Points to Ponder

Vayishlach 5780

**לָ֥מָּה זֶּ֖ה תִּשְׁאַ֣ל לִשְׁמִ֑י Why are you asking my name (32:30) - Rav Simcha Zissel Broide ztl** highlighted an important message here. Yaakov tries to quantify and classify the Yetzer HaRa in order to beat him. The Yetzer HaRa fights back by trying to be elusive. However, Yaakov teaches us not to give in. In order to beat the Yetzer HaRa we need to know who he is and where and when he is operating. The **Or HaChaim** notes that although Yaakov had seen angels many times, when it came to the Satan, he needed to see him face to face in order to beat him. Milchama with the Satan is a face to face undertaking.

**יֶשׁ־לִ֣י רָ֑ב I have much (33:9)** — It is interesting that Eisav notes that he had “much” while Yaakov notes that he had it “all”. **Rav Nissan Alpert ztl.** pointed out that Eisav uses his hands as his primary means of connecting with the world. When it comes to the hands, you can have much but there is always more to have (similar to *Yadav Rav Lo*). However, one who is B’Shalom, whose interactions with the world rise and fall on Shalom, can have it all. Hence we find that Yaakov comes Shalem to Shechem — complete with everything in mind, body and spirit.

**לָ֣מָּה זֶּ֔ה אֶמְצָא־חֵ֖ן בְּעֵינֵ֥י אֲדֹנִֽי: For what purpose? Let me find favor in my lord’s eyes (33:15)** - Why does the Torah want me to know that Yaakov and Eisav debated the idea of traveling? Why does Yaakov tell him that he will meet Eisav in Seir and then go to a totally different place? **Rav Shmuel Goldin Shlita** suggested that an analysis of the simple storyline shows Eisav’s distrust of Yaakov and his desire to have Yaakov’s small camp assimilated into his. Thus he tried to get Yaakov to stay within his sight. When Yaakov tries to slip out, Eisav tries to put agents into the camp of Yaakov in order to keep Yaakov in his sights. Yaakov tries to keep everyone happy but eventually tries to keep everyone happy — at a distance.

**וַתִּדְבַּ֣ק נַפְשׁ֔וֹ בְּדִינָ֖ה בַּת־יַֽעֲקֹ֑ב  His soul cleaved to Dinah (34:3)** - There are three distinct descriptions of the type of dedication that Shechem describes with Dinah — Deveikus Cheshka, and Cheifetz. **Rav Mattisyahu Solomon Shlita** quotes **Rav Elya Lopian ztl** who notes that the same experience of desire needs to exist with us and the Shechina. If Shechem needed to convince the townspeople to have a Bris and didn’t have the deep-rooted desire to get the job done, he could never have even gotten the attempt out of his mouth. It was only because of his strong feelings that he pushed beyond obvious limitations to see himself get his way. The same needs to be true of our dedication and desire to the will of Hashem and our experience with the Shechina.

**הַֽכְזוֹנָ֕ה יַֽעֲשֶׂ֖ה אֶת־אֲחוֹתֵֽנוּ Are they going to make our sister like a Zonah? (34:31)** - We do not find Yaakov’s answer to them but **Ramban** suggests that it was not that he agreed. Rather, he was upset with them because they engaged in trickery. The people of the city agreed to take the steps to become acceptable and Shimon and Levi changed the rules. However, **Rav Yonasan Sacks Shlita quotes from the Lekach Tov** who disagrees and maintains that Shimon and Levi’s argument defeated Yaakov’s point. In fact, the author of the **Tzror HaMor** goes further — even suggesting that Yaakov was happy or at least content with their reasoning and actions.

**וַתָּ֤מָת דְּבֹרָה֙ מֵינֶ֣קֶת רִבְקָ֔ה And Deborah the nursemaid of Yaakov died (35:8) - Rashi** comments that Yaakov heard that Rivka died at this time as well. If that is true, why doesn’t the Torah tell us THAT? Rashi adds that the Torah hid this detail so that the people would not curse the woman who gave birth to Eisav. **Rav Elya Svei ztl** added that the Torah wanted to teach us that we need to shed tears for an Adam Kasher (See Shabbos 105b). Had the Torah also highlighted the death of Rivka then Yaakov’s tears for Deborah would have been lost within his own mourning for his own mother. Sharing this thought during the Yom Kippur war, Rav Elya added that even when in America, we need to join in the Tzaros of the soldiers in Israel and the Tzaros of the Jews world-wide. But it was not enough to feel FOR the soldiers. Rav Elya encouraged each Yeshiva Talmid to feel like a soldier — not the ones on the battlefield but rather like the ones in the other half of the Elef L’Matteh — those who joined by being the partners who prayed and learned for the safety of others.

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Haftara**: מֵֽחֲמַ֛ס אָחִ֥יךָ יַֽעֲקֹ֖ב תְּכַסְּךָ֣ בוּשָׁ֑ה From the violence of your brother Yaakov you will be covered in embarrassment (Ovadiah 1:10)** - **Rav Alexander Zushia Friedman ztl** explained that this is similar to the situation where a young child comes home and tells his parent about a normally docile classmate who exploded on another friend. The parent realizes that if the docile was driven to act, and act loudly, the other person must have really provoked him. Similarly, Bnei Yaakov are not known for acting in this manner. If WE were provoked to violence, it must be indicative of the environment we found ourselves in.