - 21

### AND THE FLAG WAS STILL THERE

*"Though you mount on high like an eagle and set your nest firmly among the stars, from there I will bring you down," says G-d.*  
(Ovadiah 1:4)

**T**he Edom philosophy prevails. The world's nations send men to the poles and rockets to the moon for no reason other than to plant their sacred flags.

Our Sages tell us "Who is mighty? One who is in control of his desires." While Esav tries to conquer the world, Yaakov knows that his most sacred task is to learn to be in control of himself.

## OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

Published by

**OHR SOMAYACH**  
TANENBAUM COLLEGE

POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • 02-581-0315

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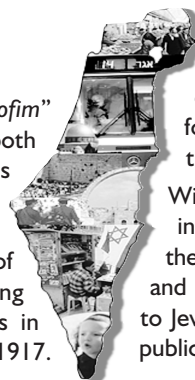
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## LOVE OF THE LAND

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

### HAR HATZOFIM- MOUNT SCOPUS

**T**he Hebrew word "hatsofim" and the Greek "scopus" both describe the fact that this mountain "looks over" Jerusalem from its heights. It was here that the Roman legions of Titus camped before capturing Jerusalem, as did the Crusaders in 1099 and the British forces in 1917.



Although the Arab Legion captured this mountain in the War of Liberation, it did not succeed in using it as a springboard for conquering Jerusalem as did these predecessors.

With the liberation of East Jerusalem in 1967 the Jewish institutions on the mountain — Hadassah Hospital and Hebrew University — returned to Jewish hands and were restored to public service.

## CHOL HAMO'ED — THE GREAT DEBATE

**C**hol Hamo'ed, the Intermediate Days of the Festivals of Pesach and Succot, was the principal subject of the previous *mesechta*, Mo'ed Katan, and makes a brief reappearance in our current *mesechta*, Chagiga. Several Torah sources are cited as proof that it is forbidden to perform some forms of labor during these days. It would, therefore, seem that the ban on forbidden labor on Chol Hamo'ed is of Torah origin, just as the ban on a broader range of labors on the first and last days of these festivals is certainly of Torah origin.

Such is indeed the opinion of some leading commentaries such as Rashi and Rif. Tosefot, however, finds difficulty with this approach and concludes that the ban on Chol Hamo'ed labors is of rabbinic origin. The passages cited in our *gemara*, says Tosefot, are merely the sort of "*asmachta*" which the Sages frequently employ in order to connect their decrees with some hint in the Torah.

One of the principal objections raised by Tosefot to the opinion that Chol Hamo'ed labor is of Torah origin is the fact that there are certain categories of labor — such as something which cannot be put off till after the festival without sustaining a serious loss — which are permitted on Chol Hamo'ed. Where, asks Tosefot, do we find something banned by the Torah with exceptions to the rule?

The rebuttal to this argument can be found in the text of a *beraita* in our *gemara*. After posing apparently conflicting signals from the Torah as to whether any labor is prohibited on Chol Hamo'ed, the conclusion is reached that the Torah delegated to the Sages the authority to determine which labors should be prohibited and which permitted. This, then, is the key to the approach of Rashi and Rif. The Torah did, indeed, ban labor on Chol Hamo'ed, but gave the Sages the power to decide which categories of labor to exclude from this rule.

It is this approach, suggests Mishna Berura (530:1), which the Rema (*ibid.*) adopts when he follows the words of the *Shulchan Aruch* that "On Chol Hamo'ed some labors are prohibited and some permitted" with the comment "According to the needs which the Sages saw as justifying exception."

A third approach, which is something of a compromise, is cited by the above Mishna Berura in his *Biyur Halacha*. According to this view, the Torah itself made some broad exceptions to its ban on Chol Hamo'ed labor, and it was the Sages who instituted their own ban to limit some of these exceptions.

• Chagiga 18a

## KEEPING THE PEACE

**E**ven though there was a suspicion in *Beit Hamikdash* days that an "*am ha'aretz*" (a Jew ignorant of the laws of the Torah) was not careful regarding the laws of ritual purity, and the vessels he handled were treated as impure, some exceptions were made. The wine he contributed for libations on the altar and the oil he donated for flour offerings were accepted. So too were vessels which he brought from his home to use for the ashes or water in the purification process of the Red Heifer.

The rationale for adopting this liberal attitude, explains Rabbi Yossi, is to prevent a situation in which the *am ha'aretz* develops such a hatred for the Sages because his materials are refused that he is tempted to establish his own altar and burn his own red heifer.

Rabbi Papa extends this consideration even to accepting the testimony of an *am ha'aretz* lest we create bad feeling with that element of Jewry. Tosefot applies this as well to counting, in our day, an *am ha'aretz* as part of a "*zimun*" for grace after meals despite the ruling of the *gemara* (*Mesechta Berachot 47b*) not to include him.

This is the approach of the Tosefist Rabbi Elchanan. The Tosefist Rabbi Yitzchak, however, sees no need to justify including an *am ha'aretz* in a *zimun* on the basis of avoiding discord. Who are we, he challenges, to assume that we are Torah scholars whose socializing with those ignorant of Torah was discouraged by the Sages? His response to this rhetorical question is that we indeed do not consider ourselves Torah scholars in regard to this matter and therefore have no problem in joining together with the *am ha'aretz* for a *zimun*.

• Chagiga 22a

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## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What sort of messengers did Yaakov send to Esav?
2. Why was Yaakov both “afraid” and “distressed?”
3. In what three ways did Yaakov prepare for his encounter with Esav?
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 Esav embrace Yaakov?
9. Why did Yosef stand between Esav and Rachel?
10. Give an exact translation of the word “*nisa*” in verse 33:12.
11. What happened to the 400 men who accompanied Esav?
12. Why does the Torah refer to Dina as the “daughter of Leah” and not 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. Esav 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 Esav’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 Esav 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 Esav 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 - Esav 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 Esav said, “I’m leaving — I don’t want the Land if it means I have to ‘pay the bill’ of subjugation in Egypt.”

## KASHA! (KASHA MEANS “QUESTION”)

**NameWithheld@vjmail.com from California asked:** Why, even after the angel tells Jacob that he is to be called Israel (*Genesis 32:28*) does he continue to be referred to as Jacob? (*Genesis 33:1*)

**Answer:** The name Israel is an additional name, not a replacement. Furthermore, the angel wasn’t sent to change Yaakov’s name.

• *Ibn Ezra, Ramban*

Do you have a **KASHA?** Write to [kasha@ohr.org.il](mailto:kasha@ohr.org.il) with your questions on any Parsha!

## UNKOSHER KRITTERS

**Name@Withheld wrote:**

Dear Rabbi,

*It is wonderful to see all the real-life examples where you have answered someone's questions about day-to-day issues. I have a question, from my husband who is too shy to ask. He is not Orthodox in habit, but has some issues about which he is very strict. One of these issues is respect for G-d and Torah. At the (Name@Withheld) company where he works, the "dress code" is primarily jeans and T-shirts. The company culture is such that people pride themselves on wearing unusual and/or colorful shirts from past jobs or from their hobbies. Since my husband is a scuba diver, he has many shirts that depict treif (non-kosher) sea creatures such as crabs, anemones, dolphins, etc. He thinks he should not wear such a shirt on Mondays or Thursdays, since wearing a picture of a non-kosher creature would show disrespect on a day that the Torah is read. Can you confirm this, or ease his mind on the issue? I recall a past question about the beaver-fur hats (shtreimels?) worn by some Orthodox men on Shabbat. Surely if wearing the skin of a non-kosher animal is permitted on Shabbat, wearing a picture of a non-kosher animal would not be an issue.*

Dear Name@Withheld,

First of all, I think the fact that this bothers your husband shows a wonderful sensitivity on his part. As far as I am aware, however, there is no prohibition of wearing pictures of non-kosher animals on one's clothing — even on days that the Torah is read. In fact, right now I'm wearing a tie that has what looks like little dolphins on it (I thought it was paisley when I bought it.)

Speaking of non-kosher animals, did you hear about the recent case of an ape that escaped from the Bronx Zoo? They searched for him everywhere, and they announced his disappearance on radio, TV, newspapers, and Internet. At

last, he was discovered in the New York Public Library. Zoo officials were summoned. They found the ape sitting at a desk peering intently at two books open before him. One book was the Bible; the other written by Darwin. The zookeepers asked the ape what he was doing. The ape replied, "I'm trying to figure out whether I am my brother's keeper or whether I am my keeper's brother."

## TRAFFIC THEOLOGY

**Dr. Michael A. Goldenhersh from Jerusalem wrote:**

Dear Rabbi,

*According to halacha, Jewish law, is it an obligation to obey all traffic laws without exception? This refers both to drivers and pedestrians. For example, is it forbidden according to halacha to cross on a red light, when it is clear that no vehicles are approaching? Must one worry that others will learn from his behavior, and cross also when crossing is dangerous?*

Dr. Michael A Goldenhersh,

I asked your questions to a noted halachic authority in Jerusalem. He responded that you must observe traffic laws for two reasons: One is the concept of *Dina d'malchuta dina*, that the law of the land prevails. Secondly, other people (children) can learn from your actions, so disobeying the laws could bring others into danger.

However, the definition of "breaking the law" depends on the way the law is enforced. If the authorities are not so strict for instance, if they won't fine you for going 60 in a 55 mph zone, it would be halachically permitted to go 60. (We don't advocate that you do so; and we're not saying you don't have to pay the fine if you do get fined for doing so.)

I personally am very meticulous about obeying all the traffic laws. For example, when I'm driving down the highway and I pass the sign that says "State Police," I immediately state "Police."

## PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ohrnet" features

**OHRNET Served with Relish in New Delhi:**

We at Jewish Education Resource Centre, ORT INDIA, have a four page Torah leaflet which we publish every month for private circulation without any charge. We distribute 100 sets of this leaflet to different places in India like Ahmedabad, Pune, New Delhi & Bombay. Would like to include the interesting articles about the month from your publication **Seasons of the Moon** and one write-up from the **Weekly Daf**. Kindly permit us to include these articles and enable us to do the mitzvah of *kiruv* (outreach). We request you to give us your permission at the earliest.

• Levi Jacob <orthbay@bom5.vsnl.net.in>

**Re: OHRNET for Tots (www.ohrnet.org):**

Well, here we go again; today is my first day of teaching my Hebrew kindergarten, and you, Ohr Somayach's Ohrnet, come in as a miracle hero to me. I just did not know how to start and, just as I open my e-mail, your messages are here to help me start my year on the right foot. I thank Hashem for sending you to help me. Have a great and healthy year!

• Morah Chana <blineder@aol.com>

**Re: Location Location (www.ohrnet.org):**

Pleased to locate your website this evening. I intend to make it one of my favorites.

• Dr. Edwin Goldberg <goldberg.e@worldnet.att.net>



Advances in computing and communications can present special challenges in speaking kindly to others and judging them favorably. Here's a case where a cell-phone provided a lesson in...

## “HI” TECHNOLOGY

Studying in Israel, I made a shocking discovery four days before I was to go back home for Pesach: My laptop computer, which I had brought for e-mail purposes (but I incidentally used to play card games during lunch), was gone! An intensive search throughout the dorm revealed nothing. No one knew what had happened to it. Besides me, there were only two people who had the password to it; otherwise it was useless. The two people were my roommates, Moshe and Chaim. I couldn't find either one of them. Both of them had cellular phones. I tried calling Moshe first,

but there was no answer. I then called Chaim, who picked up. I said my name, and asked him, “Where’s my computer?” in a tone perhaps a bit more accusative than I had intended. I then heard a dial tone — he had hung up! Calling back yielded no answer. This absolutely convinced me that Chaim had taken it, either as a prank or to use it for himself. I simmered with anger for a while, then decided to try to reach Moshe again as a last-ditch attempt at finding out exactly what had happened. Imagine my surprise when he told me he had used it the night before, stashed it under his bed, and completely forgot to tell me about it! Feeling very ashamed, I called back Chaim to apologize. I asked him if he had hung up because he was angry at me for accusing him. He explained that one of his friends had aggressively borrowed his phone in mid-call, cutting him off!

• An Ohrnet reader via the Internet

## I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

“Thus say to my master, to Esav...” (32:5)

Yaakov calls Esav “my master” eight times in this week’s Parsha. Because of this, Esav merited to have eight kings emerge from his descendants before any king emerged from Yaakov’s descendants.

• Chizkuni

## YIDDLE RIDDLE

How many times did Joshua’s troops encircle the city of Jericho?

Answer next week...

## RECOMMENDED READING LIST

|       |                            |       |                              |
|-------|----------------------------|-------|------------------------------|
|       | <b>RAMBAN</b>              |       |                              |
| 32:4  | Yaakov’s Error             | 32:25 | The Wrestling Match          |
| 32:9  | Sign for the Future        | 32:26 | Yaakov’s Injury              |
| 32:26 | The <i>Gid Hanashe</i>     | 32:33 | The <i>Gid Hanashe</i>       |
| 33:14 | The Journey to <i>Seir</i> | 33:4  | Surviving Esav               |
| 34:12 | Dina                       | 34:27 | The Guilt of Shechem         |
| 35:8  | Rivka’s Death              | 35:10 | The Meaning of Yaakov’s Name |
| 35:16 | Rachel’s Tomb              | 35:23 | The Power of Repentance      |
|       | <b>SFORNO</b>              |       | <b>SEFER HACHINUCH</b>       |
| 32:19 | Strategy of the Gifts      | 3     | The <i>Gid Hanashe</i>       |