

# OHR NET

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYISHLACH · 13 KISLEV 5774 · NOV. 16, 2013 · VOL. 21 NO. 8

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### DYNASTY

*“Now these are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom...” (36:31)*

**W**hy do Jews believe that there is a G-d? The famous English physicist Sir Isaac Newton had a colleague who was a staunch atheist. Newton would frequently cross swords with his colleague on this subject.

One day, when the atheist came to visit Newton in his library, his eyes fell upon a most beautiful sight. Sitting on Newton’s desk, basking in the rays of the afternoon sun, was an exquisite *astrolabe* — a brass machine that depicted the solar system in three dimensions.

“How beautiful!”, remarked the atheist.

“You haven’t seen anything yet,” said Newton. “Do you see the small lever on the base? Move it towards you.”

As the atheist moved the lever, the entire engine slowly came to life. At its center the orb of the sun started to revolve. Further out, turning on brass cogs, the earth and the planets began their revolutions around the sun; each planet accompanied by its own moons, all moving in wonderful precision.

“This is amazing!” remarked the atheist. “Who made it?”

“No one” replied Newton, deadpan.

“What do you mean ‘No one?’”

“No one. It just sort of fell together, you know.”

“No, I don’t know! I insist you tell me who the maker of this priceless object is. I refuse to believe that this object merely ‘fell together’.”

“This...” said Newton, pointing to the astrolabe, “This you insist has to have a maker. But *this...*” Newton spread his arms wide, indicating the Creation, “how infinitely more beautiful and complex! *This* you insist has no Maker?”

You don’t have to be able to invent the First Law of Motion to read the world like a book.

Just as the book testifies to the existence of its writer, so too the world testifies to the existence of a Divine Author.

Yet, however compelling is the evidence of design in the Creation, this is not the reason that the Jewish People believe in G-d.

We believe in G-d because the entire Jewish People had a first-hand experience of the Divine during the Exodus from

Egypt, at Sinai and the forty years of daily miracles that followed. Ah, you will say, that was *them* — what about *me*? What connects my belief in G-d to the experience of people I never met a couple of thousand years ago?

The answer is that parents don’t lie to their children about essential life information. If indeed G-d did speak to the Jewish People at Sinai and miraculously guided us through the desert, if He indeed gave us a Torah which tells us how to live our lives, then this certainly qualifies as information that our forbears would deem essential to pass on to us.

“Tradition” is infinitely more than the rhapsody of a Russian-Jewish milkman named Tevye. “Tradition”, the passing over from parent to child of that encounter at Sinai is the lifeblood of Judaism.

One of the ways we express that link is by referring to ourselves as the son/daughter of so-and-so. For example, my Hebrew name is Yaakov Asher ben Dovid. Yaakov Asher the son of David. My father’s name is Dovid ben Shmuel, and his father’s name is Shmuel ben Tanchum Yitzchak. An so on.

My name — who I am — is inextricably linked with from where I come. I am a link in a chain that spans the millennia. My very name says that.

At the end of this week’s Torah portion, there is a list of the kings of Edom. If you look at this list you’ll notice that not one of these kings was hereditary. Every one of them founded and finished his own dynasty.

Edom is descended from Eisav. Eisav despised the birthright and sold it to Yaakov. Eisav viewed heredity as disposable, insignificant. He was prepared to sell it for a bowl of lentils. Eisav’s worldview is that of unmitigated meritocracy. Nothing else counts. This is his view to this day.

Meritocracy has much to recommend it. However, when you are building a belief system which will rely on a chain of transmission spanning millennia, to despise dynasty is to disqualify yourself from the job at hand – the eternal witnessing of G-d’s interaction and interest in Mankind.

• Thanks to Rabbi Mordechai Perlman

## 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 Canaanite 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

Canaanite 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.

## TALMUD Tips

ADVICE FOR LIFE

Based on the Talmudic Sages found in the seven pages of the Talmud studied each week in the Daf Yomi cycle

### YOMA 9 - 15

*“For the people of the First Beit Hamikdash, who revealed their transgressions (did them openly without hiding them), the length of their exile was revealed (70 years); but for the people of the Second Beit Hamikdash, who did not reveal their transgressions, the length of their exile was not revealed.”*

The *gemara* explains that people of the the First Beit Hamikdash violated the three major transgressions of idolatry, immorality and murder. These were all done openly. During the Second Beit Hamikdash the reason cited for the destruction and exile is “senseless hatred” — a transgression that was in their hearts despite their acting “civilized” to each other in public.

The Maharsha likens the more serious nature of the latter to the more serious transgression of a “*ganav*” (a “sneaky thief”), as opposed to the less serious action of a “*gazalan*” (brazen robber). The *ganav* shows greater fear of Man than of G-d, while the *gazlan* equates both Man and G-d in his behavior. So, just as a *ganav*, who hides his violation, deserves greater punishment, likewise the people during the Second Beit Hamikdash hid their transgression and deserved greater punishment.

• Yoma 9b

*A mezuzah for privately owned property needs checking twice every seven years; whereas a mezuzah for a public property needs checking only twice in a Yovel (50 years)”.*

These *halachot* are taught in *beraita* on our *daf*. Even though the mezuzah was kosher when first written and affixed to these places, there is concern that it may have rotted or been stolen over time. Public property includes places such as the gates of courtyards and cities. (Rashi)

Why does a public mezuzah require far less-frequent checking? Rashi explains that if the Sages decreed to check the public ones more often, each person would say, ““Let the other people check it!”

• Yoma 11a

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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.”

## Remembering Rav Weinbach

LEARN MISHNAYOS IN MEMORY OF  
HAGAON HARAV MENDEL WEINBACH זצ"ל  
הרב חנא מנחם מנדל בן ר' יחזקאל שרגא זצ"ל

*Students, Alumni and friends are invited to share their memories, stories and thoughts on the  
MEMORIAL PAGE FOR RAV WEINBACH AT [WWW.OHR.EDU](http://WWW.OHR.EDU)  
Hespedim of our beloved Rosh Hayeshiva is available at [www.ohr.edu](http://www.ohr.edu)*

# Abarbanel

## ON PARSHAT VAYISHLACH

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

In this Parsha, Yaakov is told that his brother Esav is coming to meet him with four hundred armed men. Yaakov's reaction is "...he became very frightened and it distressed him." Abarbanel finds Yaakov's fear very puzzling. First of all, G-d has already assured Yaakov that he would always have Divine protection: "Behold, I am with you, I will guard you wherever you go." Similarly, just prior to this point in time, as he was preparing to leave his father-in-law Lavan, G-d told him, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your native land and I will be with you." Secondly, once Yaakov's fear became apparent, why doesn't G-d reassure him of His protection, as He does later on? At that point, when Yaakov is hesitant to bring his family to Egypt, G-d reassures him by telling him, "Don't be afraid to descend to Egypt...I will descend with you."

Abarbanel answers as follows: In reality, Yaakov's fear had nothing to do with any lack of trust in G-d. As such, he did not require any further reassurance. Man is a combination of a physical entity and a rational/spiritual entity. Yaakov's physical side had a genuine fear of death. He can be compared to a warrior going into battle. A true hero goes into battle knowing that death is possible. But a sense of a higher responsibility and a higher virtue enables him to overcome

that fear. One who goes into battle with no sense of danger is not a true hero, as his rational/spiritual side is not being challenged. Yaakov's physical side was genuinely and viscerally afraid of death at the hands of his brother. But his rational/spiritual side predominated and enabled him to overcome that fear and meet Esav directly. The profound depth of his trust in G-d is demonstrated by the fact that he could have employed other, safer means to escape Esav. He could have fled or sought refuge in a fortified city while sending word to his father Yitzchak to intercede on his behalf. Yaakov did not require any further reassurance, as his strategy was a clear demonstration of his trust in the veracity of G-d's earlier promises.

This conflict between our two opposing natures is a pattern that is constantly repeated in our daily lives. However, an individual who, for example, refrains from a forbidden intimate relationship or from a forbidden food because he finds the person unattractive and the food disgusting is not demonstrating his trust or the strength of his rational/spiritual nature. Only when our physical fears and desires pull us can we demonstrate the spiritual strength personified in Yaakov.

**NEW!**

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### **Talmud Navigator – "Excel" in Talmud**

The Talmud, often referred to as "The Sea of the Talmud", is vast both in breadth and depth. The *gemara* (Megillah 18b) describes the difficulty of maintaining a hold on all the Torah you learn, quoting Proverbs (23:5): "When you lift (or close) your eyes from it – and it disappears".

Chazal (Eruvin 54b) prescribe a method for gaining a true understanding and making a lasting acquisition of all the material you learn. Rav Chisda is quoted as saying, "The Torah can only be acquired with signs."

**Talmud Navigator** is an attempt to organize the Talmud in database form, mapping and charting the Talmud by tagging the various components and building blocks of the according to type and hierarchy. It is based on the system outlined by the Ramchal in

Derech Tsvonos.

This system of textual organization serves as a self-help way to outline the *sugya* in a clearer fashion. It assists in promoting a better understanding of the flow of the *Gemara* and in facilitating summary and review. It is also an excellent tool for a less advanced *Gemara* learner to identify and grasp the logical flow and interconnections of its various components.

Each Thursday we will post a PDF file which maps the *gemara* studied in that week's *Daf Yomi* cycle. G-d willing, we plan in the future to make available the Excel file which enables the user to make his own condensed selections of the *Gemara*. For example: Highlighting the main statements, arguments, questions, conclusions or personalized anchor points of the *sugya* determined by the learner to facilitate his own review.

**Talmud Navigator** is prepared by Rabbi Hanoach Zweig and is available at [www.ohr.edu](http://www.ohr.edu)

## MATRIMONIAL MISJUDGMENT

**From: Anonymous**

*Dear Rabbi,  
A friend of mine from Seminary is getting married, and I notice she's "availing" herself of many of the free provisions offered for needy brides – which is a great thing – it's just that I get the impression that she is not so needy and I'm wondering whether this is right since it will deprive others of what they really need.*

Dear Anonymous,

I understand your concern, but it is really not right for you to judge her. In most cases we have no way of knowing what a person's financial situation is, and the fact that the person is seeking help should be enough of an indication that they need it.

And even if it seems to you that she can afford these provisions on her own, she very well may not be able to do so and also afford all of the other costs, which are very great. Also, by receiving help with these items now, she may have in mind that she is relieving the burden on her newlywed husband who might be learning etc.

So you see, there are just too many variables and unknowns here to pass judgment, and in any case, it's up to the organizations to scrutinize, if they want to; it's no one else's business. And in truth, those who distribute such pro-

visions are usually very happy for anyone who wants to benefit from their services.

One of the great Chasidic Torah scholars, Rabbi Chaim of Tszanz, was known to provision needy brides and grooms. Once, a father of a bride entered his study in the presence of Rabbi Chaim's son and another rabbi, and hinted that he lacked the money for the *tallit* and *shtreimel* customarily given to the groom. Rabbi Chaim's son questioned the father's sincerity, exclaiming that he saw the father buy these items just recently. Greatly embarrassed, the father left in haste without saying a word.

Rabbi Chaim was very upset and chastised his son for embarrassing the poor father and doubting his need. "How do you know he didn't receive the items on credit and yet needs to pay? And even if he's paid, it was most certainly at the expense of his own family's needs, which he'd obviously be embarrassed to admit! Go apologize to him immediately!"

The rabbi's son found the man, apologized profusely, but the man refused to be appeased. He demanded that the issue be brought before Rabbi Chaim. The rabbi turned to the father and said, "Listen up, don't accept my son's apology until he pledges to pay for the *tallit* and *shtreimel* himself, as well as paying for all the other expenses of the wedding too!"

Rabbi Chaim of Tszanz had such empathy for the needy that he didn't spare heavily fining his own son, who himself was an accomplished rabbi, for having questioned the honesty of a request for help for a bride and groom.

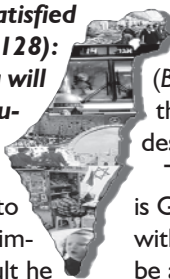
## LOVE OF THE LAND

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

## BEN ZOMA – THE TANA

**"Who is considered a rich man? One who is satisfied with what he has, as it is written (Tehillim 128): "When you eat from the work of your hands you will be fortunate and it will be well with you" – fortunate in this world and well with you in the World-to-Come." — Ben Zoma (Avot 4:1)**

**T**he truly rich man is not frantic in his efforts to acquire wealth. Therefore he can dedicate himself constantly to spiritual matters. As a result he will be blessed in both worlds.



"One who is content to enjoy the work of his own hands is greater than one who fears Heaven" say Chazal (Berachot 8a), because King David promises the former that "it will be well with you", while the latter is merely described as being "fortunate".

This comparison comes from Ben Zoma. Even if a person is G-d fearing, so long as he lacks the capacity to be content with what he has and frantically pursues wealth he will not be able to properly devote himself to the service of G-d.

• *Tosefot Yom Tov*

## THE DILEMMA OF ORGANIZED PRAYER

**A**s early as the time between the First and Second Temples (400 BCE and 300 BCE), organized prayer, which is of rabbinical origin, was established by “The Men of The Great Assembly.”

The Sages of the generation that preceded the destruction of the Temple saw with *ruach hakodesh* (a level of Divine communication) that the approaching exile would last for a long time, and that something was desperately needed to fill the void of the soon-to-be-destroyed Temple.

And so, they organized a set text of prayer to be said three times daily, corresponding to the offerings of the Temple service of yore. Just as the Temple service helped sustain the world by drawing down both spiritual and physical benefits into this world, prayer, which stands in its place, has a similar effect in helping to sustain this world as well as the spiritual worlds above.

The Men of the Great Assembly formulated the basic structure and text of prayer according to the hidden esoteric wisdom of Kabbalah, thereby enabling every letter and word uttered by all Jews to contain the requisite components to draw down Divine flow from Above. They provided each individual with his own “ladder” with which his prayers could ascend to Heaven. All

that was necessary was for all Jews to follow their directive.

Although this innovation solved a great problem, it presented a new hurdle that we still face today.

It is generally difficult to utter, with true intent and feeling, words that are not one’s own, especially when these same words are repeated three times a day, seven days a week. Unfortunately, due to the predetermined formula of the prayers, a great number of people disengage from the true purpose of prayer; namely, the service of the heart.

We have come to the timeless dilemma of organized prayer. One’s own words aren’t enough, and the words provided for us lack a soul. What are we to do!

One must study, to the best of his ability, to internalize the true meaning of the holy words of prayer. This can also be done in English if necessary. Then, when praying, one will be able to utter the prayers as if they were one’s own words. This will help to restore the true service of prayer, allowing the holy words of the Sages to be uttered with full concentration and meaning. Our job is to give the “magical” words of the Sages a soul, making them come alive as they leave our lips and ascend Heavenward. In fact, the Zohar explains that the actual words and letters of the prayers themselves ascend to Heaven.

## @ OHR *Profiles of Ohr Somayach Alumni and Students*

### *Infectious Judaism*

by Daniel Keebler

**Eric Weisman Age: 32**  
**Maalot Dafna, Jerusalem**

**University of Arizona – Major: Chemical Engineering**  
**University of Miami – Master: Biomedical Engineering**  
**Center Alumnus**

If you ask Eric Weisman why he came to Ohr Somayach, he’ll tell you, “It was the Venezuelan scientist at the Cuban restaurant.” He was working on brokering a biotech deal at a non-kosher restaurant, on Shabbat, when the Venezuelan scientist suddenly turned to him and said to him, “*Weisman? Are you Jewish? Look, I’m not Jewish, but you Jews — you stop everything one day a week and don’t go to work!*” According to Eric, it’s often the gentiles who show us that we’ve lost our spiritual integrity.

Eric came to Ohr Somayach after graduating with a Master’s degree in Biomedical Engineering on a full-ride scholarship, despite pressure to start work right away. Eric believes that people see spending time in yeshiva as financial doom. “But,” he says “G-d isn’t going to punish you for wanting to learn a bit of Torah.” In fact, testifies

Eric, it was an Ohr Somayach rabbi that helped him get the job he now has at one of Israel’s biotech companies.

Every day Eric rides his bike from Ma’alot Dafna to the Har Hotzvim Tech park. There he and his co-workers handle some of the world’s most dangerous bacteria — antibiotic-resistant “superbugs.” Eric says he is working on fascinating projects. “The world is going crazy with these superbugs and I’m sitting there working on them.”

Equally intriguing to Eric is the impact he has on his secular coworkers. Sometimes he makes a blessing out loud and one of his coworkers jumps to ask how to make a blessing on lunch, or they ask Eric where they can go to pray *mincha* (afternoon prayers), or if they can borrow his *sid-dur* (prayer book).

Eric wakes up every day at 4:30 am to learn Torah for 30 minutes before his Torah study partner arrives at 5:45 am, followed by morning prayers. Eric says that the love for Judaism that he got from Ohr Somayach is infectious; his 4-year old son sometimes wakes up at 4:30 am and wants to learn Torah with him! If not for his time in yeshiva, says Eric, “How would I know what it’s like to be a Jewish husband and father?”

