

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

VAYISHLAH

Haftarah: Obadiah 1:1-21

DECEMBER 1-2, 2017 14 KISLEV 5778

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EDITORS NOTES

At the Academy Awards in addition to best film, best actor, best actress, best screenplay and best score, there are awards for Best Supporting Actor and Actress. I realized this morning that I have spent much of the book of Bereshit this year researching the typically ignored, but very important characters who we might consider to be supporting actors. We looked at Laban, Eliezer, Metushelach/Shechem, and others. This week we have been exploring the daughter of Yaakov, Dinah.

We read this week that in preparing for the encounter with his brother Esav, Yaakov "arose during that night, and he took his two wives and his two maidservants and his eleven children, and he crossed the ford of [the] Yabbok." Rashi asks: But where was Dinah? [Benjamin was not yet born, but Dinah should have been counted.] He (Jacob) put her into a chest and locked her in, so that Esav should not set eyes on her. Therefore, Jacob was punished for withholding her from his brother- [because had he married her,] perhaps she would cause him (Esav) to improve his ways-and she fell into the hands of Shechem.

Rashi based on the Midrash is suggesting that Yaakov was punished (and Dinah more so) because Dinah could have changed Esav. But this is confusing. Could Dinah have really changed Esav? Wasn't this Leah's job? After all we read last week on the verse, "Leah's eyes were tender", Rashi explaining: "That she thought that she was destined to fall to the lot of Esav; and she would cry, because everybody would say, "Rivka has two sons and Lavan has two daughters--the elder daughter for the elder son and the younger daughter for the younger son."

Leah was able to avoid Esav through her tears. So why should the responsibility of rehabilitating Esav fall to her daughter? And again, if Leah was allowed

to avoid surface, why wasn't Dinah? And if we say that Dinah may have succeeded where her mother would not, on what do we base that.

To confuse us further, we also read this week after settling in Shechem, Dinah, the daughter of Leah whom she bore to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. Rashi sees a significant connection between the description of Dinah as "the daughter of Leah" (and not Jacob) and the mention of her "going out to see the daughters of the land." He explains: Because of her going out, she is called "the daughter of Leah." For [Leah], too, was an "Yatzanit or outgoer," as it is written, "Leah went out to greet him" (Genesis 30:16). Regarding her it was said, "Like mother, like daughter." We always learned in school that the honor of the king's daughter is within. So we infer the term Yatzanit, a huge criticism in Rashi's words.

With Leah though we that she was rewarded in going out with the birth of Yissacher, the model Torah scholar. If she was doing something wrong, she would not have been rewarded.

Perhaps too Dinah was going out in an attempt at outreach. Abraham taught the men while Sarah taught the women. Perhaps Dinah simply wanted to follow in her great grandmother's footsteps? After all just as Sarah was hidden in a box, Dinah was hidden in a box. And is it beyond our imagination that Dinah could have thought that just as Hashem protected my great grandmother in the house of Pharaoh and my grandmother in the house of Abimelech, wouldn't Hashem protect me in the merit of my own father the chosen of the Avot?

The rabbis offer many reasons for her miscalculating (homework to explore them), but even after being violated and afflicted, Dinah still had a tremendous effect on Shechem and the entire city. 24,000 people circumcised themselves and converted because of her. That's truly unimaginable. Dinah, even in the midst of a tragic situation is still the daughter of Yaakov and the great granddaughter of Abraham and Sarah and has an ability to change an entire people.

Given this, I do believe that she had strength and gift perhaps unparalleled and although Rabbi Shimon tells us that it is a law that everyone knows that Esav

hates Israel, perhaps Dinah was the one person who could have changed that and all of history. I had heard the Lubavitcher Rebbe once said that Dinah is the example for all the female shiluchot. As we explore what the Rabbis teach us about her, it becomes easier to understand why.

A supporting character, perhaps! But Dinah is a true heroine.

Shabbat Shalom,
David Bibi

Summary of the Perasha Nathan Dweck

Va'yishlach - Yaacov meets up with Esav

- 1- Esav is coming toward Yaacov to kill him. Yaacov splits up his camp and prays.
- 2- Yaacov prepares presents for Esav. Yaacov fights with the malach (of Esav).
- 3- Yaacov meets up with Esav
- 4- Yaacov bows and gives presents to Esav. Esav goes to Seir. Yaacov goes to Succoth and then to Shechem.
- 5- Shechem rapes Dina. Shimon and Levi kill the people of Shechem. Yaacov goes back to Beit Kel. Devorah dies. Hashem blesses Yaacov and changes his name.
- 6- Binyamin is born. Rachel Dies. Reuben moves the bed. Yaacov returns home to his father in Hebron. Yitshak dies. The descendants of Esav.
- 7- The children of Seir. The 8 kings of Esav. The chiefs of Esav.

FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

"Therefore the Children of Israel are not to eat the displaced sinew."

Sometimes a word loses its true meaning due to the popular usage of the word. Is the word "seesaw" fated to become one of those words whose real meaning – to rock up and down – is rooted in an object that no longer exists? While the broader meaning of the word is expected to continue to be a part of the English language for some time, the playground installation known as the seesaw is now a rarity. Children growing up these days may never see an actual seesaw. They will understand if someone seesaws in opinion or mood, or that the economy is seesawing between high and low employment, but they do not connect the term with the picture of an actual seesaw.

The reason you don't see seesaws being installed in parks is due to research that it causes injuries if there is a fall. However more recent research studies

have revealed that there are certain benefits to the seesaw. It teaches children not to fear heights. Also it teaches a kid to get up again after taking a fall on the seesaw. However despite the new research, new seesaws have not come back.

One may wonder, why not? The answer might be that even though a fall is good, we would rather not have the fall. We would rather have playgrounds that are safe.

Where am I going with this? I think the vanishing seesaw gives us a great insight in the misvah of gid hanasheh. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein zt"l has an interesting question regarding this misvah. Why do we celebrate the victory of Yaakob Abinu over the angel by not eating the gid hanasheh? Why not celebrate by eating it! When we celebrate a miracle, we do something, such as lighting the menorah to celebrate the miracle. He answers that we celebrate with a non-action to show that we would have preferred that it didn't happen at all.

We know it's a great benefit to stand up and face the challenge of exile and remain loyal to Hashem, but we would rather not have exile. Like we say every morning, "Please do not bring me to a test." So too, we don't eat the gid hanasheh to show that we would rather not have the trial.

We would rather not have a seesaw despite the many benefits to be gained.
Rabbi Reuven Semah

"And Ya'akob remained all alone." (Beresheet 32:25)

Rashi quotes the midrash that Yaakob went back to retrieve small jugs that were left behind. The Gemara explains that a saddik's possessions are beloved to him more than his own body because he does not benefit from any means of theft. At that point, he was confronted by "a man," who some explain is a reference to the angel of Esav, which represents the yesser hara. Why did the yesser hara choose this time to confront him, and what was behind their battle?

The Arizal explains that a saddik understands that everything he owns was given to him specifically by Hashem. Since Hashem gave it to him, it is an indication that he must need it, and he should therefore value it. For that reason, Yaakob felt it was necessary to go back for the small jugs even though they had little monetary value.

It was exactly this point that the angel came to dispute. "You mean to tell me that Hashem is involved in such petty details. Even if you want to say that Hashem gives a person whatever he needs, is He really so precise that He cares what item you get?" To this, Yaakob responded that yes, Hashem is involved with every single thing in our lives down to the tiniest detail.

This is what is meant when the midrash says that the dust from under their feet went up to the Heavenly Throne. Yaakob was saying that even the small things, like dust, are directly controlled from Above. In fact, the Gaon M'Vilna says that this is why in the berachah of Asher Yasar, we say after we go to the bathroom, we say the words "דובב אסך ינפל" – before Your Heavenly Throne." This is to make a declaration that we acknowledge that Hashem controls even such a seemingly mundane action like using the facilities!

This is the lesson we learn from Yaakob Abinu. May we remain focused to understand that nothing is random, and to constantly see the Hand of Hashem in every detail of our lives. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

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What Was Esav's Angel Afraid Of?

We read in Parashat Vayishlah the famous story of Yaakob's wrestle with a mysterious person who attacked him in the middle of the night as he made his way back to Eretz Yisrael. This assailant turned out to be Esav's heavenly angel. Our Rabbis teach that this angel came to defeat not just Yaakob, but his progeny, as well. This was, if you will, the first attempt at a "final solution," to annihilate the Jewish people. Yaakob, as we know, survived the attack, though he was badly injured, symbolizing the fact that the Jewish people, his descendants, would be "injured" over the course of their history, but they would survive every attack made upon them.

The question arises, why did specifically Yaakob Abinu come under attack? If the evil angels in the heavens wanted to prevent Beneh Yisrael from coming into existence, why didn't they start their assault right at the beginning, with Abraham Abinu? And if, for whatever reason, they did not attack Abraham, why did they not launch an assault on Yishak? What was so special about Yaakob Abinu that Esav's angel found so threatening, thus prompting a violent assault?

Each of the three patriarchs excelled specifically in a distinct area of religious life, and bequeathed to us that particular quality. Abraham Abinu implanted within us the quality of Hesed, kindness and generosity, the desire to help others in need. Satan and his minions did not feel threatened by Abraham because kindness alone cannot ensure the perpetuity and eternity of the nation. There are, thank G-d, many non-Jews and many non-observant Jews who also excel in this quality, who are kind, sensitive and

caring. As much as we pride ourselves – rightfully so – on our nation's excellence in this area, we must acknowledge that other people share this quality of Hesed. And thus, it alone cannot guarantee our continued existence as a nation. Hence, Satan did not feel threatened by Abraham Abinu.

Yishak Abinu, our second patriarch, embodied the area of Aboda (sacrifice), as he was placed upon the altar, prepared to sacrifice himself for G-d. In the absence of the Bet Ha'mikdash, sacrifices are replaced by prayer; this is how Aboda is expressed in our times. Prayer, too, cannot guarantee the success or continuity of a nation. All streams of all faiths build and attend houses of worship. As important and vital as Tefila is in Jewish life, it cannot guarantee our future, and thus Satan was not frightened or intimidated by Yishak.

The patriarch who did frighten the evil angels was Yaakob Abinu, who embodied the value of Torah study. Intensive, rigorous engagement in sacred texts is something unique to the Jewish people, and it is what has ensured our survival for millennia. This is what frightened Esav's angel. When he saw Yaakob Abinu's commitment to Torah, a commitment that would be passed down to his descendants, he realized he had to act immediately. If the Jewish people would retain that commitment – which, of course, we have – they would exist forever. It was thus specifically Yaakob Abinu who came under assault.

The Torah tells that although Yaakob triumphed over the angel, he sustained a serious injury in his thigh. The Zohar comments that the blow to Yaakob's thigh symbolizes the blow that was dealt to the supporters of Torah. The thigh is what supports the upper part of the body, and Yaakob's injury thus represents the damage caused to the support of Torah. Indeed, it is far more difficult to raise money for a yeshiva than for Hesed organizations and for synagogues. Many people, Baruch Hashem, eagerly and generously respond to calls for funding to assist the needy or to build or expand synagogues. When it comes to supporting Yeshivot, however, people are often reluctant. This phenomenon is the result of the blow dealt to Yaakob's thigh, which impaired the base of support for his descendants' Torah study.

When we are approached with a request to support a Torah institution, the Satan works overtime to discourage us, planting in our minds all kinds of reasons and excuses for refusing. Satan knows that Torah learning is the Jewish people's greatest weapon against him, and he will therefore do anything he can to interfere with our support of

learning. But if we overcome this challenge and offer our generous support to Yeshivot, then we defeat Satan, and help guarantee the continued existence and growth of the Jewish nation, that despite the injury to the "thigh," we will continue to live and thrive for all eternity.

**VICTOR BIBI
SOD HAPARASHA**

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**Rabbi Wein
TELLING THE TRUTH**

Often times, if not even always, telling the truth is a painful experience both for the teller and for the listener. Our entire life is wrapped up in avoiding painful truths. And even if we are aware of them, not communicating them to others because that will make us very unpopular is also stressful.

The rabbis of the Talmud called this world "a world of falsehood." This is so ingrained within us that we expect that our leaders, political and otherwise, are never telling us the truth. Our political campaigns are based on slogans and promises that we all know to be false but since these are apparently the rules of the game, we accept them even though we know they contain little truth.

No politician runs on the truth that taxes have to be raised, deficits have to be closed and that there is no guarantee for an easy life for anyone else. Instead we are surrounded by promises of rose gardens, unending prosperity and a chicken in every pot. However, when one of our government leaders or ministers steps out of line and actually tells us the truth, the reaction from his or her colleagues, the media and all of the professional experts is one of shock and horror.

Apologies must be made for telling the truth so that we can continue to flow along the river of falsehoods that eventually will endanger our survival and success. In the "world of falsehood" we really cannot expect a different result in such situations.

Recently a government official here in Israel dared to say that the Emperor known as American Jewry has no clothes. There can be no denying the fact that for the vast majority of American Jews, Judaism, the state of Israel and traditional observance of the Jewish way of life no longer exists. The birth rate and American Jewry, if one factors out the Orthodox

population, is insufficient to maintain the weak numbers that already exist.

The intermarriage rate, again factoring out the Orthodox, encompasses 2/3 to 3/4 of American Jewish youth. The alienation of most Jewish youth in the United States towards any Jewish causes, philanthropic, religious or communal is a true and tragic fact. So, when an Israeli political leader and government minister may note that this publicly and warned about the deterioration of Jewish values and especially of support for the state of Israel financially and politically, she was immediately castigated by the powers that be for having spoken the truth.

It was not politically correct for her to do so and she was forced to apologize in order to restore the fake picture of American Jewry that our leadership continues to assert. The crisis of faith and identity that has beset American Jewry is in my opinion the greatest challenge and potential tragedy of our time.

American Jews in the main may know that somehow they are the people of the book but they don't know what book is being referred to. Under these circumstances there is little hope for their eventual survival as a vital part of the Jewish people. It is good that someone had the nerve to say so. It is tragic that instead of supporting that message of truth, all of the sycophants deny it and force unnecessary and very false apologies.

In my opinion this is very telling regarding the Conservative and Reform movements here in Israel and in the United States. They are witness to their decline in numbers and in Jewish loyalty. Many of their congregations are no longer populated by Jews, no matter what standard of conversion may be applied to them.

They have been unable to inspire generations of Jewish children to remain loyal to the Jewish people no matter what type of rules of observance exist. There are very few great-grandchildren or even grandchildren that exist within these groups. Their struggle here in Israel against the traditions of the Jewish people that most Israelis, secular or observant, hold dear is really one of the shameful chapters in our current story.

Instead of fighting about location at the Western Wall, should not the battle be against intermarriage, against remaining single, against a declining birthrate, against an abandonment of all moral tenets in the face of popular current political correctness? The truth hurts both the teller and listener as I have mentioned above. But at least once in a while it

should be publicly stated so that we will realize the true problems that face us and in what direction we should turn.

Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks The Struggle of Faith

There are Mozarts and there are Beethovens. Which are you?

I have only the most amateur knowledge of music, but the impression one gets about Mozart is that, from him, music flowed. There is something effortless and effervescent about his compositions. They are not "sicklied o'er by the pale cast of thought." He wrote at speed. He carried the worries of the world lightly.

Not so Beethoven, for whom it sometimes took years for an idea to crystallise into its final form, with countless drafts and revisions and crossings-out. This was a man who could be angry with himself and with the world, for whom creativity was a struggle from which he emerged triumphant with work that is rarely less than strenuous and full of conflict until its final majestic resolution. The ethereal, mystical, almost other-worldly quality of his last compositions, the sublime late piano sonatas and string quartets, are the creation of one who has finally found peace after a life of wrestling with his own angels and demons.

All of this is, for me, a way of coming to understand Jacob, the man who became Israel, our father in faith. Jacob is not the most obvious choice of religious hero. He does not appear – at least on the surface of the biblical text – as a man with Abraham's courage or kindness, Isaac's faithfulness and self-restraint, Moses' vigour and passion, David's politics and poetry, or Isaiah's lyricism and hope.

He was a man surrounded by conflict: with his brother Esau, his father-in-law Laban, his wives, Leah and Rachel, and his children, whose sibling rivalry eventually brought the whole family into exile in Egypt. His life seems to have been a field of tensions.

Then there were his transactions: the way he purchased Esau's birthright, took his blessing, and eventually outwitted his wily father-in-law Laban. In each case he seems to have won, but then his situation deteriorates. The episode in which, at Rebekah's request, he dressed up as Esau and deceived his blind father, forced him to leave home and – as we see in this week's parsha – left him traumatised with fear at the prospect of meeting Esau

again. Almost the same deception he practised on Isaac, he suffered at the hand of Laban. Even his escape from Laban might have ended in tragedy, had God not warned him not to harm Jacob (Hence the passage in the Haggada: "Go and learn what Laban the Aramean sought to do to our father Jacob"). His life as portrayed in the Torah seems to be a constant series of escapes from one trouble to the next.

So who and what was Jacob?

To this there are two radically different answers. There is the Jacob of midrash who even in the womb longed for a synagogue,[1] who spent his years as a young man studying in the bet midrash,[2] who looked like Abraham[3] and whose arms were like pillars of marble.[4] His motives were always pure. He bought Esau's birthright because he could not bear to see Esau offering sacrifices (the privilege of the firstborn) to idols.[5] As for his father's blessing, the very reason Isaac became blind in old age was so that this could be possible.[6] Esau was the opposite, a violent and mercurial character who had deceived his father into thinking he was ultra-pious,[7] but who had – on the day he came in "tired" from the field – committed a whole series of crimes including murder.[8]

This is an extreme portrayal, but not without scriptural basis. Jacob is called an *ish tam*, which conveys the sense of simplicity, integrity and single-mindedness. The plain sense of the oracle Rebekah received before the twins were born was that "the elder will serve the younger." [9] She knew Jacob was the son destined to prevail. Besides which, as Maharatz Chajes says in his Introduction to the Aggadic Literature,[10] midrash paints biblical characters in moral black-and-white for obvious moral and educational reasons. It is difficult to teach children how to behave if all you have to offer is a series of studies in ambiguity, complexity and shades-of-grey.

The other Jacob, though, is the one we read in the plain sense of the text. The obvious question is: why did the Torah choose to portray the third of the patriarchs in this way? The Torah is highly selective in the details it chooses to relate. Why not paint Jacob in more attractive colours?

It seems to me that the Torah is delivering, here as elsewhere, an extraordinary message: that if we can truly relate to God as God, in His full transcendence and majesty, then we can relate to humans as humans in all their fallibility. In every other religious literature known to me, heroes are idealised until they no longer seem human at all. They are Divine or semi-Divine, perfect and infallible. There is no one

like that in the whole of Tanakh. Even Noah (righteous, perfect) is seen drunk and dishevelled. Even Job (blameless, upright) eventually curses his fate. The man who, more than any other, epitomises fallibility is Jacob.

And perhaps that is the point. Jacob was a Beethoven, not a Mozart. His life was a series of struggles. Nothing came easily to him. He, alone of the patriarchs, was a man who chose to be chosen. Abraham was called by God. Isaac was chosen before his birth. Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah: these were all singled out by God for their mission. Not so Jacob. It was he who bought the birthright and took the blessing, he who chose to carry Abraham's destiny into the future.

Not until he was running away from home did God appear to him. Not until years later, alone, at night, terrified at the prospect of meeting Esau, did God or an angel wrestle with him. He alone was given, by God or the angel, a completely new name, not an enhancement of his old one but a completely new identity: "Israel." Even more strikingly, despite the fact that he was told "Your name shall no more be called Jacob,"[11] the Torah continues to call him Jacob, suggesting that his struggle was lifelong – as, often, is ours.

Were I to choose a soundtrack for the Jacob I have come to know, it would be Beethoven's Hammerklavier Sonata or his Grosse Fugue, music of such overwhelming tension that it seems on the verge of bursting through all form and structure. Yet it was through these epic struggles that Beethoven eventually reached his own version of serenity, and it was through Jacob's extended wrestling-match with destiny that he eventually achieved what neither Abraham nor Isaac accomplished: all his children stayed within the faith. "According to the pain is the reward," said the sages.[12] That is Jacob.

There are saintly people for whom spirituality comes as easily as did music to Mozart. But God does not reach out only to saints. He reaches out to all of us. That is why He gave us Abraham for those who love, Isaac for those who fear, and Jacob/Israel for those who struggle.

Hence this week's life-changing idea: if you find yourself struggling with faith, you are in the company of Jacob-who-became-Israel, the father-in-faith of us all.

[1] Bereishit Rabbah 63:6.

[2] Bereishit Rabbah 63:10.

[3] Midrash Lekach Tov, Bereishit 47:18.

[4] Bereishit Rabbah 65:17.

[5] Bereishit Rabbah 63:13.

[6] Bereishit Rabbah 65:8.

[7] See Rashi to Gen. 25:27.

[8] Baba Batra 16b.

[9] Elsewhere in past 'C&C's on Toldot, I have pointed out that this text is freighted with ambiguity.

[10] R. Zvi Hirsch Chajes, Mavo ha-Aggadot (printed at the beginning of standard editions of Ein Yaakov).

[11] He is told this twice, first by the angel, then by God Himself: Gen. 32:29; 35:10.

[12] Mishnah, Avot 5:23.

Rav Kook on the Perasha

Miracles were no novelty for Rabbi Zeira. The Talmud in Baba Metzia 85a elates that the third-century scholar fasted for a hundred days in order to protect himself from the fires of hell. But Rabbi Zeira was not content with theoretical preparations. Once a month he would test himself by sitting down in a burning furnace, to see if he would feel the heat. He didn't. (Once his clothes were singed, but that story is for another time.)

Yet, on very windy days, Rabbi Zeira was careful not to walk among the palm-trees, lest a strong wind should knock a tree over. His caution in orchards seems bizarre. Why should a man who can sit unharmed in a burning furnace be concerned about the possibility of a falling tree?

The Talmud (Shabbat 32a) counsels the following attitude towards miracles:

"One should never put himself in a dangerous situation and say, 'A miracle will save me.' Perhaps the miracle will not come. And even if a miracle occurs, one's merits are reduced."

The Sages learned that one should not rely on miracles from Jacob. When Jacob returned home after twenty years in Laban's house, he greatly feared meeting his brother Esau. He prayed to God, "I am unworthy of all the kindness and faith that You have shown me" (Gen. 32:11). The Sages explained Jacob's prayer in this way: "I am unworthy due to all the kindness and faith that You have shown me." Your miracles and intervention have detracted from my merits.

We need to examine this concept. What is so wrong with relying on miracles? Does it not show greater faith? And why should miracles come at the expense of one's spiritual accomplishments?

The Function of Skepticism

Skepticism is a natural, healthy trait. Miracles can have a positive moral influence, but they also have a

downside. Reliance on miracles can lead to a weakened or even warped sense of reality.

At certain times in history, God disrupted natural law in order to increase faith and knowledge. However, this intervention in nature was always limited as much as possible, in order that we should not belittle the importance of personal effort and initiative. This is where skepticism fulfills its purpose. Our natural inclination to doubt the occurrence of miracles helps offset these negative side effects, keeping us within the framework of the naturally-ordered world, which is the greatest good that God continually bestows to us. It is preferable that we do not rely on divine intervention, but rather say, 'Perhaps a miracle will not occur.'

Miracles and Nature

Ultimately, both miracles and natural events are the work of God. So how do they differ? A miracle occurs when we are unable to succeed through our own efforts. By its very nature, a miracle indicates humanity's limitations, even helplessness. When miracles occur, we are passive, on the receiving end.

Natural events are also the work of God, but they are achieved through our skill, initiative, and effort. When we are active, we spiritually advance ourselves by virtue of our actions. Our zechuyot (merits) are the result of the positive, ethical deeds that we have performed. We should strive for an active life of giving, not a passive one of receiving. Such an engaged, enterprising life better fulfills God's will — the attainment of the highest level of perfection for His creations.

Jacob 'used up' merits when he required God's intervention to protect him from Laban and Esau. He admitted to God, "I am unworthy due to all the kindness and faith that You have shown me." But Jacob later regained spiritual greatness through his active struggle against the mysterious angel. "For you have struggled with angels and men, and have overcome them" (Gen. 32:29).

(Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 70-72. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. III, pp. 166-168)

Rabbi Meyer Laniado What Does It Mean To Be Benei Yisrael?

Ya'aqob's name change to Yisrael is not really a name change. It is a statement of accomplishment; it is descriptive of the character development that Ya'aqob had achieved. This alternate name is a title

Ya'aqob earned for himself and his children for future generations[1]. We are known as Beit Ya'aqob and Benei Yisrael. Each of these titles represents traits that are crucial for our success.

Ya'aqob abinu grew into as ish tam yosheb ohalim, in contrast to his brother Esav who grew up to be an ish yodea sayid ish sadeh[2]. Ya'aqob grew up in his father's home studying about God and the universe. He was a philosopher and a thinker. He was an idealist. He assumed everyone around him dealt justly in a straightforward manner. Esav, on the other hand, was a man of the field. He knew how to maneuver and strategize. He was a master of entrapment and survival in the wild world.

In his parents' home, Ya'aqob was passive and reactive. The purchase of his bekhora was the seizing of an opportunity, but does not seem to have been planned, rather was a response to the situation. Later, when his father Yisshaq intended to transmit the berakha to Esav, it was Ribqqa, Ya'aqob's mother, who was proactive and planned, while Ya'aqob reluctantly[3] fulfilled his mother's instructions.

The twenty-year journey of Ya'aqob, from when he ran from his parents' home until he returned, taught him how to be proactive, strategize and plan to be able to deal with difficult situations and people. Ya'aqob was forced to flee the comfort and safety of his home and run to a place where he had no one to protect him. There he encountered another ish sadeh, Laban, who took advantage of Ya'aqob on multiple occasions.

Ya'aqob tried to be as clear as possible in specifying his choice for a wife. He stated clearly to Laban that it is Rahel, your daughter, the youngest, that he wants. Laban seemed to agree, but he did so vaguely, leaving room for manipulation. Laban said: "it is better for me to give her to you than to give her to another man[4]." Ya'aqob at first assumed Laban was an honorable man and was responding to his request; he did not think Laban had a completely different idea in mind. Note Laban's words carefully, it is unclear from Laban who 'her' was referring to. Was it referring to Rahel or Leah? Ya'aqob realized after the fact and asked Laban why he tricked him[5]. From then on Ya'aqob learned that to survive with Laban, and those like him, he must be proactive and strategize. His first step was to ensure he was properly compensated for his work. To do so he developed a plan to be paid in sheep, and later when he realized Laban no longer viewed him favorably, planned an escape. If Ya'aqob remained solely as a wholesome boy, an ish tam, unsuspecting of Laban, he would never have been able to head back to the

Promised Land and fulfill the legacy of Abraham, as our Haggada says: veLaban biqesh la'aqor et hakol, Laban sought to completely uproot. There would be no nation Israel if Laban got his way, and kept Ya'aqob from returning to Israel.

When Ya'aqob was on his way to Israel, he remembered his mother Ribqa's words to him that Esav had sought to kill him. Therefore, Ya'aqob, being proactive, sent a diplomatic envoy to investigate whether or not Esav's anger had subsided, and if not, to try and quell his anger. When the messengers returned, they reported that Esav was coming to "greet" Ya'aqob with four hundred men and that the plan of appeasement[6] did not work. Ya'aqob was very scared and pained by this report[7], but he was not immobilized by this fear. He implemented a new set of tactics. He divided his camp, so that if one was attacked the other could flee or rescue the first, then he prayed to God for assistance[8], and finally created another strategy of appeasement through more tributes[9] and language that appealed to Esav's desire for power[10].

It was specifically after these strategies were in place that Ya'aqob encountered the angel of Esav. Ya'aqob wrestled with this angel, completely overpowered him and did not allow the angel to escape. This angel represented Esav, Ya'aqob's greatest fear. Radaq suggested that God sent this angel to give confidence to Ya'aqob, letting Yaaqob know that he can defeat Esav[11].

Ya'aqob's approach to conflict put him on top and in control of the situation. His ability to recognize that strategy had to be utilized when dealing with people and situations such as those of Esav and Laban earned him the title Yisrael. As the angel told Ya'aqob "you struggled with the angel and with men and succeeded."

The way that Ya'aqob dealt with Esav on his way to Israel was masterful and demonstrated his newly learned skill, which earned him the title of Yisrael. It was particularly at this point, the time when Ya'aqob finished preparing his strategy and readying himself to approach Esav face to face, that the angel wrestled with Ya'aqob and entitled him Yisrael. This new title represented that Yaaqob now knew how to successfully 'wrestle' in the arena with the Laban's and Esav's of the world, 'vatukhal' and succeed.

Yisrael, the title earned by Ya'aqob was passed to his family. The children of Ya'aqob are known as both Beit Yaaqob and Benei Yisrael, just as Ya'aqob was known as Ya'aqob and Yisrael. Each of these names represents a trait that we must utilize to be

successful. The primary trait is ish tam, and that is why it was Ya'aqob and not Esav who received the berakha of Abraham to continue the legacy. This trait alone is not enough, as without knowledge of how to deal with an ish sadeh he would get taken advantage of and would not be successful.

Our nation must first and foremost exemplify the traits of the ish tam, being direct and straightforward, and focusing on developing knowledge of God, but we also need to know how to deal with the Laban's and Esav's. The Laban's and Esav's do not engage in a straightforward manner. They are manipulative and scheming. They say one thing but are really meaning something else. They take you down a line of reasoning only to derail your attention, distract you, and take advantage of you.

Yisrael means that we are not afraid of these types; we know how to preempt them and devise strategies to address the issue to ensure our safety, security, and success. We need to be Yisrael and make sure that we are proactive and strategic, whether as individuals or as a nation.

[1] "Your name shall no longer be Yaaqob, but Yisrael, for you have striven with beings divine and human, and have prevailed (Beresheit 32:29)" He is still, even at his last moment of life, called Yaaqob Beresheit 49:33. It is also not a prayer or assurance for the future as was the name change of Hoshea to Yehoshua Bemidbar 13:16 or Abram to Abraham Beresheit 17: 4-5

[2] Beresheit 25:27 and note ולדגיו וירענה

[3] Beresheit 27:11-12

[4] Beresheit 29:19

[5] ולמה רמיתני

[6] Beresheit 32:6 למצא להגיד לאדני, Note his articulation. He gives honor to Esav, the honor Esav sought; the honor the berakha gave to Ya'aqob (Beresheit 27:29). Therefore, Ya'aob addresses Esav as his master and call himself Esav's servant. This is repeated later in his later stratagem. Note the language: עיניך חן בלאדני לעשו, עבדך יעקב, להגיד לאדני, למצא and later מנהגה הוא שלוחה, לאדני לעשונישיתחו ארצה -- ואמרת, לעבדך ליעקב, and this continues with many more examples. Note the entire family prostrates themselves before Esav and offers him a חננה, a tribute.

[7] Beresheit 32:8

[8] "One should not rely on a miracle" (Pesahim 64B). Note that first he acts, and then he prays for God to help him. Ya'aqob is a pragmatic man who first does all he can to ensure the security of his family, then he prays to God.

[9] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tribute>

[10] See footnote 6

[11] Radaq Beresheit 32:25-26 ובל קחל בקעיל ראלמה הז לאה חלשו הז וליפהל לוכי אלו ומע קבאנ רכיפל, ול לוכי אל יכ, ושעמי ארי אלש רחא הרוא ול היהת יכ, הזב ול זמר, רחשה תולע דע ומע קבאנו, ול לוכי דע ומע קבאנו הלילב וילא אב רכיפל הכשחו הליל תלשמנ הרצה יכ, הכשח Also see Shemuel Ibn Hofni Gaon Beresheit 32:24 ותעדל המ רמאנ תאז רחאלו רבכ... ושעמ דחפ בור תא ונעדי רבכ... ראלמה הארנ הללגב רשא הביסה ויפלכ ותוא צמאלו ובל תא

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL
“And Jacob was exceedingly afraid and distressed” (32:8)

The “Duties of the Hearts” (Shaar Bitahon, preface) states: “Among the benefits of Bitahon (Trust in Hashem) is the repose of the mind from worldly worries...And the joy at whatever he encounters... because of his trust that G-d would do to him only that which is the best for him.”

Jacob surely was not deficient in trust in Hashem. Then why did his Bitahon not sustain him, and why was he ‘exceedingly afraid’ when he heard that Esav was coming with 400 men?

The answer is that the words of the “Duties of the Hearts” refer to circumstances that have no immediate or clear peril. We learn here an important law in the subject of Bitahon: Hashem desires that men become greatly afraid of Him when they see an immediate or clear peril confronting them.

The purpose is twofold:

- 1) To gain fear of Him and to recognize our need of Him and to call out to him for support.
- 2) To stir ourselves to immediate and energetic action to rescue the children of the living G-d so that they live and succeed in continuing to serve Him in this life.

The great fear and distress are bestowed upon men as a stimulus to accomplish these two meritorious achievements:

- 1) The outcry to G-d and the sharpened awareness that He alone is the Master of our lives.
- 2) The effort to rescue those (including one’s self) whom He wishes that we rescue.

Quoted from “The Beginning” By R’ Miller ZT’L