

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYISHLACH · 14 KISLEV 5772 · DEC. 10, 2011 · VOL. 19 NO. 8

PARSHA INSIGHTS

TWO CAMPS

"I have been diminished by all the kindness and by all the truth that You have done; ...and now I have become two camps." (32:11)

We live in a world where depression has become as common as table salt. Being depressed is like living in two worlds that never coincide. Worlds that have no common agenda, no point of contact.

It seems that one can never take the wisdom of happiness into the despair of depression.

It's like visiting time at the State Penitentiary, trying to communicate with your wife through a block of glass four inches thick.

Like two castaways on two different islands waving signal flags at each other and the flags having two different meanings.

Like two people who speak different languages trying to get to know each using two dictionaries whose words are translated completely differently.

Like two camps.

A camp of light and a camp of darkness.

"...and now I have become two camps."

Man is a relative animal. We cannot grasp anything in absolute terms. Our whole frame of reference is relative. We only understand what light is because every night it gets dark. If the sun always shone, not only would we have no word for dark, but we would also have no word for light. Our perception of the world is based on this principle.

There will always be a camp of darkness in our lives. A time when we inhabit the midst of difficulty and trial.

When we dwell in that camp of darkness we must remember that the days and nights of our emotions are as connected as day and night itself.

That however black and disconnected we feel, we must remember that the darkest hour is just before dawn.

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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.

ISRAEL Forever

THE STRATEGY OF SURVIVAL

When the Talmudic Sage Rabbi Yanai traveled to Rome as a representative of the Jewish community in Eretz Yisrael, which was under Roman rule, he first carefully reviewed this week's Torah portion. Aware that the relationship between his ancestor — the Patriarch Yaakov — and the ancestor of the Romans — Eisav — was a preview of the relations between their descendants, this Sage studied the strategy thus described in *Parshat Vayishlach*.

When Eisav offered to accompany Yaakov, or at least assign some of his people to escort him, Yaakov diplomatically rejected the offer. From this Rabbi Yanai learned to always make sure that no Romans escorted him on his return. The one time that he had to leave for Rome in such

a hurry that he did not have time to review *Parshat Vayishlach*, he made the mistake of allowing some Romans to accompany him. The *midrash* relates that by the time they reached the Port of Akko, he lost his coat to them.

It has wisely been said that "nations have no ideologies, only interests." The particular interest of the heirs of Eisav throughout history has been to deprive Jews of their possessions and even their lives.

This is as true today as it was in the time of Yaakov and Rabbi Yanai and it is therefore important for those responsible for Israel's foreign affairs to remember the strategy of maintaining proper diplomatic relations while carefully avoiding putting their faith in anyone but G-d to secure Israel forever.

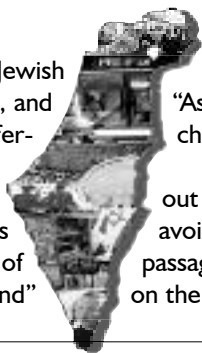
LOVE OF THE LAND

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

MATANA TOVA – THE GOOD LAND

“Three good gifts were presented to the Jewish People by the Holy One, Blessed be He, and all of them were given only through suffering.”

One of the gifts mentioned in this statement by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (*Mesechta Berachot 5a*) is Eretz Yisrael. This is based on the Torah promise of “For the L-rd, your G-d, brings you into a good land”



(*Devarim* 8:7) being preceded by the assurance that “As a man chastens his son so too the L-rd, your G-d, chastens you” (*ibid.* 8:5).

The great Talmudic commentator Maharsha points out that such suffering has always been necessary to avoid the nationalistic conceit described in the following passages which may cause Israel to forget its dependence on the Creator who gave Jews the land.

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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TALMUDigest

BECHOROT 30 - 36

- Is one who is suspect of violating the laws in one area also suspect in regard to other areas
- What is a *chaveir* and how does one achieve this status
- Slaughter and sale of consecrated animals disqualified for sacrifice
- The special status of a *bechor* and a tithed animal
- Who may consume the flesh of a *bechor* with a disqualifying flaw
- The *bechor* who required bloodletting in order to survive
- The penalty for inflicting a flaw on a *bechor*
- The flaw in a *bechor* inflicted by a non-Jew or children
- The flaw inflicted in self-defense
- Which shepherds have credibility as to how a flaw developed
- The credibility of a *kohen* in regard to flaws

THE DOUBLE DECEIVER

A *bechor* (firstborn animal) must be given to a *kohen* who then offers it as a sacrifice. After the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash* the only way in which the *kohen* would be entitled to consume the *bechor* would be if it had a physical flaw which would have disqualified it as a sacrifice. It was strictly forbidden, however, for a *kohen* or anyone else to inflict such a flaw on a consecrated animal such as a *bechor*.

If a *kohen* declared that an Israelite gave him a flawed *bechor* he was believed, because one is not suspected of lying in a case where he is likely to be exposed.

This ruling was challenged on the basis of a story concerning the Sage Rafram of Pumpedita. He gave a *kohen* a

bechor that had no flaw. This *kohen* then inflicted a flaw on the *bechor*. Aware that Rafram was suffering from an illness that affected his eyesight, he brought the *bechor* before him, claiming that he had received it from an Israelite in flawed condition. Rafram made a strenuous effort to open his eyes and realized that this was the very *bechor* that he had given to this *kohen* in perfect condition!

Why did Rafram not decree that henceforth no *kohen* could be believed that he received a flawed *bechor*?

The answer was that this particular *kohen* was a double deceiver. Not only did he transgress by inflicting the flaw, but he also had the *chutzpah* to seek the approval of the very person who gave him the *bechor*.

"If he is so arrogant", concluded the *gemara*, "why should we suspect anyone else of such arrogance?"

• *Bechorot* 36b

WHAT THE Sages SAY

"The lips move in the grave of a Torah scholar whose Torah revelation is quoted in this world."

• *Rabbi Yochanan in the name of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai - Bechorot* 31b

NEW
FEATURE!

@ OHR Profiles of Ohr Somayach Alumni and Students

Joshua Mangerel

Toronto, Ontario

University of Guelph – Biomedical Toxicology

Currently a student in the Mechina Program

What do you call monthly migraines, nightmares, vacuum-sealed test tubes, and a Christian Korean boy? Well, Joshua Mangerel calls them *berachot*. You'll have to get the details from him, but suffice it to say, it all helped him become the "ben Torah" he is today – with Ohr Somayach's guidance.

Joshua was having second thoughts about lab research before he went on his Birthright trip. After the journey, his hidden *tzitzit* (and he himself) were screaming, "Shma Yisrael..." for a new life. His prayers were quickly answered and his Yeshiva birthright began. Now, instead of being the loner learning the laws of *lashon hara*, Joshua's an inspiration to his fellow moral-minded peers, and the Torah and *mitzvot* have stimulated Joshua into his true calling to be a doctor. He says, "G-d is my role model. Being Jewish is not about copying people. It is about living with G-d."

MERCY KILLING

From: Mark

Dear Rabbi,

I was wondering about euthanasia and Jewish law. I know that it's wrong to murder, but this is an act of mercy, and wouldn't euthanasia be like the verse that says to "love the your fellow person as yourself"?

Dear Mark,

You are correct in your assumption that we are commanded to love another person. But, of course, this care and concern for others must be expressed in a manner that is not contrary to Jewish law.

Jewish law forbids euthanasia in all forms, and is considered an act of homicide. The life of a person is not "his". Rather, it belongs to G-d, the One who granted that life. Therefore, only the true Owner of that life may reclaim it at the time and under the circumstances that He wills. Despite one's noble intentions, an act of mercy killing is flagrant intervention into a domain that transcends this world.

One source in the Torah for this prohibition is found in the Book of Genesis (9:5) in a verse relating to murder:

"But the blood of your lives [spilled by murder] will I require [accountability from the murderer]...from the hand of man, *from the hand of a person's brother*, will I require [punishment for taking] the life of man."

The additional phrase "from the hand of a person's brother", after having already stated "from the hand of man", is redundant. The author of the book *HaKtav v'haKaballah* explains that this verse refers to a prohibition against

euthanasia. Although murder is the opposite of brotherly love, one might think that euthanasia is a permitted expression of brotherly love. This verse declares in no uncertain terms that this particular form of "brotherly love" is in fact equivalent to murder.

This does not mean that one should be lax about relieving the suffering person's pain. Elimination of suffering is a commendable goal. In fact, this may permit even "aggressive" treatment of pain to a degree that is not standard medical practice. For example, heroin-like medications may perhaps be acceptable according to Jewish law, in spite of the risk of addiction. It would have to be legal, however, by civil law.

There are other considerations that are beyond the scope of this column, such as passive/active intervention, prayer for a suffering person's death, and the actual halachic definition, and corresponding treatment, of a dying patient. These and other related topics may be further studied in the sources listed below.

Sources:

- *Commentaries on Genesis 9:5*
- *HaKtav v'haKaballah*
- *Judaism and Healing*, J. David Bleich, Ktav Publishing House
- *Jewish Bio-Ethics*, "The Jewish Attitude Towards Euthanasia", by Fred Posner, Fred Posner and J. David Bleich, Sanhedrin Press
- *Jewish Ethics and Halacha for Our Time*, "Euthanasia", Basil F. Herring, Ktav Publishing
- *Practical Medical Halacha*, "Euthanasia", Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists, Feldheim Publishing
- *Medical Halacha for Everyone*, "Euthanasia or Mercy Killing", Abraham S. Abraham, Feldheim Publishing

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HOLD THAT RECORDER!

Question: When I go to hear a public lecture I am in the habit of taking along a device to record the lecture and so I can listen to it again at home. Is there a need for me to request permission from the lecturer?

Answer: There is a basic principle in human affairs that when someone says something to another person he is not necessarily interested in having that information shared by others. This is why our Talmudic Sages ruled (*Mesechta Yoma 4b* and cited as halacha by Magen Avraham in *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 156*) that it is forbidden for one to relay to others what he has heard from an individual unless that person grants him permission to do so.

Just as there may be reasons unknown to the listener for the speaker's desire for confidentiality in the above-men-

tioned case of individuals, there is reason to assume that a lecturer addressing a particular audience may also object to having his statements heard by those outside of that audience. There have been many instances where a remark which was "politically correct" for one audience reached outsiders through a recording and was the catalyst for ugly recriminations.

An additional factor to consider is that many professional lecturers have an arrangement for marketing the tapes of their lectures and view the taping by individuals as an infringement on their enterprise.

In conclusion, come early to the lecture and take the pains of asking the lecturer or his escort for permission to do the recording.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

THE UNBORN SHIDDUCH

A man seeking a shidduch visited Rav Chaim Kanievsky, *shlita*, seeking advice and a *beracha*. He was one of the many people who visit with the Torah giant during the afternoon hours. The man, in his 30s, visited the rabbi about two months ago. The teary-eyed man explained he could not find a shidduch and asked Rav Kanievsky for a *beracha*. The rabbi probed the man's details somewhat and reportedly responded, "Your *zivug* hasn't been born, *beracha v'hatzlacha*", leaving the man in tears, apparently despondent

over hearing these words.

The man recently returned to the great rabbi, this time with a smile on his face, announcing "I am engaged". Those present were somewhat surprised, wondering how he accomplished this in the two months after hearing the rabbi's previous words. The happy groom explained that his bride-to-be is a convert who converted a month earlier, thus explaining the great rabbi's words "your *zivug* has not been born".

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