

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYISHLACH · 14 KISLEV 5775 - DEC. 6, 2014 · VOL. 22 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, “so infinitely more beautiful and complex, *this* you insist has no Maker?”

You don’t have to be able to discover 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 the “Divine Author”.

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

We believe in G-d because the entire Jewish People had a firsthand 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 things that are important for the children to know. 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 forebears 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 or daughter of so-and-so. For example, my name is Yaakov Asher ben Dovid. Yaakov Asher, the son of David. My father’s name was Dovid ben Shmuel, and his father’s name was Shmuel ben Tanchum Yitzchak. 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 Esav. Esav despised the birthright and sold it to Yaakov. Esav viewed heritage as disposable and insignificant. He was prepared to sell it for a bowl of lentils. Esav’s worldview is that of unmitigated meritocracy. Nothing else counts. This is his view even to this day.

Meritocracy has much to recommend it. However, when you are building a belief system which will rely on a chain that spans the 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 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.

## 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

## YEVAMOT 65 - 71

*“The mitzvah ‘to be fruitful and multiply’ is a mitzvah for a man but not for a woman.”*

This is the opinion of the Tana Kama in our *mishna* — and is the halacha — although a dissenting view is taught by Rabbi Yochanan ben Beroka in our *mishna*, that also a woman has this mitzvah. *Amaro'im* in the *sugya* cite two sources for the source of the Tana Kama. One source is that this mitzvah that G-d tells Yaakov ‘be fruitful and multiply’ is in the singular form of “*prei u'rvei*” and not in the plural form of “*pru u'rvu*” (Ber. 35:11).

There appears to be a difficulty with this proof since G-d said to Adam “*pru u'rvu*” in the plural (Ber. 1:28). However, this earlier statement can be understood to be a blessing and not a mitzvah, as indicated by the words that begin this verse: “and G-d blessed them...” (Tosefot). And just as the earlier verse is a blessing but not a mitzvah according to the Tana Kama, the later verse is likewise understood by Rabbi Yochanan ben Beroka to be a blessing and not a mitzvah (Maharsha).

Regarding this mitzvah as being only for a male, I once heard a great rabbi in Jerusalem offer the following reasoning: “Wouldn't it be unpleasant to command a woman to have children since childbirth is generally uncomfortable to say the least? All of the ways of the Torah are pleasant. Therefore, a woman's instinct is to want children and this is reflected in the blessing she recites daily, “that He made me like His will” — she is naturally attuned to do G-d's will without being commanded.”

• *Yevamot 65b*

*“Just as it is a mitzvah to say something that will be heard (accepted), so too is it a mitzvah to not say something that will not.”*

This statement is taught in our *gemara* by Rabbi Ila in the name of Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Shimon and refers to the mitzvah of “*tochacha*” — “rebuking” a person who is transgressing the way of the Torah. The Maharsha understands from Rashi that the repeated verb “*hochei'ach tochi'ach*” — rebuke, you will rebuke — is the reason that our Sages learned that there is a “double-mitzvah” in this verse. To rebuke one who will accept, and not rebuke someone who will not. The Maharsha offers an additional explanation of his own, without basing it on the double verb since the *gemara* elsewhere learns a rule to rebuke a person “even a hundred times” (if needed) from the repeated verb. He explains that the verse specifies to rebuke “*amitecha*” — your friend who desires to keep the Torah and *mitzvot*, as our Sages explain this term. Therefore there is a mitzvah to rebuke someone who desires to not transgress — and for the “opposite” type of person the mitzvah is to do the “opposite” and refrain from rebuke. It will only lead to anger and danger. But lovingly rebuking “your friend in Torah and *mitzvot*” will engender his love for you.

• *Yevamot 65b*

## 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.”

## LOVE OF THE LAND

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

### KFAR CHANANIA (ANAN) — TOMB OR TRIBUTE?

In the northern Arab village of Anan, previously known as Kfar Chanania, is a burial cave which some researchers claim is the tomb of the Talmudic Sage Rabbi Chanania ben Akashia. Others dismiss this claim and say that the village



was merely named in honor of the Sage whose famous statement about G-d giving the Jewish People the Torah and the *mitzvot* in order to confer merit upon them is repeated at the end of a learning session before reciting the special *kaddish d’rabbanan*.

# Abarbanel

## ON PARSHAT VAYISHLACH

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

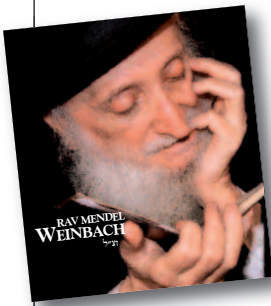
In the beginning of this Parsha, Yaakov is told that his brother Esav, accompanied by a formidable army of 400 men, is coming to meet him. Not sure of his brother's intentions, Yaakov prepares for the eventuality of a military confrontation. As the Torah states, "So he divided the people with him, and the flocks, cattle and camels, into two camps. For he said, 'if Esav comes to the one camp and strikes it down, then the remaining camp shall survive.'" He then sends some of his men and animals ahead in order to offer a tribute to Esav. The Torah then continues, "But he got up that night and took his two wives, his two handmaids, and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. And when he took them and had them cross over the stream, he sent over his possessions." After the famous narrative of his struggle with the angel, his entire entourage comes face to face with Esav and his men.

Abarbanel is puzzled by the fact that it appears that Esav is confronting only one camp, which appears to include all of Yaakov's wives, children and possessions. What exactly did the second camp consist of and where was it located? In his explanation, Abarbanel brings to light a fundamental principle of how a Jew should respond to physical danger. Rather than relying on a miraculous Divine intervention, we are required to take all the available natural steps to succeed. If Esav was intent on harming him, Yaakov knew that a direct

confrontation, absent a Divine intervention, would spell disaster. He decided to create two camps, one consisting only of animals, household goods and the servants required to take care of them, while his wives and children would be in the second camp. The Jabbok River would separate the two camps. Yaakov calculated that Esav would be traveling in such a way that he would first encounter the camp without his family. He hoped that Esav would be held up temporarily and even when he inevitably prevailed, the distance between the two camps would be great enough to allow the family to escape. Another possibility was that Esav would be satisfied with the captured booty and would allow the other camp to escape without pursuit.

G-d, however, had other plans. Esav chose a completely different route, did not have to cross the river, and ended up confronting Yaakov and his family first. In the end, of course, the reunion with Esav is peaceful. Both camps survive intact, are reunited and continue on their way. This is a clear example of the verse in Proverbs (19:21) "Many designs are in a man's heart, but the counsel of G-d, only it will prevail." Even though Yaakov's planning was for naught, G-d saw to it that the end result was even better than he had hoped for. The results of our efforts are always in G-d's hands but we are still obligated to make those efforts in the most logical and well-thought-out manner possible.

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\* Suggested minimum donation for the printed version is 36 nis.

Proceeds will be used for the Gemach Charity Fund established by Rav Weinbach, zt"l.

## FACING FEAR

**From: Yaakov**

*Dear Rabbi,*

*Given the situation now in Israel and Jerusalem, I find myself "fearing" for my life and I'm not quite sure how to cope with it. Do you have any ideas that might help me face this fear and get back to living life as normally as possible?*

Dear Yaakov,

Unfortunately, given the situation, many people feel such concern, and it is completely normal to do so.

Still, there is a big difference between feeling concerned and "fearing" for one's life, as you put it.

First, let me point out that while these barbarous attacks are directed intentionally at Jews for political or religious motivations, the truth is that in any large city around the world, due to crime and accidents, a person who leaves his house must know that he may not return.

I absolutely do not intend to diminish the horror of terrorist attacks, which must be thwarted at all costs, but in terms of "fearing" what might happen, it's not clear that the likelihood of something happening is significantly different.

My point is simply that when one lives life in a normal way, tragedies may occur, no matter where we live or what we do – yet we continue to live normal lives while taking normal precautions.

That being said, whether we like it or not, fear is a natural feeling which we have to deal with. But the fact that we have this feeling indicates that it, like all other emotions, comes from G-d, and therefore has the potential to be positive. The question is, how can we channel or harness fear for our benefit?

The first and most essential step is to gain control over ourselves in order to prevent fear from debilitating us. This can be done by asserting rational thinking over our feelings of fear, thereby transforming the fear into constructive caution. Thus, rather than being paralyzed by fear, we actually use it to fuel positive action.

Here's a practical example. Suppose a person fears leaving the house because of some potential danger. If rational thinking would not dictate one's staying home, that same rational thought, taking into consideration the various aspects of the danger, can be used to formulate a plan of action which would determine where to go, when, with whom, etc. And while on the way, the germinal feeling of fear can be harnessed to navigate our surroundings with heightened awareness and alacrity.

Relating to fear in this way, far from causing panic, actually empowers us to take greater control of our lives.

However, no matter how much physical effort we expend to protect ourselves from harm, ultimately, since everything is from G-d, we must make an effort on the spiritual plane as well – meaning that we must make sure we are free of sin and thereby worthy of Divine protection, above and beyond the physical measures we take to avoid danger.

This is illustrated by the Torah's teaching regarding Jacob's fear of his pending confrontation with Esav: "Jacob sent messengers to his brother Esav...The messengers returned to Jacob, saying, 'We came to your brother Esav and he is also coming toward you with four hundred men'...Jacob became very frightened and [he prayed]... 'G-d, deliver me from the hand of Esav, for I am afraid of him, lest he come and strike me together with mother and children.'" (Gen. 32:4-12)

But considering G-d's earlier promise to guard Jacob, "Behold, I am with you, and I will guard you wherever you go, and I will restore you to this Land, for I will not forsake you until I have fulfilled what I have spoken concerning you" (Gen. 28:15), a point which Jacob himself includes in his current prayer for protection from Esav, the question is: What was he afraid of? G-d had already promised him Divine protection!

Our Sages answer (Berachot 4a) that Jacob did not fear Esav per se, but rather he feared loss of Divine protection as a result of his having neglected the mitzvah of honoring his parents during the many years of his absence. What he really feared was sin!

So, to master fear we must channel it rationally in order to positively promote, not paralyze, action, while simultaneously using it to catalyze *teshuvah* in order to engender Divine favor and protection!

*Please daven for a refuah shleimah for*

**Chaim Yechiel ben Malka** (Ohr Somayach alumnus Chaim Howard Rothman)

**Eitan ben Sarah - Yitzchak ben Chaya**

**Shmuel Yerucham ben Baila** (Rebbetzin Heller's son-in-law)

*May we all hear Besoros Tovos.*

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## SHEMONAH ESREI — SEVENTH BLESSING — PART I

### Knowledge, Teshuva, Forgiveness and Redemption

### The Number Seven

**T**he blessing of redemption follows immediately after our request for forgiveness; for only after one is truly forgiven for his misdeeds does he deserve redemption. Thus, we see in the first four blessings of requests the reverse pattern of man's demise.

Man's intellect is all too often influenced by his base desires and misguided emotions, thus leading him to sin. What appear to be correct and logical decisions are in reality a result of this "inner incitement" convincing man to follow his own way instead of G-d's. In fact, this is what happened in Gan Eden, resulting in a decree of punishment and banishment. We see that the misuse of knowledge leads to sin, resulting in punishment and exile.

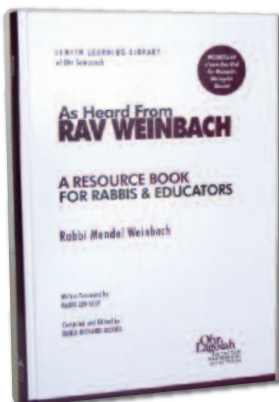
In order to reverse this negative cycle we ask that G-d bestow upon us His knowledge, i.e. Torah, which serves as a light in this dark and confusing world. The Torah teaches us the path of proper repentance through which we earn G-d's forgiveness. Once we are completely forgiven for our misdeeds, G-d will end the current exile and welcome us back to our homeland to be together again with Him. May it happen speedily, *amen*.

**T**he Talmud explains that the blessing of redemption was specifically chosen to be the seventh blessing.

This is in accordance with a well-known teaching that the world will exist for six thousand years, followed by the final redemption which will begin at the start of the seventh millennium. Although it will be another thousand years until the Mashiach, a direct descendent of King David, will arrive, greater significance is placed on the beginning of our redemption since it marks the end of our suffering and servitude.

There is a hint to this idea in the weekly cycle. We are commanded to work for six days and to rest on the seventh day. The six work-days represent the six thousand years that we have been allotted in order to spiritually prepare both ourselves and the world for the seventh millennium, which is compared to Shabbat since it will be a time of great joy and reward. In connection to this, G-d says to those who did not prepare: "Fools of the world, only those who took trouble to prepare on the eve of (i.e. before) Shabbat will eat on Shabbat; however, one who did not prepare, from where will he eat on Shabbat?"

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