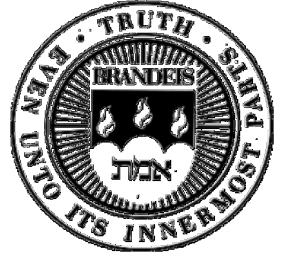




תורת אמת



A Weekly Brandeis Orthodox Organization Publication

18 Kislev 5770 / 5 December 2009 Vol. XI Issue 14

PARSHAT VAYISHLACH

Candle-lighting: 3:54 pm
Shacharit: 9 am
Sof Kriat Shema: 9:17 am
Sof Zman Tefilla: 10:03 am
Mincha 3:40 pm
Shkia: 4:12 pm
Motzei Shabbat: 4:59 pm

Parsha in a Box

- Yaakov prepares to meet Esav
- Yaakov wrestles with a "man," and is given a new name, Yisrael
- Yaakov and Esav have an intense meeting, Esav wants to continue to travel with Yaakov but they eventually separate
- The family travels to Shechem and Dina is taken by Shechem son of Chamor
- Shimon and Levi take matters into their own hands
- Yaakov goes to *Beth-el* and builds an altar for Hashem
- Hashem reaffirms His promise to Yaakov
- Rachel gives birth to Binyamin and dies and is buried in Beit Lechem
- A list of Yaakov's sons
- Yitzchak dies
- The descendents of Esav

Song of Angels

By Rabbi Kaplowitz

Parshat Vayishlach contains the story of Ya'akov *avinu's* wrestling match with the angel. After struggling all night, the angel says to Ya'akov: "let me go, for dawn is breaking." Ya'akov, of course, demands that the angel/man give him a *bracha* first. It is at this point that Ya'akov is given the additional name of Yisrael.

In his commentary to this episode Rashi opens the door to a fascinating tradition found in the Midrashic literature. Rashi explains that the angel asks to go when he sees dawn is breaking because "I must say praises at day." This is based on the *Gemara Chulin* 91b. There we find the following elaboration on the story:

And he said: "Let me go, for the day breaketh." [Jacob] said to him, "Are you a thief or a rogue that you are afraid of the morning?" He replied: "I am an angel, and from the day that I was created my time to sing praises [to the Lord] had not come until now."

According to the *Gemara*, the angel is only to sing praises to Hashem at designated times. This angel's time came at the exact moment of his struggle with Ya'akov. The Midrash Rabbah builds on this exposition of the *pesukim* and asserts that "a celestial company (group of angels) never repeats [G-d's] praises. R. Helbo said: The Holy One, blessed be He, creates a new company of angels every day, and they utter song before Him and then depart [evermore]." In other words, the praise of G-d sung by the angels is a new, unprecedented praise. Each day a new group of angels is created in order to sing unique praise to G-d! With this in mind, I would like to pose two questions. Is human prayer meant to emulate angelic prayer? Are we also supposed to find a new praise for Hashem

(Rabbi Kaplowitz continued on page 4)

Call the Eruv Hotline

By Zahvi Glasenberg '11

(I'd like to extend *hakarot hatov* to my teacher Rav Yehudah Cooperman, founder and dean of Michlalah College for Women in Yerushalayim, who first introduced me to me the passage in the Meshech Chochma discussed below.)

There is much debate among Chazal whether the *Avot* kept the *mitzvot*, and if so, to what extent they kept them. We see one example of the attribution of *mitzvah* observance to the *Avot* in this week's *parsha* with regard to Yaakov *Avinu*. We read that Yaakov comes to the city of *Shechem*, "*vayichan et pnei hahar*", and he encamped before the city (33:18). The *midrash Bereishit Rabba* says this last phrase indicates that Yaakov made his camp in front of the city in order to secure *Shevita* within 2000 cubits of the city, which according to some authorities would allow Yaakov to walk to and through the city on *Shabbat*. It seems here that Yaakov performed *Eruv Techumim*, a *mitzvah d'rabanan*.

We also hear of another of the *Avot*, Avraham, who kept *mitzvot d'rabanan*. The *gemara in masechet Yoma* (28b) goes as far as to specify that Avraham kept the *mitzvah* of *Eruv Tavshilin*. This association made by Chazal between *Eruv* and our *Avot* cannot be coincidental. The Meshech Chochma, Rav Meir Simcha HaCohen miDvinsk in his comments on *parshat VaYishlach* brings the connection between this *mitzvah* and the mission of the *Avot* to light.

Let's start with *Eruv Tavshilin*. Although cooking on *Yom Tov* is permitted if the cooking is being done for that day, cooking on *Yom Tov* for the next day is prohibited, regardless of whether the next day is a weekday or *Shabbos*. If the next day is *Shabbat*, we run into the problem of how to have prepared food for *Shabbos*. Biblically, in fact, it is permitted to cook during the day of *Yom Tov* for *Shabbat*, because, according to Rava, you never know how much food you will need on *Yom Tov* as there is always the possibility that unexpected guests will arrive. Despite this, both Rabbah and Rav Chisdah forbid cooking on *Yom Tov* for *Shabbat* unless one performs, on *Erev Yom Tov*, this special ceremony called "*Eruv*

(Zahvi Glasenberg continued on page 3)

**We'll Miss You All
Over Winter Break!**

The Perils of Youth

By Avi Snyder '13

One of my favorite songs is Billy Joel's "Angry Young Man." The song describes the zealotry, extremism, and passion that often overtakes young people. Although the older and wiser are often moderate, judicious, and thoughtful, the young are prone to impulsiveness, extremism, and unbridled passion.

This clash between the zealotry and passion of youth and the moderation and thoughtfulness of old age comes into full display in *Parshat Vayishlach*. In the *Parsha*, it is the voices of youthful zealotry which ultimately win, leading to violent and disastrous consequences.

After the rape of Dinah by Shechem, the prince of a local tribe, Shechem's father, Hamor, attempts to strike a deal with Yaakov in order to prevent a conflict from arising between the two men's tribes. Hamor approaches Yaakov, saying, "My son, Shechem, longs for your daughter. Please give her to him in marriage. Inter-marry with us... You will dwell among us, and the land will be open before you."

Hamor, the wise old leader of the local tribe attempts to use his son's irresponsible rape of Dinah, the daughter of a rival tribe's leader, in order to make peace with Yaakov and his clan. Yet, Hamor is not allowed to continue his negotiation with Yaakov as he wishes. His son, Shechem, interrupts and impulsively says, "Do me this favor, and I will do whatever you tell me. Ask of me a bride-price ever so high, as well as gifts, and I will pay what you tell me; only give me the girl for a wife." Where Hamor seeks to make a stable and lasting peace between the tribes in the region, Shechem is only concerned with gaining Dinah as a wife. He seems to be willing to sacrifice his entire fortune, presumably at the expense of his people, in order to fulfill his lust for Dinah.

This contrast between the judiciousness of old age and youthful passion is equally on display on Yaakov's side of the conflict.

When Yaakov hears that his daughter has been raped, we are told that he "kept silent" until his sons arrived home. Yaakov does not react to this offense against his daughter's honor until he can take counsel with the rest of his family. In contrast as soon as Yaakov's sons hear about their sister's rape they became "distressed and very angry." When Yaakov and his sons engage in negotiations with Hamor and Shechem over the fate of Dinah, only Yaakov's sons speak. Yaakov is not allowed to get a word in and contribute to the discussion of Dinah's fate. During the negotiations, Yaakov's sons, Shimon and Levi, deceive the city of Shechem into circumcising all their males. Eventually, while the men of the city are recovering, they slaughter all the men of Shechem. This violent and zealous action is strongly condemned by Yaakov, who rebukes his sons, saying, "You have brought trouble on me, making me odious among the inhabitants of the land...if they unite against me and attack me, I and my house will be destroyed!" Yaakov realized that violent revenge against Shechem threatened the safety of his own tribe in the long run. Unlike Shimon and Levi, Yaakov wished to pursue a more diplomatic response to Dinah's rape. Yet, Yaakov's sons did not allow him a voice at the negotiating table. Ultimately, their youthful, passionate anger was able to manifest itself in violence.

The story of the rape of Dinah is certainly not simple. It leaves any close reader with a host of questions. Was Hamor's proposal to Yaakov really so benign? Were Shimon and Levi's violent actions justified? If Yaakov was so opposed to their plan, why did he allow them to dominate the negotiations with Hamor and Shechem?

These questions deserve plenty of discussion, and there are certainly plenty of conflicting answers to all of these questions. However, I do believe that the Torah is attempting to convey a message to us about the dangers of allowing youthful extremism to dominate the discussion about important political, personal, and religious issues. The reason that the rape of Dinah resulted in the violent slaughter of an entire city seems to be directly connected to the fact that Shechem and Yaakov's sons were allowed to dominate the discussion about Dinah's fate. It was Shechem who volunteered to do whatever Yaakov's family

demanding to win Dinah over. And it was Yaakov's sons who used this opportunity to deceive Shechem into crippling his entire city. Hamor and Yaakov wished to pursue a peaceful resolution to a potentially violent conflict; yet, their voices were suppressed.

It is very easy for voices of moderation and thoughtfulness to get drowned out by those who are young, energetic, and zealous. Often, these young voices of passion advocate for just causes. Shimon and Levi's rebuttal to Yaakov's rebuke, "Should our sister be treated like a whore?!" certainly strikes a chord in all those who hold justice and dignity dear. Yet the young and passionate are often characterized by impulsiveness and extremism, and their just rage can often lead to unnecessary violence. Perhaps the Torah hopes to remind us through this story to be wary of allowing the voices of youthful extremism to drown out the voices of judicious moderation, however just their cause may be.

Avi Snyder's thirst for adventure has taken him everywhere, from Karaite shuls to Chasidic tisches.

Ya'akov's Humility

By Felicia Kuperwasser '13

As one of his preparatory steps before a battle with Esav, Yaakov said a brief *tefilah* which the Torah recorded. The Torah does not record words arbitrarily, so what lesson can we learn from Yaakov's *tefilah*?

Yaakov called out to Hashem, the G-d of his fathers, who instructed him to return home in order to receive blessing. "*Katonti*," he continued, from all of the kindnesses and truth that Hashem did for His servant..." (*Bereishit*, 32:10-11)

Rashi interprets this ambiguous word, "*Katonti*," as "diminished;" that Yaakov's merits were diminished by the kindness that Hashem already showed him, and thus, if he sinned, little merit would remain to save him from Esav. Accordingly, Yaakov invoked Avraham's and Yitzchak's merit, since his own was insufficient.

Ramban claims that Rashi's interpretation of *Katonti* does not fit in the *pasuk*: first of all, the Hebrew root "*katan*" refers to size, not quantity (i.e. "diminished"). Moreover, why would Hashem promise Yaakov something which he could then potentially lose from sin?

Rather, Ramban explains, "*katonti*" means that Yaakov, himself, is small; too small to merit the good that Hashem bestowed upon him, and likewise, to withstand any bad decreed against him. Ramban quotes Rabbi Abba in *Breishit Rabba* who explains that Yaakov was unmeritorious of *emet*, or kindness that Hashem promised, but also *chasadim*, kindness not bound by promise. HaEmek Davar adds that *emet* refers to gifts which ensure continuity, such as children. According to Ramban, rather than lose merit, Yaakov simply never had enough for these gifts.

The Sfat Emet adds that Yaakov is small **because** of the *chasadim*. We must approach *chasadim* with humility because we recognize that Hashem grants us these kindnesses out of pure *chesed*, whether or not we are worthy. Pride may cause us to misinterpret Hashem's kindness as payback for our good deeds. Chazal said that Hashem grants *tzadikim chesed* more slowly than He does *rishaim*, because a *tzadik* must first elevate himself to a level when he understands that **both** *emet* and *chesed* are *chasadim*. Nothing is really payback, and Hashem gives regardless of worthiness.

Yaakov's "*katonti*," explains the Sfat Emet, was his expression of this very humility and his fear of excessive pride that earned him these *chasadim*. He worried that his deficiency would hurt future generations, whereas he relied on his forefathers' merit, he asked for *emet*, or lasting kindness that Hashem promised along with this *chesed*.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe adds with regard to Yaakov's name change that the level of Yaakov means that he does not sin, but with struggle, whereas the higher level of Yisrael implies an openness and pride in serving Hashem. The message for us seems clear: Yaakov's level of humility is a commendable feat and ultimately increased his merit. We must remember though, that Yisrael is the higher level; that we should ultimately serve Hashem with complete openness and joy, and know that out of pure *chesed* does Hashem grant us kindness and good.

Felicia has 879 friends on Facebook. Whoah.

M O D A O T

- **Remove Your Belongings from Berlin Chapel** As you should know, Berlin Chapel will be undergoing renovations over winter break. To that end, please remove any personal items you keep in the Chapel, including but not limited to *tallitot*, *siddurim*, last year's *etrog*, your physics textbook from freshman year, and the materials for your *sukkah*. It's possible that if you don't move these items, they will end up locatable anyway, but it would make the entire process easier if you'd take what's

yours. Additionally, we will be looking for volunteers to help clean out the Chapel in shifts beginning November 30th and running through the end of finals. Stay tuned for details!

- **Sponsor Kiddush!** Speak to Mimi Cooper if you, a group of your friends, or even better - your parents would like to sponsor kiddush in honor of someone's birthday or another special occasion. Special requests for food and decor will be considered.
- **Shabbat Shalom!**

We just wanted to thank all of our writers for contributing great articles each week. Thanks to our readers for keeping us inspired.

It's been a pleasure being Torat Emet editors and we know that Michelle and Eitan will do a great job next semester!

Love, Lauren and Ronit

The Perils of Youth

By Iren Klyachko-Kovalis '11

Like all the *parshiyot*, *Parshat Vayishlach* is filled with many valuable lessons and morals. The *parsha* starts out with Jacob traveling to *Canaan* to meet with Esav and then wrestling with an angel. We then learn about Chamor raping Dina, and Shimon and Levy massacring the men of Shechem. The *parsha* then ends with Rivka passing away, and G-d giving Jacob an additional name, *Israel*. So many sad events occur throughout *Vayishlach*, but it still can teach us a very positive and powerful message.

While Jacob is traveling back to *Canaan*, Esav organizes an army to kill Jacob. When Jacob finds out about it, he says, "Save me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esav." The Torah states "hand of my brother" and "hand of Esav." We know that Jacob only had one brother, so why the repetition? Rabbi Piliskin explains that this repetition is needed to teach us that when a brother turns into an enemy, he is a much more dangerous enemy than a stranger would be. *Tosafot* has a similar understanding of this: just as a one-time beloved friend makes the worst enemy, so too when two enemies become friends it makes the strongest friendship.

There is a very valuable lesson in this repetition that we can carry into our own lives. Whenever a challenge arises, whether in academics or in our personal lives, the easiest thing to do is to ignore it and avoid it. It is often very difficult to deal with the issue and it takes a lot of time to resolve the problem. *Vayishlach* teaches us that while it is true that the worst enemies are those that used to be very close friends, it is also true that the strongest friends are those that used to be enemies. When one overcomes the most difficult situation, it is one of the most rewarding experiences. Whether it is getting an A in the class that one worked the hardest for, or taking the first step and trying to make a friendship that is very difficult work, at the end those will be the best friendships and the best classes.

Iren has a great selection of headbands.

(Zahvi Glasenberg continued from page 1)

Tavshilin". Avraham invited many guests in order to teach them and bring them towards Hashem, spreading the ideals of *tzedek u'mishpat*. According to the Meschech Chochma, this was a risky endeavor, as Avraham's "open invitation" had the potential to bring many foreign influences, some of which may not have been appropriate or positive, into his home.

Yaakov, on the other hand, performed the *mitzvah of Eruv Techumim*; according to Chazal, he understood that the *kedusha* of *Shabbat* warrants boundaries that must be created in order to maintain the *kedusha*. Yaakov, in contrast to Avraham, set boundaries, understanding that the *kedusha* and integrity of Bnei Yisrael is very dependent on limits and a certain degree of separation.

We see two very different ways of living a life of Torah in Avraham and Yaakov. On one hand, we see Avraham, paradigm of *chesed*, who not only had an "open tent" but who went out of his way to reach out to others and to spread love and knowledge of Hashem to the world. In Yaakov, however, we see almost a divergence from the way of his grandfather, and instead, Yaakov almost closes up his family from the outside. We see that even after there was reconciliation between his camp and that of his brother, Yaakov chose to keep his separate way and not travel with Esav. The Bais HaLevi writes that this encounter is a representation of the dangers that Yaakov's descendants would experience in *galut*: While it would begin with physical danger, Bnei Yisrael would then be under pressure to accept the invitation of "brotherhood" from the people around them, at the risk of compromising not only their uniqueness but their adherence to *halacha*.

In *parshat VaYeitzei*, Hashem blesses Yaakov that he will spread out in all directions ("*u'faratzta yama v'kedma...*"). If we follow Yaakov's lead of setting boundaries for ourselves so that we remain an *am kadosh*, Hashem will grant us good "without limit." While it is a challenge to maintain the balance between the lifestyles of Avraham and Yaakov, it is one that we have been blessed with resources to handle. As we sing each *Shabbos* in the *zemer* of *Mah Yedidut*, "*nachalat Ya'akov yirash, b'li mitzarim nachalah...*"; our inheritance is without borders. May this idea serve as both a reminder and a comfort to us as we strive to walk in the ways of Avraham and Yaakov.

Insert Canada joke here.

Who Really Names Us?

By Aviva Zadoff '10

One of the many events that occur in this *parsha* is Hashem changing the name of Ya'akov to Yisrael. Although the angel that Ya'akov meets earlier in *perek* 32 tells him his name will be changed to Yisrael, it is Hashem who performs the actual name change ceremony in *perek* 35. Hashem comes to Ya'akov and explains to him that he will have a new name which will be Yisrael. But when Ya'akov is given the new name of Yisrael, he is told that the old name of Ya'akov will still be used. Rabbenu Bachaya explains that the use of names in the future will depend on the context in which Ya'akov is being addressed. When Ya'akov is being talked about concerning a mundane issue or situation he is addressed as Ya'akov. When Ya'akov is being talked about in terms of his spiritual or patriarchic role he is referred to as Yisrael.

This experience is similar to when Avram was given a new name by Hashem and from that point is referred to as Avraham. The major difference though between these two instances is that after the point of re-naming Avraham he was never called by his old name again. Further than that, it says in *gemara Brachot Daf* 13a that anyone who refers to Avraham by his old name Avram is violating a negative commandment. It is interesting to try to understand why in one case the name change is so permanent while in the other case the names go back and forth.

Rav Moshe Feinstein explains that the difference in these two name changes is in how each of these men is told by Hashem of their name change. When Hashem approaches Ya'akov to change his name He starts the encounter by saying "your name is Ya'akov..." (35: 10), signifying that Ya'akov will keep his name with him even after this experience. Rav Feinstein continues that this beginning is clearly stating that that name Ya'akov has significance and will remain a part of his life. This doesn't happen with Avraham; his old name gets left behind completely. When Hashem approaches Avram there is a clear break being made between what has passed and what is to come.

The Or HaChayim has an interesting understanding as to the significance of a person's name and the name changes. He states that the name of someone signifies the soul that Hashem puts in a person. There is a connection between the name and the inherent nature and soul of a person. With this in mind the Or HaChayim understands that when Ya'akov was being renamed, Hashem was adding a name and adding to the soul of the person. In this action of adding the name Yisrael, Hashem was in a way building on the soul that was already there. With Avraham it was a different situation. Hashem was almost replacing the soul of Avram, there was a significant change that was occurring within Avraham in the changing of his name. But at the same time, Avraham's new name was being built upon his existing name, the old Avram was still there, but this was now a new and improved man. These two different name changing experiences can teach us about the experiences of each man and what Hashem thought was necessary for these two men at that stage of their life.

In the case of Ya'akov, the name changing event comes right after a lot has happened to Yaakov. Ya'akov has been through some trying times in the recent events. We just heard of his experience of running away from his home and having to live in Lavan's house and now coming back from that experience a stronger and more devoted man. Most recently, Ya'akov has just gone through the experience of losing his mother. In fact, Rashi says that Hashem visited Ya'akov now as a consolation visit of him losing his mother. Ya'akov has been tested in life both spiritually and physically and now Hashem is signifying the growth Ya'akov has made and the new man he has become. While understanding that Ya'akov is still at heart the same man he has always been, there must also be recognition of the growth and change Ya'akov has undergone.

Happy birthday Aviva!

As we learn every year around *Yom Kippur*, to forgive is holy. In *Vayishlach*, we see that Esav has no notion of the importance of forgiveness. He holds his grudge in order to feel powerful.

Yaakov extends many offerings of peace, but Esav wants none of them. Yaakov's messengers come back with the warning that Esav is still full of wickedness, even after Yaakov extends a humble message asking for pardon.

Yaakov then prepares for battle, anticipating Esav's army. However, when Esav sees Yaakov, he runs towards him and apparently kisses him. The word וישיקו, which means "and kissed him," has dots over every letter. This happens nine other times in the Torah, and each time indicates a discrepancy between its literal meaning and the intent behind it. This suggests that it was not a sincere kiss, but, more likely, Esav intended to bite Yaakov's neck, but was unable to do so. Some commentators suggest that Yaakov's neck was hardened so that the bite became like a kiss. The dots over the letters appear to be more like quotations (which indicate the insincerity of the word).

If this is the case, then all actions after this become parts of an act, rather than heartfelt actions. Esav must have realized that Yaakov must be an extremely powerful person, even if he does not recognize Hashem's hand in it. It is perhaps more out a desire to protect himself and his family, a decision made out of fear, rather than one made out of love and respect, as Yaakov's actions are. Even though we see what seems to be a major change of heart on Esav's part, it is indeed possible that he only acted the way that he did out of fear, and did not genuinely forgive Yaakov.

Joan's real name is Joanifer.

(Rabbi Kaplowitz continued from page 1)

each day when we daven?

Why did this particular angel's time to sing praise to G-d would come directly after the wrestling match with Ya'akov?

I believe that a valuable lesson is to be learned from the fact that this angel's time to praise Hashem comes immediately after the wrestling match with Ya'akov. It is clear that the praise of Hashem that is uttered is a direct outflow of our life experiences. The angel had no previous opportunity to praise Hashem because the encounter with Ya'akov was his defining moment. Until he went through this episode, he did not have any experience or inspiration to sincerely and effectively praise Hashem. So too, our davening and prayers to Hashem must be a reflection of our life experiences. It is not enough to open a *siddur* and mindlessly read the words. We must find ways to make our prayers – our requests, praises and yearnings be reflective of all that we experience in life.

While we are different from the angels in the fact that we are given multiple opportunities to praise Hashem, we must learn from them as well. Just as the angels can only utter unique and unprecedented praise in their *tefilah*, we must find the means to express new and unique praise in our daily *tefillah* as well. As we go through life and experience the joys, challenges and tribulations that occur, we must find ways to incorporate them all into our *davening* and spiritual lives.

Rabbi Kaplowitz Fun Fact: Rabbi Kaplowitz founded the town of Waltham in 1634.

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