

O H R N E T

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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 my big BPM (bucks-per-minute) have accelerated the cutting rates of film and video to the microsecond. The ubiquitous cell phone interrupts us 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? Twenty is pretty Olympic in my experience.

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

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

Yitzchak, the pillar of prayer, and Yaakov, 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 Eisav 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 Eisav 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, Eisav 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, “*holding kop*” — maintain-

ing a minimal attention span — will be a gigantic battle in itself.

In the era before the coming of Mashiach, Eisav will try to make it very difficult to educate our children with Torah.

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 fami-

ly 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

DESERVING THE NAME

What do the following have in common? The newly-elected Chairman of Labor, Israel's second largest political party, expresses his gratitude for scoring an upset victory over veteran party leader Shimon Peres by paying a visit to the grave of Yitzchak Rabin rather than going to the Western Wall.

Magen David Adom agrees to remove the Star of David from its logo in order to gain full recognition from the International Red Cross.

Yehudit Tayer, a prime spokeswoman for the settlement movement, interprets these two incidents as indications that Israel is turning its back on Jewish tradition as she asks in an Op-Ed piece in the Jerusalem Post:

"Is this a new religion? Is this the tradition that has

kept our nation together through the dark centuries of the Diaspora – to go to the grave of a politician to express gratitude?"

In this week's Torah portion the attacking patron angel of Eisav concedes victory to the Patriarch Yaakov and informs him that he will hereafter be called Yisrael "for you battled with angel and man and overcame them" (*Bereishet* 32:28). For Medinat Yisrael to be worthy of that august name it must cling to the religious tradition which teaches more reverence for a sacred place of prayer than the grave of a politician. It is only respect for tradition which will entitle us to bear the name of Israel forever.

לע"נ

ח'יה צירל ע"ה בת צבי נ"י

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

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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.”

- What separates the groups spending Shabbat in one building?
- Is the place of eating or of sleeping the criterion of residence regarding *eiruv*?
- When are both *eiruvei chatzeirot* and *shitufei mevot* needed?
- How many homes and courtyards are required for a *lechi* and *koreh* being applicable to a *movuy*?
- The mystery of the ruling of the Sage Shmuel
- The inner and outer courtyards and houses interacting regarding *eiruv*
- Window connecting adjoining courtyards
- Squaring the circle
- Wall separating adjoining courtyards
- Reducing the size of the wall in order to connect them
- Ladders against the wall
- Ditch separating courtyards

MYSTERY OF THE MOVUY

Carrying in a *movuy* (a walled inner street into which courtyards pour and which leads to a public thoroughfare) is permitted only if a *lechi* (pole) or *koreh* (beam) is placed at its entrance to remind the residents of the courtyards not to carry into the *reshut harabim* (public thoroughfare).

Whether this arrangement is valid only if there are at least two courtyards with two houses in each was initially a matter of dispute between the Sages Rav and Shmuel. The latter once gave a man named Eivos bar Echi approval for putting

up a *lechi* for the *movuy* in which his was the only courtyard leading into it. After Shmuel passed away, Rabbi Anan came along and removed the *lechi* to the great wonder of Eivos who had relied on the ruling of Shmuel.

The first assumption of the *gemara* is that Shmuel had approved the *lechi* of Eivos in accordance with his own halachic position that a *lechi* could be effective in a *movuy* which had only one house with a courtyard plus a house without a courtyard leading into it. Since this was contrary to the position of Rav that two courtyards with two houses in them were necessary for a *lechi* to be effective, Rabbi Anan removed the *lechi* after Shmuel was no longer around to be offended.

This assumption is challenged by the *gemara* by offering a totally different scenario. There is an earlier account of a Sage challenging Shmuel by presenting a contradiction in his rulings. It can then be assumed that Shmuel retracted his position and conceded to Rav that two courtyards leading into the *movuy* were necessary. He nevertheless approved the *lechi* of Eivos because there was a synagogue which had a courtyard leading to the same *movuy* in which the sexton would sleep at night, although he ate his meals in his home somewhere else. Since Shmuel's position was that the place of sleeping was the decisive factor in determining residence in regard to *eiruv*, he considered the synagogue and its courtyard as fulfilling the requirements of the position of Rav to which he had conceded. After Shmuel's passing the sexton ceased sleeping in the synagogue so that it and its courtyard no longer constituted a residence to qualify the *movuy* for a *lechi*. This is why Rabbi Anan removed the *lechi*.

• *Eiruvin 74*

WHAT THE SAGES SAY

"Where a man eats determines his residence in regard to *eiruv*."

• *The Sage Rav*

"Where a man sleeps determines his residence in regard to *eiruv*."

• *The Sage Shmuel - Eiruvin 73a*

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CALLING TAROT'S CARD

From: Joshua in England

Dear Rabbi,

A close relative of mine regularly consults a witch who reads the tarot and tells her things about the people she knows and about the future. Based on what she has said and predicted, I am sure she is not a fake and must be able to tap into some power; otherwise she wouldn't be able to know about these people and predict the things that have come true. I know that according to Judaism this type of thing is surely forbidden. My question is, since I see that this woman is "for real", am I allowed to pay attention to the things she tells my relative that regard me? The reason I ask is because according to this witch, some pretty interesting things are in store for me.

Dear Joshua,

Allow me to give a brief background of the tarot. The first known deck appeared in Italy in 1440. It is believed that they were originally created as a game for the nobility. The first account of divination through the use of the cards is attributed to cartomancer Jean-Baptiste Alliette in 1770. A decade later, Antoine Court de G'belin purported that the cards were the key to lost Egyptian magical wisdom written by Thoth, the Egyptian god of inspired written knowledge. The discovery in 1799 of the Rosetta Stone used to decipher the hieroglyphs of the Egyptians did not support the idea.

Nevertheless, a later theory attributed the tarot to the wandering Romany or Gypsies, thought to be descendants of Egyptians, who carried the deck on their travels through Europe. In the nineteenth century, the occultist Eliphas L'vi [this French non-Jew's attempt to translate his name, Alphonse Louis Constant, into Hebrew] developed a correlation between the tarot and the Kabbalah. This new belief that the tarot originated in Israel and contained the wisdom of the Tree of Life "legitimized" the tarot for many magical and esoteric groups who then accepted it as a timeless body of

mystical knowledge.

First, let me assure you that the tarot has no source in Kabbalah; as you said, it would be included in the prohibition against divination. However, it is interesting to note that using the Kabbalah to legitimize and popularize trendy spiritualism is not a new phenomenon. Let me also say that it is highly unlikely that nowadays anybody has the knowledge or power to use magic or witchcraft to reveal secrets or predict the future. This is particularly so regarding the tarot since it is not an ancient practice and appeared only recently, initially as nothing more than a card game.

Regarding this woman's uncanny insights and predictions, perhaps your relative reveals to her more than he/she realizes, or possibly the relative exaggerates what she has said based on his/her own knowledge of these people and the direction their lives are taking. That being said, it is possible that she is clairvoyant and uses the cards to disguise her extra-sensory perception.

Even if this witch is "for real", she may not be consulted. This is worse than astrology, which Judaism recognizes as an ancient wisdom through which one is able to predict the future or determine things about people. Still, it may be used only for the latter, to gain insight into the strengths, weaknesses, or inborn character traits of a person in order to better serve G-d (see Shabbat 153). However, consulting it to tell the future is forbidden. And even though one may take precautionary heed of an astrological prediction that one didn't consult but only heard indirectly, that is because ultimately astrology is a system through which G-d expresses His will in the world (Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De'ah 179:1). But magic and witchcraft belong to the "dark side" and must be avoided entirely.

Therefore, you must find a way to discourage your relative from consulting this woman. But more important as far as you are concerned, is to tell this relative to stop asking the woman about you, and certainly not to talk to you about it. Regarding whatever you've heard regarding yourself or the future: If it's bad, realize that harm results from our shortcomings and transactions – strengthen your Torah study, prayer and mitzvot. If it's good, realize that blessing comes only from G-d – only He is the one to consult and thank for it.

NOTHING TO SNEEZE AT

Question: If I am learning Torah and hear a nearby person sneeze, should I interrupt my study in order to wish him the traditional blessing of “*labriyut*”?

Answer: Whether it is the modern “*labriyut*” or the old-fashioned “*gezuntheit*”, it is a hallowed tradition to wish one good health when we hear him sneeze. Whether one should do so even at the expense of a breach in his study of Torah was already discussed in the Talmud (*Mesechta Brachot* 53a). In the *beit midrash* of Rabban Gamliel they did not interrupt their study to wish “*marpei*” – the original form of the blessing – to one who sneezed.

Although this is the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch (*Orach Chaim* 246:17) there is a question raised by later authorities as to whether this also applies to our times when people interrupt their learning for other matters as well. There is a difference of opinion on this point between the Prisha and the Turei Zahav. The Aruch Hashulchan (*ibid.* 246:33) cites only the opinion of the Prisha that the restraint practiced in the *beit midrash* of Rabban Gamliel applies only to previous generations who never lifted their heads out of their *sefarim*, and that it is therefore quite in order for you to interrupt your learning to say “*labriyut*”.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

A GREAT TEACHER

“The mediocre teacher tells, the good teacher explains, and the superior teacher demonstrates.”

This grading of teachers made by William Arthur Ward came to mind upon hearing what Rabbi Dovid Weinberger did for his class of senior citizens at Jerusalem’s Ohr Somayach while studying the Torah law forbidding the consumption of animal fat known as *cheilev*. In all of his many years as an educator, Reb Dovid never had such a group of students who insisted on being shown exactly which is the forbidden fat and which the permitted one.

What did Reb Dovid do? In the presence of the stu-

dents, he got on the phone to the renowned Jerusalem butcher, Reb Alter Hacker, and began asking him how to answer his students’ questions. “Send one of them over to me right away,” came the answer. In less than a quarter of an hour one of the older men came into the classroom clutching genuine *cheilev* in one hand, and the permitted *shuman* in the other.

Thus Rabbi Weinberger, who serves as the Ohr Somayach Student Registrar in addition to his teaching role, proved himself a superior teacher by demonstrating what he taught, and a truly great teacher by inspiring his students and his colleagues with a love for learning – and teaching.

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(Don't) Hold that Call! — Re: Calls in the Middle of a Meeting

Halivai, it should be that easy!

As a NYC/NYS registered lobbyist, and as far as I know the only one with a yarmulka, I know all too well how elected officials must deal with a host of constituent needs from their district as well as from interest groups around the city or state. Any number of items could be percolating at the time your writer had his meeting in the official's office, which is why lobbyists try and meet at any time and in any place.

As someone who as worked extensively with public officials for over 30 years I respectfully disagree with the advice that you give.

As a practical matter, public officials can hold all calls. Most of the work public officials do is conducted over the phone. A short conversation with another public official, a commissioner or a staff member may be an urgent matter that can involve millions of dollars or even matters of life and death.

The fact that a public official takes calls in the middle of a meeting can often be a positive. Since the nature of such calls is often confidential, the fact that the public official takes such calls in front of you indicates a certain level of trust.

An important public official may well have people fight-

ing for even a few minutes of his or her time. It is important that you show appreciation for the fact that the public official has taken the time to meet with you.

As a practical matter, meeting with a public official, especially if it takes a long time to arrange the meeting, may often not be the best way of getting something done. Working with a lobbyist or a staff member who has the official's ear can often be more effective.

I believe you owe your "listening" public the opportunity to hear the "*l'maseh*" side from an insider. Otherwise, they may stop pursuing issues that do need their elected officials' attention with negative results for their respective communities.

• Joel Schnur

Gemachs Unlimited

Regarding your Parshat Lech Lecha "Human Side of the Story" piece on "Kindness Unlimited", you described the impact of Gemachim upon the community. I'd like to add a follow-up message:

The Gemach Forum, at www.geocities.com/jewish-groups, can help people find the Gemach they need — anywhere in the world. This online forum is the most up-to-date resource in the world, with subscribers responding to urgent requests for information.

• David Grossman

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE FRUITS

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

SEVEN SPECIES — HOW THEY REPRESENT LOVE OF THE LAND

“For the L-rd, your G-d, brings you to a good land... a land of wheat and barley, of grape and fig and pomegranate; a land of oil-rich olive and sweet date.” *Devarim* 8:7-8

This is how the Torah introduces the seven species of grain and fruit with which Eretz Yisrael is blessed.

These species are mentioned in a number of places throughout Tanach. In many cases there is a comparison between them and our people to whom G-d gave this Land.

Our Sages (*Mesechta Succah* 5b) even saw in these seven species hints to the various measurements of substance and time, that play a crucial role in halachic matters.

We pay special tribute to G-d after consuming any of these species by making a special blessing, different

from the one we make after all other food and drink.

Whether it is the *birkat hamazon* (grace after meals) we say after eating bread made from wheat or barley and their three sub-species, or the condensed version (*me'ain shalosh*) said after partaking of cake, wine or the rest of the species, we offer thanks to G-d not only for the food but also for the Land with which it is identified.

Regardless of whether these species grow in Eretz Yisrael or elsewhere, this special blessing is made simply because a species which is described in the Torah as one of the blessings of Eretz Yisrael sets it apart from everything else — just as Torah sets the Land and the people apart from the rest of the world.

This is the ultimate expression of our people's love of the Land.

