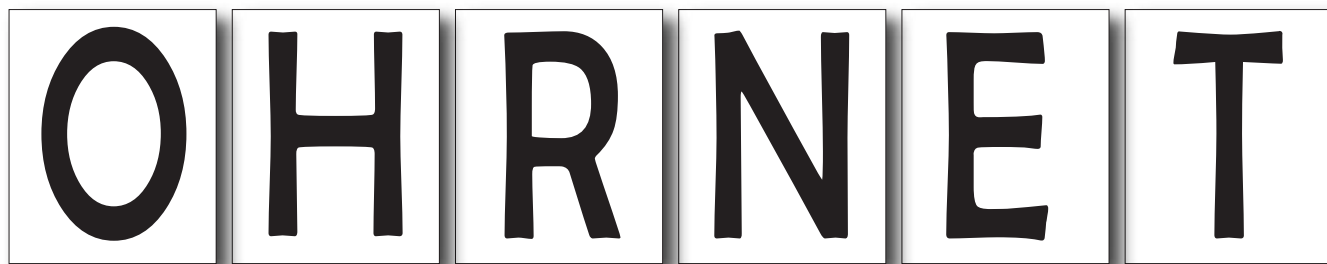

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SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYISHLACH • 14 KISLEV 5778 - DEC. 2, 2017 • VOL. 25 NO. 8

PARSHA INSIGHT

BY RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

A Master of Disguise

“Yaakov was left alone and a man wrestled with him...” (32:25)

The secular Jewish newspapers make depressing reading. (Serves me right for reading them!) It seems that every Torah prohibition — especially its norms of family life — have now been overridden by “enlightened” thought. What the Torah terms “abominable” has now not only become “acceptable” but even “admirable”.

Ironically, the rainbow, that symbol of G-d’s withholding His anger from Mankind, has been commanded by that group provoking that same anger.

The negative drive in man has always had two *agents provocateurs*. One blatant and the other sophisticated.

“Yaakov was left alone and a man wrestled with him...”

Rashi comments: *“One said (Rav Shmuel bar Nachmani): ‘he appeared to him (to Yaakov) as an idolater,’ and one (Rav Shmuel bar Acha) said: ‘he appeared as a Torah scholar.’”* (Talmud Chulin 91)

The evil impulse has two faces: that of the idolater and that of the sophisticate.

We find this idea echoed in the Midrash:

Rav says, “The yetzer hara (evil inclination) is like a fly that sits on two openings of the heart”. Shmuel says, “It is like a grain of wheat”. (Midrash on Bereishet 4:7)

In search of his pleasures, the fly will visit the most putrid and disgusting places in the world. He is blatant in his lust.

Wheat is the symbol of sophistication, as the Talmud says: “A baby does not know how to say ‘Daddy’ and ‘Mommy’ until it tastes the taste of wheat.” (Berachot 40)

A Jew must know that the *yetzer hara* is much stronger than he. The *yetzer hara* is a *malach* — an angel. He is a master of disguise, and if G-d did not constantly help us we would not be able to withstand his onslaught.

PLEASE JOIN US...

...in saying Tehillim/Psalms and a special prayer to G-d for the safety and security of all of Klal Yisrael in these times of conflict and conclude with the following special prayer:

“Our brothers, the entire family of Israel, who are delivered into distress and captivity, whether they are on sea or dry land – may G-d have mercy on them and remove them from stress to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption now, speedily and soon.”

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

BY RABBI MOSHE NEWMAN

Maccot 16 - 24

Standing Up for Torah

Rava said, "How foolish are 'those other people' who stand up for a Torah scroll but do not stand up for a Torah scholar."

Rava explains that his statement is based on the fact that although 40 is the number of lashes *written* in the Torah as punishment for transgressing many commandments (Dev. 25:3), the Torah Sages taught that the actual number should be one less — 39. This is taught in the *mishna* as the majority opinion, and the reason is explained in the *mishna* and in the *gemara*.

Who are "those other people" that Rava refers to as being foolish for failing to stand in honor of a Torah scholar? The Maharsha explains that they are people who are ignorant regarding the exceptional nature of Torah study, and therefore do not appreciate the greatness of Torah scholars — and may even ridicule them. "Those other people" look at Rabbis as mere functionaries who lead prayer services or speak nicely for a special event. Regarding the study of Torah, however, they see Rabbis as no more qualified than anyone else. They say, "How do the Rabbis *help* us? "Did they permit eating a raven?" The Maharsha explains this to mean that they feel that the Rabbis never taught any new idea that is not stated in the Torah. However, an example of how wrong they were is taught in our *mishna*: Without the Torah Sages a transgressor might receive 40 lashes and die, but since the Sages taught to give one lash less they could be saving his life! "Those other people" do not understand the necessity to delve into the study of the Mishna, Gemara, and the entire Oral Law. They don't understand that this realm of Torah study is essential for a truthful understanding of any aspect of the Torah — including correctly understanding the Written Law, and knowing how to properly fulfill each mitzvah.

The Maharsha adds that with this understanding of Rava's statement here we can reconcile what appears to be an apparent contradiction between our *sugya* and a teaching in Masechet Kiddushin (33b). A question is posed there as to whether there is an obligation to stand for a Torah scroll. Rabbi Chilkiya, Rabbi Simon and Rabbi Elazar rhetorically state, "In the presence of those who *study* the Torah one stands — in the presence of *it* (the Torah) isn't it 'all the more' logical that one should stand up in honor?" This statement implies that the Torah is "greater" than those who study it, whereas our *gemara* seems to teach the reverse. The Maharsha provides resolution by stating that certainly the Torah is "greater" than the scholars, and that our *gemara* — which seems to say the opposite — is addressing the erroneous thinking of "those other people" who ridicule the role of Torah scholars.

• *Maccot 22b*

The Reward of a Mitzvah

Rabbi Chanania ben Akashia said, "The Holy One, blessed is He, wanted to reward ("lezokot" in Hebrew) the Jewish People — therefore He give them much Torah and many mitzvot."

This statement is taught at the conclusion of the final *mishna* of our current *masechta*, Tractate Maccot, and is based on a verse in the Prophet Yeshayahu (42:21).

Numerous commentaries ask what the benefit of having *many mitzvot* is, since this also poses a potential risk of many transgressions and failure to fulfill one's obligations, leading to punishment.

The Maharsha states that the emphasis here is on the great number of "negative commandments" — 365 — as opposed to the fewer "positive commandments" — 248. Since G-d desires to reward the Jewish People, He gave them a larger number of negative commandments, which can be simply fulfilled by refraining from wrongdoing — such as not eating "creepy-crawlers" — and do not even require any action, unlike fulfillment of the "positive commandments" which requires doing an action.

The Rambam in his "*Commentary to the Mishnayot*" teaches a fundamental connection between mitzvah observance and the ultimate reward of meriting a place in the World-to-Come. He writes that a person who fulfills even just one commandment during his lifetime merits a place in the World-to-Come. This is true as long as the person fulfills the mitzvah in accordance with Jewish Law, and without any personal ulterior motive. Since there are "so many" *mitzvot* given to us by G-d, it is a virtual certainty that each and every Jew will fulfill at least one mitzvah properly, and will thereby merit a place in the World-to-Come. This fundamental belief is the basis for the *mishna* in Masechet Sanhedrin (90a) that teaches, "All of the Jewish People have a portion in the World-to-Come."

• *Maccot 23b*

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.”

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Love of the Land, written by RAV MENDEL WEINBACH, *zt”l* • General Editor: RABBI MOSHE NEWMAN • Design: RABBI ELIEZER SHAPIRO

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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

Rachel's Tomb and a Great Benefactor

Although the Torah relates that the Patriarch Yaakov put up a monument to mark the grave of his beloved wife Rachel, the structure that we see in Beit Lechem when visiting this holy site was built in 1841 by Sir Moses Montefiore.

The British benefactor received a building permit

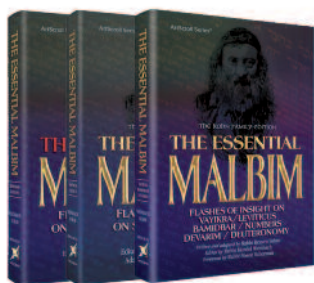


from the Turkish sultan and paid the fees for maintaining the site. Before his death at the age of 101 he asked that a small replica of the dome on Rachel's grave be placed on his grave, and that dust from Rachel's tomb be placed in his own grave.

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 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.



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BY RABBI YIRMIYAHU ULLMAN

In or Out?

From: Barry

*Dear Rabbi,
I have a problem at work. There is a long-time manager who does a decent job, but there are those who are not satisfied with the way he runs things. These employees are trying to oust him, and are putting a lot of pressure on others to join them. There is one man in particular who has taken the lead, and it seems he's interested in being the one to replace the current manager. So a type of tension has developed around this, and I'm at a loss as to which side to take, if any, and what to do. Perhaps the manager is lacking talent, but it's not clear the other would be any better. Also, the way he and his "faction" are acting is not very peaceful. It seems they are more interested in change than in improvement — otherwise they would work together with the manager to make things better, rather than to replace him. Any thoughts would be greatly appreciated!*

Dear Barry,

This is a difficult issue, particularly since there are so many details that I cannot possibly be aware of.

Certainly change with the intention to improve is desirable. And often, drastic changes are needed to correct problems which have become entrenched as a result of long-term mismanagement, neglect, apathy or just inertia.

On the other hand, much injustice and harm may be done by those whose sole agenda is change and not improvement, particularly when it is they who will gain control, which they present as being for the common good.

Based on what you have described, it sounds like this manager may not be the greatest, but he's not so bad. He has also held the position for a long time. Assuming that's not because of favoritism, force or foul play, this means that he's basically acceptable. Also, you indicate that the reformers don't want to work with him to improve the situation, but rather to replace him. This suggests an "agenda". Otherwise, unless this manager is a power-hungry tyrant, changes could be made within the organization under his lead, which would make room for renewal, and the introduction of

new people with fresh ideas and talent.

If in your estimation this analysis is correct I would recommend that you essentially stay out of the conflict. Rather, validate the good points of each side and urge them all to work together for the good of all. If both sides are basically well-intentioned and interested in improvement, even if they have different ideas about what that is, you and others may be able to effect a compromise.

In the event that the sides could not reach a compromise, or that it turns out to be simply a power struggle, and one side eventually prevails over the other, even though neither camp would view you as a partisan supporter, each would view you as a team player worth keeping on the team.

This reminds me of the famous conflict for leadership waged by Korach against Moshe (Num. 16). Korach was greedy, jealous and power hungry, but charismatic and convincing, leading a rebellion in which he hoped to replace G-d's appointed leaders, Moshe and Aharon, and himself become the leader of the Jewish People instead. He amassed many important followers, who cajoled and pressured others to join them.

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 109b) relates how the wise intervention of the wife of one of Korach's followers spared him from the evil fate of the rest:

A man named On, the son of Pelet, was saved by his wife. She argued, "What difference does it make to you who wins, such that you should take sides? If Korach wins, you'll be his subordinate, and if Moshe wins you'll be his." He countered, "What can I do? I joined counsel with them and pledged my allegiance to them." She said, "I know they are all 'holy' men and a 'holy' congregation. Stay put, and I'll extract you from them."

On the day appointed for the rebellion, she brought him wine, got him drunk, and put him to bed in the tent. She then uncovered her hair and sat outside of the tent. Anyone from Korach's camp who called upon him to join the insurrection recoiled from the improper sight of On's wife and turned away. In the meantime, Korach and his 'holy' congregation were all swallowed by the earth, while On, whose wise and self-sacrificing wife kept him safely out of the conflict, was saved!

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

BY RABBI REUVEN CHAIM KLEIN

Angels and Agents

A “messenger of G-d” refers to either an angel or a prophet, but what about a “messenger of Jacob”? When Jacob sent a message of peace to his older, belligerent brother Esau (Gen. 32:4), the Torah says that he sent Esau *malachim* (“messengers”). While the word *malach* in Hebrew may mean “messenger”, it also means “angel”. In fact, the Midrash (*Bereishet Rabbah* §75:4) records a disagreement amongst the Sages whether Jacob sent angelic messenger to his brother, or whether he sent human messengers. (Rashi adopts the former stance.) Nonetheless, there is another Hebrew word which means “messenger”—*shaliach*. Although the word *shaliach* never appears in the Bible, it is clearly a conjugation of the Biblical root word *shlach* (“send”). In this essay we will explore the difference between the two ostensibly synonymous words — *malach* and *shaliach*.

Radak in *Sefer HaShorashim* writes that the root of the word *malach* is LAMED-ALEPH-CHAF and that the letter MEM at the beginning of the word is not part of the root. This understanding is somewhat perplexing because there is no other Hebrew word with such a root. Nonetheless, archeology has proven Radak correct. Texts found at the site of the ancient city Ugarit (in modern-day Lebanon) are written in a Semitic language (known by linguists as Ugaritic) that closely resembles Hebrew. In that language the root of the verb for “sending” is not SHIN-LAMED-CHET (e.g., *shlach*) like it is in Hebrew, but the root is LAMED-ALEPH-CHAF, the exact root which Radak claims is at the heart of the word *malach*!

In an approach similar to Radak’s, Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) writes that the root of the word *malach* is LAMED-CHAF — *lech*, “go”. According to these understandings, the difference between *malach* and *shaliach* is not really in the roots of the words, because “go” and “send” are essentially the same. The difference, then, must lie in the nature of the mission on which the messenger is sent.

To this effect, both Rabbi Pappenheim and the Malbim explain that the word *malach* is only used to denote an agent charged with doing the type of mission which the sender would do himself. It is not nec-

essarily a sign of subservience to be a *malach*. The *malach* is sent only on prestigious assignments and, in a way, attains a position of honor. The Malbim adds that a *malach* is not required to report back to whoever sent him.

Based on this primary meaning of the term, *malach* is also applied to angels whom G-d *sends* for various important undertakings, some of which involve commandeering the laws of nature to perform miracles or to relay messages to prophets. In fact, Gersonides, throughout his commentary to the Bible, consistently tries to explain that every *malach* mentioned is a prophet, not an angel (see also Maimonides’ *Guide for the Perplexed* 2:6 for his view of “angelogy”).

Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) writes that the word *malach* is related to the Hebrew word *malachah* (“creative labor”) because a *malach* is an agent — whether angelic or not — who carries out a certain *task* on one’s behalf. Though the comparison between these two words is not readily understood, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) offers a penetrating insight: The word *malachah* denotes the thinking man’s ability to bring his ideas into reality through creative work, while *malach* is the personification of the thinking man’s ability to use a proxy to realize his ideas. He also writes that the word *malach* sometimes refers directly to G-d because He constantly engages in the *malachah* of creating the world. According to this approach, *shaliach* simply denotes a messenger, while *malach* denotes the messenger’s role in replacing the one who sent him.

Rabbi Yaakov Lorberbaum of Lissa (1760-1832) explains that a *shaliach* is somebody who is given a choice about whether or not he will accept his mission and — should he choose to accept it — when he executes his mission he is acting of his own volition. Sometimes, G-d employs such angelic forces to do His bidding and, based on their different tasks, they are given different names. Two categories of such angelic forces include a *malach*, which carries out benevolent missions, and a *mashchit*, which carries out malevolent missions. According to this approach, a *malach* is a type of *shaliach*.

Another, less common, word which appears to be

Continued on page seven

PRAYER Essentials

BY RABBI YITZCHAK BOTTON

Laws of Kedusha — Part 2

The congregation should not recite “Nakdishach...” with the chazzan. Instead, they should remain silent and pay attention to the chazzan, and when he reaches “Kedusha” they should answer aloud. (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 125:1)

The Mishneh Berurah explains that the reason for this is that the Rabbis instituted that the *chazzan* should represent the congregation when he recites the introduction to *Kedusha*. Therefore, if they recite the introduction as well, how can we call the chazzan their *shaliach* (representative)? However, today the custom is not like the Shulchan Aruch. Rather, the congregation recites the entire *Kedusha*, the same as the *chazzan*. This custom is based on the Taz, though its widespread acceptance can be attributed to the fact that it is also the opinion of the Arizal. In fact, according to the Arizal the congregation should say each word with the *chazzan*. (See Mishneh Berurah, Kaf Hachaim, Piskei Teshuvot)

When *Kedusha* is said, one should join his feet together as though they are one foot, as is written about the angels (in Yechezkel 1:7): “And their feet (plural)

are a straight foot (singular).” It is written in Sha’ar HaKavanot that one should be very careful about keeping his feet together during *Kedusha*. It is also written there that one should take three steps forward to recite *Kedusha* in the same place where he prayed Shemoneh Esrei.

When saying the three verses of *Kadosh... Baruch... and Yimloch...* one should raise his body and heels. It is the custom to raise one’s eyes upward (Rema), and preferably they should be closed (Arizal, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch). The Maharil would not speak from the beginning of *Kedusha* until the end of the blessing of “*Ha’El HaKadosh*”, and therefore one should also not speak at all during the *Kedusha*. One who already said *Kedusha* should nonetheless say it again if he is in a place where others are saying it (Rema). One who already said *Kedusha* and is in a place where he hears both *Kaddish* and *Kedusha* being said at the same time, answering “*Amen Yehei Shemei Rabbah*” for *Kaddish* takes precedence over *Kedusha*; but if one already started to say *Kedusha* he does not interrupt to answer “*Amen Yehei Shemei Rabbah*” (see Kaf HaChaim 125:17).

What’s In a Word...continued from page six

synonymous with *shaliach* is *tzir*. This word appears fewer than ten times in the Bible. The Vilna Gaon (in his commentary to Proverbs 13:17) implies that a *tzir* is specifically an agent who had been used many times (e.g., a professional courier), thus slightly differentiating between that word and *shaliach*. The truth is that the word *tzir* is always used to refer to a messenger in a diplomatic setting (e.g., an envoy, ambassador, or attaché). Rabbi Pappenheim explains that the word *tzir* refers to the idea of attaching distant (political) entities. He finds other examples of words related to *tzir* that refer to the concept of connection. The Malbim explains that a *tzir* is a messenger whose job is not simply to relay a message for his dispatcher, but also to report back to him.

In Aramaic, there are two words that mean “sending”: *shagar* (whose primary meaning seems to be “flow”) and *shadar*. The Modern Hebrew word *shagrir* (“ambassador”) is derived from the word *shagar*. *Shadar* entered the Hebrew vernacular in a conceptually-related way as a contraction of the phrase, *shaliach de’raban* (“emissary of the rabbis”). That term was used to describe rabbinic envoys charged with collecting charitable donations on behalf of public institutions. In Modern Hebrew the word *shadar* means to broadcast a message in the context of radio and/or television.

Ellyu Nishmat my mother Bracha bat R’ Dovid and my grandmother Shprintza bat R’ Meir

Letter & Spirit

Insights based on the writings of Rav S. R. Hirsch

BY RABBI YOSEF HERSHMAN

A Historic Struggle

After twenty years in Lavan's home, with his family completely grown, Yaakov sets off to resettle in the Land of his fathers. He prepares for a face-off with his brother Eisav, who has been plotting to kill him for some 35 years.

This encounter is even more consequential than it seems. Just as Yaakov and Eisav are at odds with each other here, so they stand opposed to each other for the duration of history. Yaakov has spent the last twenty years raising his children; he is the hard working family man. Eisav has spent this time becoming a political force, the leader of an army, a chief of his tribe. Yaakov represents family life, serving others, and seeing to their welfare and happiness. Eisav represents the glitter of political power and might. The struggle between them, and the outcome of this struggle, foreshadow a raging battle that has haunted humanity for thousands of years. In the words of Rav Hirsch:

“Is it sufficient just to be a human being, and are political power and social creativity of no significance unless they lead to the loftiest of all human aspirations, or, on the contrary, does everything that is human in man, in home, and in family life exist only to serve the purposes of political triumph?”

The night before this fateful encounter, Yaakov experiences an even more fateful encounter, with his brother's angel. This adversary wrestles with Yaakov the entire night, as Yaakov attempts to protect himself. The angel realizes that he cannot prevail against Yaakov, and he is able only to injure his leg. The angel then asks to be released, for the dawn is breaking, but Yaakov refuses let him go until the angel blesses him: “You will

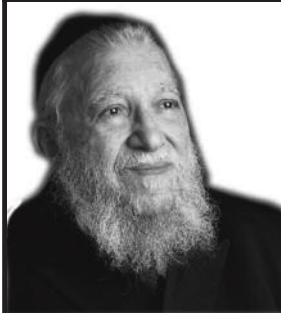
no longer be called Yaakov, but Yisrael, for you have become the commanding power before G-d and men, since you have prevailed.”

As long as the night prevails, Yaakov's adversary appears to have the upper hand, but as soon as day breaks it is Yaakov who sets the terms to end the struggle. All he asks is that instead of hatred and hostility, the adversary (the other nations) extend blessing and support. During the long night of exile that enemy seeks to destroy Yaakov, quashing his identity and extinguishing his values. While the enemy, reincarnated in every generation, attacked throughout our long bitter history, *he saw that he could not prevail* — nothing would extinguish us or force our complete assimilation. Yaakov sought not to destroy the other; he wanted only not to fall, and in that he succeeded. The goal of history — realized at daybreak — is the recognition that happiness and progress depends on those principles which Yaakov has lived by throughout the ages. No longer shall he be known as “Yaakov” — he who holds on to the heel — but rather, “Yisrael” — he who shows the world that G-d towers above all.

This final blessing, we are told, will happen “there.” There, where Yaakov stood, poised to return to the Land of his future, set on a course to build the Jewish People. It is “there” that the angel blessed Yaakov, by changing his name. And it is “there” — on the soil of our Promised Land and en route to our promised future — that we stand today, waiting for dawn to break, for Yaakov, the downtrodden, to be recognized as Yisrael, who has taught the world the way of G-d.

• Sources: Bereishet 32:8; 32:27-32; Collected Writings, Vol. VIII, “The Jewish Wayfarer's Sustenance,” p. 229

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Rav Bulman ^{zt"l}
on the
Torah Portion of the Week

BY RABBI ZE'EV KRAINES

The Chain Gang

“C hai” chains, “Star of David” chains, and even “Hamsa” vampire-protection chains — we are all familiar with the various physical symbols people like to use to express their Jewish identity and pride. Just google “mezuzah chain” and you will see that a mezuzah pendant seems to be a popular member of the “chain gang” as well. Because of its ascribed powers of protection, some people have also been known to keep a mezuzah in their car.

But how “kosher” is it to use a mezuzah as an amulet or lucky charm? And even if one’s respectful intention is purely to proclaim his faith and Jewish identity, is it disrespectful to hang around his neck a holy scroll containing Torah verses and multiple Names of G-d?

One thing is for certain: The Torah clearly states that the mezuzah’s place is on the doorpost. Thus, one who wears it, carries it, or keeps it in his car fulfills no mitzvah. Nevertheless, some authorities accept that the mezuzah’s protective power may still be in effect even when it is not in active service. Indeed, some sources suggest that in ancient times some people would insert a mezuzah into a hollowed-out chamber in their walking sticks for protection. Similarly, the Talmud records that *tefillin* retain protective power even when not strapped in place.

Practically speaking, the authorities differ whether hanging a mezuzah on the neck is considered an act of disrespect. Some cite the Talmud’s prohibition against hanging *tefillin* from a peg, and opine that this concern would apply to hanging a mezuzah around the neck. Certainly, this would apply to hanging a mezuzah in a car (next to the dice?). But others assert that, on the contrary, hanging a mezuzah on the body is a sign of endearment. Indeed, the Talmud records that the

Jewish king would hang a small Torah scroll from his arm in fulfillment of the Divine command that he should carry the Torah with them constantly.

Yet even those who allow this practice insist that the scroll must be encased in two coverings if it is to be worn while entering a bathroom, or if it is present in a bedroom during marital relations. Some even require that the mezuzah pendant be taken off in these situations.

It must be noted that some authorities have expressed strong hesitations about wearing *mezuzot* as necklaces even when these technical considerations are met. They fear that people will mistakenly feel that since they are wearing a mezuzah they no longer need to affix *mezuzot* on their doorways. They also suspect that some people will intend that words of Torah written in the scroll should heal them from sickness. Words of Torah may have protective powers, but using them directly as “medical instruments” is considered a degradation of the honor due them, except in a case of dire illness.

Because of these and other concerns, wearing a mezuzah necklace is not a common observance in our times. It may be part of the “chain gang”, but it is not a link in the chain of tradition.

- Sources: *Mishnah, Keilim 17:16; Berachot 23b; Sanhedrin 22a; Igros Moshe Y.D. 2:141; Halichos Olam 8, p. 216; M. B. 43:25; Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De’ah 179:11-12; Shevet HaLevi 2:149; Agur B’Ohalaecha 3:30*

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BY RABBI SHLOMO SIMON

Shlomo Chizkiyahu

**Age 29 - Born in Beirut, Lebanon - Raised in Manila, Philippines and Broughton Vale, Australia
Now in the Mechina Program**

It would be hard to imagine a more circuitous and unique path to Yiddishkeit and Ohr Somayach than the one taken by Shlomo Chizkiyahu. His parents met in Beirut, where they were both working. His father, a Moslem, is from Conakry, Guinea, on the West Coast of Africa, and his mother is a Catholic from Manila, the capital of the Philippines. At four years of age his parents split up. His father went his own way, and Shlomo went to Manila with his mother. She and her parents were devout Catholics, and Shlomo was raised in that tradition. He went to Church regularly, and later became an altar boy. From an early age he felt comfort and closeness to Hashem that has only grown over time. He prayed regularly to the Creator, feeling abandoned by his father, and since his mother left him in care of his grandparents when he was five to work in Saudi Arabia.

At the age of eight, he and his mother moved to Broughton Vale, New South Wales, a small rural farming community in Australia, where she married an Australian railroad worker who owned an 80-acre “hobby farm” where he, his brother and his sister helped their parents raise sheep, cattle and other farm animals for sale, rental and personal consumption. After high school in Nowra, a resort city on the South Coast of New South Wales, Shlomo began working as a salesman for a large national pay TV service provider. He enjoyed that work, but after the financial crisis in 2008 the pay TV business plummeted and his position was eliminated. He worked as a barber for about six months until he got a job in structural modification, also known as controlled demolition. He was working in that field for the three years prior to his entering the yeshiva.

Shlomo’s spiritual journey began to pick up steam as his belief in the Creator grew. He was finding footprints of the Creator in almost everything he saw and learned. When he was 24 he started reading the King James Bible from the beginning, and studied the commentaries that he found there. He made a decision to live a life that was in line with what he was reading. Abraham circumcised his children, Shlomo decided to circumcise his future children. Abraham practiced kindness to strangers, he would do the same. The Avot — Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — became his role models. When he reached the Book of Exodus he decided to honor the Sabbath Day and keep it holy. Incredibly, without any Jewish sources, he resolved not to work or watch TV on the Sabbath, or to travel, cook or do anything on that day but study the Bible, eat and sleep. This was his way of honoring the Sabbath Day. Of course, to him, Sabbath was Sunday. One day he saw a commentary in some Christian source that the Jews observe Sabbath beginning on Friday night and ending on Saturday night. This made a lot of sense to him since he was

somewhat familiar with the Spanish language, as the Philippines was once a Spanish colony and the Spanish word is “Sabado” — which sounds a lot more like Sabbath than “Domingo” or Sunday. He then began to observe the Sabbath for 24 hours from Friday evening to Saturday night. When he came to passages in the Bible that spoke about laws of *kashrut* he stopped eating pork and seafood. In fact, he stopped eating in fast-food restaurants, fearful that the food might have been prepared with lard.



Without a congregation of likeminded believers, he was quite alone in his practice and beliefs. After a while he met a small group of “Messianics” or “Nazariners” (as they called themselves). They adhered to the practices of the Jews in the Bible and wore *yarmulkes* and *tzitzit*. He was impressed. Although he had read about *tzitzit* in the Bible, he couldn’t picture what they might look like. He then started wearing them. But he didn’t feel totally comfortable with the Messianics. He felt that they were “a bit off.” They believed they were members of the 10 lost tribes. Shlomo didn’t think he was. They also emphasized a belief in Jesus as the

Messiah and Savior, and Shlomo remained unconvinced of that. They prayed to Jesus. Shlomo never felt comfortable with praying to man instead of praying directly to G-d.

Then he saw a YouTube video of a rabbi named Tuvia Singer, a well-known debunker of Christian missionaries. He went through the passages in the Prophets that the Christians used to “prove” that Jesus was the Messiah, and he showed that there was no basis for their “proof”. Shlomo was convinced, and after a deep internal struggle he left the Messianics and got rid of all his Christian Bibles and kept only his recently acquired ArtScroll Tanach.

He then moved to Maroubra, a suburb of Sydney with a sizable Jewish population, where he worked as a deliveryman. As it happened, many deliveries of food were to Jewish homes on Friday in preparation for Shabbat. He looked forward to Fridays, and would ask many questions of the customers about the interpretation of the Chumash and about the laws and customs of Judaism. He eventually found his way to the Rabbi Ingraham of the Adas Shul of Bondi, and to the Beit Din of Sydney. In January, 2017, after two years of study and *milah and tevilah*, the Beit Din issued its certificate of conversion to him. Many people in the Bondi community who are alumni of Ohr Somayach strongly suggested that he come here to study. He arrived at the beginning of this year’s “Winter *zman*” (“semester”). As to his experience in the Yeshiva, Shlomo told me: “I’m very happy to be here. The guys in the Mechina are very sincere and very good guys.” And we’re very happy to have Shlomo here as well.