

## Yaakov and Eisav – Chs.25-36

### Pt I: The Voice of Yaakov and The Hands of Eisav עשו והידיים קול יעקב

#### Chapter Summary:

#### Toldot

- 25: The birth of the sons. The sale of the birthright
- 26: Yitzchak's chapter
- 27: The theft of the berakhot
- 28: Yaakov blessed by Yitzchak and flees

#### Vayetze:

- 28: The vision of the ladder
- 29: Yaakov at the well. Working for Lavan for Rachel and Leah
- 30: Rachel's barrenness. Children. Fixing the wage
- 31: Yaakov returns to Israel. Pursued by Lavan.

#### Vayishlach:

- 32: Preparations to meet Eisav. The nighttime combat
- 33: The reunion with Eisav
- 34: The rape of Dina
- 35: Hashem's words to Yaakov. The return to Bet El. The death of Rachel
- 36: The descendants of Eisav

#### Two Questions:

- Why does Yitzchak love Eisav?
- Why does Yitzchak not retract the beracha when he realizes the deception?

#### רמב"ן בראשית פרק כז פסוק לג Ramban, Bereishit 33:7

(לג) בטרם תבא ואברכהו גם ברוך יהיה - אין דרך החרד חרדה גדולה עד מאד וצועק "מי הוא אשר רמני לברך אותו" שישלים צעקתו לאמר מיד "גם ברוך יהיה", אבל היה ראוי שיקללהו, ועוד, כי היה עשו צועק עליו לאמר "ולמה תברכהו עתה אבי", ואיך יאמין עשו כי במרמה היה מתחלה, בראותו כי עתה יברך אותו ברצונו:

והנכון בעיני שהוא לשון הווה, 'יאמר, מי איפוא הוא הצד ציד אשר היה יכול לרמותי שאברכהו, וגם שיהיה ברוך על כל פנים, כי ידעתי כי ברוך הוא. או טעמו וגם ברוך יהיה על כרחי, שאי אפשר לי להעביר הברכה ממנו, כי מאז שברך אותו **ידע ברוח הקדש** שחלה ברכתו עליו:

Before you arrived and I blessed him – this is not the way of a great trembling and cry of 'who deceived me', to conclude the cry by saying 'he shall also be blessed'. On the contrary Yitzchak should have cursed the deceiver. Moreover, when Eisav cried out saying 'and why did you bless him?!', how could he believe that it was truly deception when he sees his father now blessing him?

In my mind Yitzchak is saying, the hunter who was able to deceive me to receive a blessing, he shall also be blessed in any case. Alternatively we can understand Yitzchak to be saying 'I am forced to say he shall also be blessed', for I cannot remove the blessing from him, for as soon as I blessed him I knew with **divine inspiration** that the blessing has fallen on him.

**Rav Kook's Revolution – Purification through Exile, Orot HaMilchama, p14-15**

We were forced to leave the international political stage, although there was an inner desire that we do so until the glorious time when it would be possible to conduct a government without evil or barbarism; this is the era for which we long... Our souls have been sickened by the terrible crimes of governments during evil times.

But now, the time has come; very soon the world will sweeten and we will be able to prepare ourselves, for it will already be possible for us to conduct our government on the foundations of goodness, wisdom, uprightness and clear, divine illumination...

This entire culture, which exalts itself with instruments of falsehood, must, by necessity, be annihilated from the world, and in its place will emerge a kingdom of the sacred and exalted. The light of Israel will appear, to establish the world with peoples of a new spirit.

## The Significance of the Conflict between Nazism and *Am Yisrael*<sup>1</sup>

*Am Yisrael* brought the world a lesson that became the foundation of the morality of western culture. No longer would beauty, strength, ability, or desire perch at the top of the hierarchy of values, as in the Greek and classical western tradition. Rather, the supreme values would be the righteousness, truth, freedom, mercy, and kindness of the Torah. The children of Avraham are modest, merciful, and kind (*Yevamot* 79a). These signs characterize Jews not only towards themselves, but are also recognized by the nations of the world. Nechama Leibowitz cites a letter written by a Roman senator describing the Jews he saw during his visit to *Eretz Yisrael*: "[They are] immersed in reading, teaching, and discussion; a group of cultured people elevated above the people would never be possible." Their laws are "nonsensical and meaningless – such as this law commanding that they rest on the seventh day, and to free a slave who has served them for six years." He writes further: "You will be astonished to know that there is no land like this one for lack of slaves. While our last census counted twenty-three slaves for every free person, in Judea the opposite is the case – there is one slave there for every twenty-three citizens."

Ceasing to work on Shabbat, mercy for slaves, the value of freedom – all of these appeared to Roman eyes as a threat to civilized culture. Over the course of the years, Jewish values seeped into European culture via Christian channels, although at times they were warped along the way. At a later stage in history, some anti-Semitic intellectuals – such as Walter and Chamberlain – even argued that Jewish culture and morality had come to dominate European culture. The fiercest and most important exponent of this view was Nietzsche. He claimed that there is no such thing as absolute morality; rather, there exist two main systems of morality, each representing the interests of a different class. There is the morality of masters, and the morality of slaves. The morality of masters had developed among the ruling classes; it centers around an appreciation for power, strength, beauty, and success. These are the values of one who lives a life of freedom without disturbance by some master. Jewish morality, Nietzsche claimed, is the morality of slaves, the "morality of the weak." In other words, it centers around the obligation of compassion towards the weak, towards those in need of protection. The nature of Jewish morality is such, he argued, because of its source in a weak and persecuted culture, whose moral teachings express its own need for protection and compassion.

According to Nietzsche's analysis, the spread of Jewish morality throughout Europe was simply the result of European weakness and lack of confidence in its own classical values. At the center of his new moral approach, he placed the desire for power – the strongest human existential drive. Nietzsche called for the realization of this drive; he proposed that all human ability and talent should be directed towards the creation of a type of man who would give expression of his independence and strength. In his view, the Jewish morality of kindness and compassion represented suppression – based on self-interest - of power and strength, blocking the full realization of human potential.

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<sup>1</sup> An excerpt from **Faith and the Holocaust**, by Rav Tamir Granot, available at <http://www.vbm-torah.org/shoah.html>

Nietzsche placed a question mark over both faith and morality. Jewish monotheism gives absolute validity to morality – the morality of God. Nietzsche's message was that Jewish morality is not truth, but rather weakness. A weak nation seeks values that protect the weak.

Hitler was familiar with Nietzsche's teachings and took his ideas to their extreme limits. The Third Reich was built upon the philosophy of power and strength that justified everything. Hitler's justice and righteousness flowed from the might of his regime and his army.

Was Nietzsche correct in asserting that a morality of kindness and compassion can exist only amongst a weak society, a weak nation? And beyond Nietzsche, is the nation of Israel righteous, pious, merciful, and kind only because it is weak and lacking in military might?

History presented two diametrically opposed options: the Jewish nation had proven that it was possible to be weak and righteous; the German nation had proven that strength and might – not only as natural qualities, but as values, as national ideals – forge a natural alliance with evil. History has already proven that it is possible to be weak and righteous or strong and evil. However, does the historical playing field also allow for the third option – a nation that is strong and righteous? Can there be existence based on might and mercy simultaneously? Can such a nation survive and make a place for itself in history?