

## SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

VAYISHLAH

December 6 2014

14 KISLEV 5775

DEDICATIONS: Le'lluy Nishmat Yosef ben Esther

And in memory of Robert Varon  
A life long member who was truly beloved by all  
The Rabbi would remark on how brilliant Mr. Varon was.  
He spoke many languages and was very musical  
His Parents were Morris and Rachel Varon - Founders of the Synagogue  
We extend our condolences to his children Rachel Bloom and Dr. Maurice Varon  
To his siter Pauline Kassimir  
And to the entire extended family

Candle lighting Friday evening 4:10 p.m. Mincha at 4:10

SHABBAT: Perasha class with Rabbi Aharon at 8:30 this week  
Rabbi Dr. Meyer Abittan will be joining us with his family this Shabbat

Shaharit - Hashem Melech at 9:00 AM - Please say Shema at home by 8:40AM  
Kiddush this week sponsored Anna and Rafik Yadgarov in honor of their grandchildren  
- Kiddush before 11:45 Hasot

Please sponsor a Kiddush or Seudah Shelishi or breakfast in memory or in honor of a loved one  
Early Mincha after Kiddush - Amidah after 12:09

Shabbat Morning Children's Program 10:30 - 11:30  
Ages 0-5 - in the Playroom/ Girls Ages 6-12 - In the Upstairs Library / Treats, Games, Stories, Prayers and Fun!

Children's afternoon program with the Bach at the Bach 3:30 PM  
Ladies Class at the Lembergers at 4:30

Return for Arbit at 5:30

Saturday Night December 6<sup>th</sup> Family Movie Night @The Sephardic. Pizza Melaka Malka - Sponsored by Patti & Jack  
At 7:30 .... We will try to coordinate so that we are done at about 9:35 allowing time for parents at the Lido movie to come  
back and pick up their children. We do need some parent volunteers for the night

. And for the Adults ....IS J STREET PRO-ISRAEL & PRO-PEACE? At Lido Beach Synagogue 7:30 PM  
Please join us for a screening of one of this year's most talked about, controversial and provocative films; a documentary  
about the American Jewish Community and its relationship with Israel. Free Admission. \$10 Suggested Donation. PANEL  
DISCUSSION FOLLOWING THE FILM with producer, co-writer, and co-director Ilya Feoktistov

Krav Maga SUNDAY

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

Shaharit Sunday 8:00AM, Mon and Thurs at 6:55, Tues, Weds and Fri at 7:00

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE - Thursday Nights 8:30-9:30 Virtual\* Class facilitated by Rabbi Yosef Colish.  
Practical Laws of Shabbat for Sephardim

SAVE THE DATE: Sisterhood Annual Dinner December 9 honoring Hinda and Robert Mizrahi.  
Please sponsor an ad and make your reservations

GENERAL SYNAGOGUE MEETING For all congregants  
At the Synagogue - New Date - Sunday December 14<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 AM  
Looking forward to 2015 - Plans for the future and transitions

Saturday Night December 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:15 pm ..... Did you know there are over 700,000 amateur radio operators in the United  
States and almost 3 million world-wide! Come learn the secrets of how to operate your own radio to communicate with  
others by transmitting voice, Morse code, digital text and pictures, even live video signals by radio from one ham "station"  
to another, on land and at sea, in the air, and in space. Children and adults of all ages are invited. Pizza and refreshments  
will be served. Presentation by Bob Kraus, facilitated by Rabbi Yosef

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 Israel or something of interest

**Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue,  
 17th Floor, Artistic Frame at 4PM – Please join us!  
 212-289-2100 – Mincha and Arbit – Give us 22  
 minutes and we'll give you the World To Come!**

### Editors Notes

What is man's potential? How high can we reach?  
 Who is on a higher level, a man or an angel?

In our classes during the mornings this week we  
 discussed our forefather Jacob and his relationship  
 with angels.

Last week at the outset of the portion of Vayese,  
 Jacob dreamed about angels moving up and down  
 the ladder suggesting those who accompanied him in  
 the land were leaving him and those who would  
 accompany him in exile at the house of Laban were  
 coming down to join him. And as we close last week's  
 portion, we are told that "angels of G-d met him".  
 Rashi explains that angels of Israel came to greet  
 Jacob to escort him to the land.

This week the portion begins with Jacob uses angels  
 as his messengers when he sends them to his  
 brother Esav. Rashi emphasizes that these are  
 literally angels. We also have the story of Jacob  
 wrestling with an unnamed opponent. Again Rashi  
 comments, "Our Rabbis explained (Gen. Rabbah  
 77:3, 78:3) that this was the prince (the guardian  
 angel) of Esau". At dawn the angel begs to leave.  
 Again Rashi informs us that the angel must return to  
 recite his songs of praise. Jacob refuses to release  
 the angel and demands a blessing. And he ( the  
 angel) said, "Your name shall no longer be called  
 Jacob, but Israel, because you have commanding  
 power with [an angel of] God and with men, and you  
 have prevailed." And finally we are told, "And Jacob  
 named the place Peniel, for [he said,] "I saw an angel  
 face to face, and my soul was saved."

One might imagine from all of this that an angel is on  
 a much higher level when compared with a human  
 being of flesh and blood and physical desires. An  
 angel "lives" in "heaven" and serves Hashem  
 faithfully. An angel is completely spiritual and in  
 essence a perfect being. We on the other hand are  
 far from perfect. If faced with an angel would we not  
 melt from their breath?

We all remember the story that the Talmud tells  
 regarding when Moses went up to Heaven to receive  
 the Torah. The angels protested his presence and  
 opposed that the Torah should be given to man. G-d  
 commanded Moshe to answer the angels. Moshe  
 was afraid they would burn him with their fiery breath,  
 so G-d told Moshe to hold onto the Throne of Glory.

Angels are said to be standing, while people are  
 moving. Angels are one-dimensional: each angel has  
 one specific form of Divine service.

Rabbi Abittan once explained that it's less important  
 where one is on the ladder of life when compared  
 with the direction the person is heading. Frozen in  
 place even at a high level is not nearly as good as  
 someone who rises each day and each year higher  
 and higher.

Only man has the ability to live in this physical and  
 corporeal world and refine and elevate it.

Angels may be able to appreciate the Torah only on a  
 spiritual level. Man on the other hand can appreciate  
 the physical level and elevate it to the spiritual.

Jacob can be Yaakov, but he can also struggle with  
 an angel, defeat him and become Yisrael. Jacob in  
 essence is both man and angel. We see Moses too is  
 called Ish HaElokim. Moses too is somewhat man  
 and angel.

Man has the unique ability through self-control and  
 self-elevation of raising the physical to the spiritual  
 and in reality of rising above an angel and  
 commanding them.

I saw that Rabbi Sholom DovBer once described the  
 feelings he experienced while reciting the daily  
 morning prayers: "When I recite the part of prayer  
 which describes the praise that the angels sing  
 before G- d, I envy them. But when I read the  
 Shema, the praise that the Jew sings before G- d, I  
 wonder: "Where have all the angels gone?"

I thought about it. We say Shema Yisrael. Who is  
 Yisrael. He is me. He is the Jewish people and he is  
 Jacob rising above to the level of angel. If I can  
 perfect me, then my perfection helps to perfect the  
 people and if I become dedicated to helping the  
 people than I too can rise to the level of my father  
 Jacob.

Our potential is endless.

Shabbat Shalom,  
 David Bibi

### Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st 2nd & 3rd Aliyot: It's the year 2205 and Yakov is 97 years old. He sends messengers to greet Eisav and is informed that Eisav is approaching, prepared to do battle. He applies a three pronged strategy in preparation for the confrontation: a) Tefilah - prayer b) diplomacy c) war. Prior to the actual confrontation, Yakov bests Eisav in a spiritual battle with Eisav's Angel, and earns the name "Yisroel." Due to the wound he sustained in the battle, G-d prohibits Yakov and his family from eating the Gid Hanashe - the sciatic nerve. Yakov and Eisav meet after 34 years.

4th Aliya: Yakov and Eisav agree to separate peacefully. Eisav returns to his kingdom of Seir, and Yakov settles outside of the city of Shechem.

5th Aliya: Dina is abducted and raped by Shechem the son of Chamor, and Shimon and Levi devise a strategy for successfully killing the entire male population of Shechem. According to Chazal, Shimon and Levi were 13 years old. Hashem (G-d) instructs Yakov to move to Beth El. Rivka's nurse Devora dies, and Hashem confirms the name Yisroel upon Yakov.

6th & 7th Aliyot: Rachel dies while giving birth to Binyamin and Yakov buries her in Beis Lechem. Following Rachel's death, Reuven switches the bed of Yakov from Bilha's tent to Leah's tent. Although Yitzchak will live another 21 years, the Torah relates his death at the age of 180 (2228). The remainder of Vayishlach lists Eisav's descendants as well as the specific Kings of Seir who ruled prior to King Saul - the first king of Israel. (2882)

This week's Haftorah is the Book of Ovadiah, which is the smallest book of the Prophets - only one chapter. Ovadiah lived during the time of Eliyahu, and the difficult reign of Achav and Ezevel (3043-705 b.c.e.) We were introduced to Ovadiah in the Haftorah of Parshas Vayera when Elisha miraculously helped his widow.

Ovadia's personal commitment and courage in saving 100 prophets from the purges of Ezevel (Jezebel) was rewarded by himself becoming one of the prophets who would prophesies about the demise of evil and the ultimate salvation of the righteous.

The connection to our Parsha is the emphasis on Eisav's eventual demise. Yoseph, who is the positive manifestation of what Eisav could have been, will triumph in eradicating Eisav's evil influence from society. "...the house of Yoseph a flame, and the house of Eisav stubble. They will set them ablaze and consume them..." (1:18-19) Eisav had been given his chance of joining in the creation of the

Jewish nation whose influence over society would redirect destiny. Instead of joining, Eisav challenged Yakov, and attempted to destroy him.

Throughout history, Eisav rejoiced in Israel's misfortune and boasted of his contribution to their pain and distress. Ovadiah's prophecy, portrays the times of Mashiach when justice will manifest itself in the "measure for a measure", of Eisav's destruction. Eisav, who destroyed the Bais Hamikdash and sent Israel into exile, will live to see the in-gathering of the exiled and the rebuilding of the Bais Hamikdash. He will experience the ultimate retribution of witnessing what might have been his own glory and triumph, if only he had chosen to do good, rather than bad.

Ovadiah is chosen to deliver this prophecy because he chose to do good over bad. As a servant to the evil Achav and Ezevel, he could have chosen a life of power and glory while carrying out their evil wishes. Instead, he chose to place himself in mortal danger to save the intended victims of Ezevel. In his capacity as the Navi, Ovadiah says to Eisav, "You have no excuse! Everyone is challenged and everyone must choose." Those who choose evil will be destroyed, and those who choose good will witness Eisav's punishment, and the coming of Mashiach. (1:21)

### EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

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

Ya'akob Abinu is about to meet up with Esav. After crossing his family over the river, he realizes he forgot a small jar. He returns back for the jar and while he is alone he is attacked. Our Sages tell us that he was attacked by the angel that represents Esav. Why did Ya'akob return alone to retrieve a seemingly unimportant jar?

The Arizal is quoted in the book called Shaar Hapesukim on our perashah. He says, "The righteous love the things they own because it is something that Hashem has given them. Since it came from Hashem one should not belittle the object for if the object was not important for him to have, Hashem would not have given it to him. Therefore, Ya'akob returned for even a small jar, for if he didn't retrieve it, it would seem as if he didn't want it. Anything that comes from up High, one must retrieve it."

Obviously the sadik has a very different viewpoint of objects than most people commonly have. The small objects are Heaven-sent!

The Steipler Gaon was very careful not to waste anything. When building his sukkah, he would hammer out nails that were bent from previous use. His son once asked, "Is it really worth the time

straightening out bent nails, rather than taking new ones? After all, wouldn't your time be better spent studying Torah?"

"Just as any other misvah requires time and effort to fulfill," the Rav answered, "the misvah of not being wasteful also requires time and effort. It is worth the time to show our appreciation for what has been given to us." Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

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

When Ya'akob was traveling alone at night, the angel of Esav appeared to him like a man and began struggling with him the entire night, until the angel said he couldn't conquer Ya'akob. The angel of Esav represents the evil side, the yeser hara; why did he only choose Ya'akob to battle and not Abraham or Yitzhak?

The answer is that Abraham represents hesed, kindness, and Yitzhak represents abodah, which is prayer, whereas Ya'akob represents Torah study. The yeser hara is not as threatened by deeds of kindness or by prayer as he is by Torah study. When we pray and do hesed, of course we are doing great things, but we can't vanquish the evil inclination that way. He is still lurking, waiting for an opportunity to ensnare us. However, when we learn Torah, we become clear as to our purpose in life and we reorganize our priorities. The yeser hara realizes we will see through his wily ways and feels threatened and therefore doesn't want us to go to that class or pick up that book to learn. That's why the angel of Esav attacked Ya'akob, the patriarch who symbolizes Torah study! But just as Ya'akob was not overpowered, so too do we have the ability to overcome the yeser hara and to grow in Torah. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

### **RABBI ELI MANSOUR**

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[MishnaBerura.com](http://MishnaBerura.com), [LearnTorah.com](http://LearnTorah.com)  
The Reason Why Sadikim Love Thier Money**

Parashat Vayishlah tells the famous story of Yaakob's fight against an angel that confronted him and attacked him as he made his way to meet his brother Esav. The incident itself is fascinating and requires in-depth analysis, but the background to this episode is also significant and worthy of study. The Torah tells that as Yaakob traveled, he and his family came upon the Yabok river, and Yaakob moved his family and all his belongings across the river. But then, for some reason, he was left alone on the opposite side. It was there, as Yaakob stood alone,

that he was unexpectedly assaulted by the mysterious man who turned out to be an angel.

What was Yaakob doing alone on the other side of the river? After he brought over his wives, children, servants and belongings, why didn't he join them on the other side and continue traveling?

The Midrash explains that Yaakob went back across the river to retrieve "Pachim Ketanim" – "small jugs" – that he had forgotten to bring over. He took the time to cross the river, and stood all alone in the dark of night, in order that he would not lose a number of small items that were left on the other side. The Sages of the Midrash make an astonishing comment on the basis of this incident: "The Sadikim – their money is as dear to them as their souls." The effort that Yaakob exerted to retrieve small, inexpensive possessions reflects the importance to which he – and Sadikim in general – afford their material goods.

This statement appears to directly contradict the most elementary notions of Torah values and piety. We are always taught that the more righteous a person is, the less interest he has in material possessions, as he instead invests his time, thought and energy into the pursuit of spiritual excellence. The Sadik is the one who sacrifices a life of material comforts for spiritual greatness. What, then, do the Sages mean when they say about the Sadikim, "Their money is as dear to them as their souls"?

The story is told of an indignant man who owned next to nothing. He could not even afford a cup for Netilat Yadayim, and it troubled him that he could not fulfill this Misva. One night, before he went to sleep, he prayed to God with all his heart to provide him with a washing cup. Sure enough, the next morning, he found a washing cup on the floor near his bed, with a note that read, "Here is the cup you requested. Sincerely, God."

The man was exuberant. Besides receiving something that he desperately wished for, he had also received a special, personal gift directly from God. He cherished that washing cup from that day on, realizing that it was a personal gift from the Almighty.

Years later, the man's fortunes were reversed, and he became wealthy. He was finally able to move into a large house, and he hired movers to transport his belongings to his new residence. As he unpacked, he realized that his beloved washing cup was missing. He called the movers, and it turned out that they didn't bother bringing the washing cup.

"It's just an old, plastic cup, and we figured you didn't need it anymore," he was told.

Of course, the man was dismayed. It may have been just a simple plastic cup, but it meant the world to him. It was a clear expression of God's unique love for him, and he wouldn't want to give it up for anything in the world.

This is why the Sadikim love their money. They view everything they have, even the smallest items in their possession, as direct gifts from God. When one approaches his material assets from this perspective, he exercises extreme care not to waste or squander even a penny. Every morsel of food and every small gadget in his home was given to him by God Himself as an expression of love, affection and concern for his needs. How can he give it up? He wants to hold onto it forever!

And when we view our possessions from this perspective, we also immediately recognize that everything we have is given to us for a spiritual purpose. If we would wake up in the morning and find some money on the ground with a note by God telling us He gave it to us, we would, without doubt, donate all of it to charity. After all, if God gave it to us, it must be for a lofty purpose. So why are the rest of our possessions any different? They, too, are given to us as a personal gift from Hashem, and we must therefore assume that they have been given to us for a lofty purpose, to serve God. The basketball net in our driveway is to help our children grow and have an outlet to enable them to learn. The treadmill in the basement is there so we can be healthy and able to serve Hashem. Our fancy chinaware is in our cabinets to give honor to Shabbat and the holidays. The fine clothing in our closets serves to give us a dignified appearance and thereby bring honor to God, the Torah and the Jewish people.

This is why Yaakov afforded such importance to the "Pachim Ketanim." He understood that if God gave him these jugs, then they must serve some purpose, and he therefore was not prepared to let them go.

Everything we have has been given to us for a purpose. Our challenge is to determine that purpose, and ensure to direct all our material assets towards that goal.

### **Rabbi Wein THE GIFT OF GENERATIONS**

The Lord blessed me last week with the birth of a great-grandson. As I began writing this article I almost slipped and wrote "another" great-grandson. I

have been blessed many times over with becoming a great-grandfather. But I caught myself and did not write "another" great-grandchild because the birth of every great-grandchild is unique and special. I come from a generation where I and my peers barely knew grandparents and no one ever imagined seeing a great-grandparent.

The fact that great-grandparenthood is almost taken for granted in our current society is really one of the momentous miracles of our time. Much of this achievement has to do with the great strides in medical care and resultant increases in longevity occasioned by these medical advances. But there is also an element of spiritual mystery, which plays a role in the likelihood of seeing a fourth generation in one's family.

As the bonds of societal cohesion continue to loosen in our time, it has become ever more imperative that family relationships and influences be strengthened. The family is the last and strongest fortress for developing character, morals, tradition and proper role models for children and later generations.

A child who sees and interacts with grandparents and great-grandparents can gain a greater perspective on life and its events than what the child would gain on its own without the input of generations. The Torah implies that Menasheh and Ephrayim became equal members of the tribes of Israel due to the fact that they were to a great extent raised and influenced by their grandfather Yaakov.

The Western world today suffers from a breakdown of family bonds and generational relationships. Declining rates of marriage, increased incidence of divorce and single parenting, personal mobility and the anonymity afforded by current urban life, all have contributed to vexing societal problems. In all relationships within a family, a steadying hand and role model must be present.

This necessary ingredient for family stability can and should be provided by older generations present in that family. Grandparents should not interfere in the arrangements and marriages of their children's children. That is the responsibility of the actual parents who are raising those grandchildren.

Nevertheless, grandparents, by their presence, provide an example and can make great contributions to the welfare and wisdom of their later generations. It is difficult to assess what the true impact of previous generations have upon their descendants. But, I feel that it is abundantly clear that

there is such an impact and that it can be a most positive one.

How to create such an impact requires a complex and delicate blend of unconditional love, sound advice, patience, and wise silence and abiding faith in the ability of future generations to right the ship no matter how unlikely it presently looks.

All of these ingredients for family stability and Jewish continuity can be supplied by grandparents and great-grandparents. So, the birth of a grandchild or a great-grandchild is not only to be treated as a moment of joy and personal accomplishment but it is also to be seen as an opportunity and a challenge to yet play a significant role, even at an advanced age, in the structure and traditions of Jewish family life.

The Torah makes special mention of great-grandfatherhood when it remarks that the grandchildren of Joseph were raised on the knees of Yaakov. One of the many terrible consequences of the Holocaust has been the disruption in the chain of generations.

Knowing the past generations is somehow a crucial and necessary component for Jewish survival. The same pending disaster is true for the wave of assimilation and intermarriage savaging Western Jewish society today. My old wise teacher in the yeshiva long ago would say to us: "Boys, if your grandparents and your grandchildren are both proud of you, then you are probably alright."

I may not have truly appreciated the wisdom of his remarks when I was in my adolescent years but I certainly understand them well now. Part of the turmoil in Jewish life today, especially here in Israel, lies in the fact that the new generation senses, that somehow their forbearers took a wrong turn somewhere. Now they are looking for a way to get back to the correct road in Jewish life. Generations are a great challenge in Jewish life. They are certainly a blessing. But like all blessings, generations require care and nurturing, appreciation and watchful guarding

### **Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks**

From beginning to end, Genesis 34 tells a terrifying story. Dina, Jacob's daughter – the only Jewish daughter mentioned in the entire patriarchal narratives – leaves the safety of home to go out to "look at the daughters of the land." She is raped and abducted by a local prince, Shechem, son of the king of the town known as Shechem.

Jacob learns of this fact but does nothing until his sons return. Shimon and Levi, Dina's brothers, immediately realise that they must act to rescue her. It is an almost impossible assignment. The hostage-taker is no ordinary individual. As the son of the king, he cannot be confronted directly. The king is unlikely to order his son to release her. The other townspeople, if challenged, will come to the prince's defence. It is Shimon and Levi against the town: two against many. Even were all of Jacob's sons to be enlisted, they would still be outnumbered.

Shimon and Levi therefore decide on a ruse. They agree to let Dina marry the prince but they make one condition. The members of the town must all be circumcised. They, seeing long term advantages to an alliance with this neighbouring tribe, agree. The men of the town are weakened by the operation, and the pain is most acute on the third day. That day, Shimon and Levi enter the town and kill the entire male population. They rescue Dina and bring her home. The other brothers then plunder the town.

Jacob is horrified. "You have made me odious to the people of the land," he says. What then were we supposed to do, ask the two brothers? "Should we have left our sister to be treated like a prostitute?" With that rhetorical question, the episode ends and the narrative moves elsewhere. But Jacob's horror at the action of his sons does not end there. He returns to it on his deathbed, and in effect curses them:

"Simeon and Levi are brothers—  
their swords are weapons of violence.  
Let me not enter their council,  
let me not join their assembly,  
for they have killed men in their anger  
and hamstringed oxen as they pleased.  
Cursed be their anger, so fierce,  
and their fury, so cruel!  
I will scatter them in Jacob  
and disperse them in Israel. (Gen. 49: 5-7)

This is an extraordinary passage. It seems to lack any kind of moral message. No one comes out of it well. Shechem, the prince, would seem to be the chief villain. It was he who abducted and raped Dina in the first place. Hamor, his father, fails to reprimand him or order Dina's release. Shimon and Levi are guilty of a horrendous act of violence. The other brothers engage in looting the town.[1] Jacob seems passive throughout. He neither acts nor instructs his sons on how to act. Even Dina herself seems at best to have been guilty of carelessness in going out into the town in the first place, in what was clearly a dangerous neighbourhood – recall that both Abraham and Isaac, her grandfather and great grandfather,

had feared for their own lives because of the lawlessness of the times.[2]

Who was in the right and who in the wrong are left conspicuously undecided in the text. Jacob condemns his sons. But his sons reject the criticism.

The debate continued and was taken up by two of the greatest rabbis in the Middle Ages. Maimonides takes the side of Shimon and Levi. They were justified in what they did, he says. The other members of the town saw what Shechem had done, knew that he was guilty of a crime, and yet neither brought him to court nor rescued the girl. They were therefore accomplices in his guilt. What Shechem had done was a capital crime, and by sheltering him the townspeople were implicated.[3] This is, incidentally, a fascinating ruling since it suggests that for Maimonides the rule that "all Israel are responsible for one another" is not restricted to Israel. It applies to all societies. As Isaac Arama was to write in the fifteenth century, any crime known about and allowed to continue ceases to be an offence of individuals only and becomes a sin of the community as a whole.[4]

Nahmanides disagrees.[5] The principle of collective responsibility does not, in his view, apply to non-Jewish societies. The Noahide covenant requires every society to set up courts of law, but it does not imply that a failure to prosecute a wrongdoer involves all members of the society in a capital crime.

The debate continues today among Bible scholars. Two in particular subject the story to close literary analysis: Meir Sternberg in his *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*[6] and Rabbi Elhanan Samet in his studies on the parsha.[7] They too arrive at conflicting conclusions. Sternberg argues that the text is critical of Jacob for both his inaction and his criticism of his sons for acting. Samet sees the chief culprits as Shechem and Hamor.

Both point out, however, the remarkable fact that the text deliberately deepens the moral ambiguity by refusing to portray even the apparent villains in an unduly negative light. Consider the chief wrongdoer, the young prince Shechem. The text tells us that "His heart was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob; he loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her. And Shechem said to his father Hamor, 'Get me this girl as my wife.'" Compare this with the description of Amnon, son of King David, who rapes his half sister Tamar. That story too is a tale of bloody revenge. But the text says about Amnon that after raping Tamar, he "hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her. Amnon said to her,

'Get up and get out!'" (2 Samuel 13: 15). Shechem is not like that at all. He falls in love with Dina and wants to marry her. The king, Shechem's father, and the people of the town, readily accede to the Shimon and Levi's request that they become circumcised.

Not only does the text not demonise the people of Shechem. Neither does it paint any of Jacob's family in a positive light. It uses the same word "deceit" (34: 13) of Shimon and Levi that it has used previously about Jacob taking Esau's blessing and Laban substituting Leah for Rachel. Its description of all the characters, from the gadabout Dina to her excessively violent rescuers, to the plundering other brothers and the passive Jacob, the text seems written deliberately to alienate our sympathies.

The overall effect is a story with no irredeemable villains and no stainless heroes. Why then is it told at all? Stories do not appear in the Torah merely because they happened. The Torah is not a history book. It is silent on some of the most important periods of time. We know nothing, for example, about Abraham's childhood, or about 38 of the forty years spent by the Israelites in the wilderness. Torah means "teaching, instruction, guidance." What teaching does the Torah want us to draw from this narrative out of which no one emerges well?

There is an important thought experiment devised by Andrew Schmookler known as the parable of the tribes.[8] Imagine a group of tribes living close to one another. All choose the way of peace except one that is willing to use violence to achieve its ends. What happens to the peace-seeking tribes? One is defeated and destroyed. A second is conquered and subjugated. A third flees to some remote and inaccessible place. If the fourth seeks to defend itself it too will have to have recourse to violence. "The irony is that successful defence against a power-maximising aggressor requires a society to become more like the society that threatens it. Power can be stopped only by power." [9]

There are, in other words, four possible outcomes: [1] destruction, [2] subjugation, [3] withdrawal, and [4] imitation. "In every one of these outcomes the ways of power are spread throughout the system. This is the parable of the tribes." Recall that all but one of the tribes seeks peace and has no desire to exercise power over its neighbours. However, if you introduce a single violent tribe into the region, violence will eventually prevail, however the other tribes choose to respond. That is the tragedy of the human condition.

As I was writing this essay in the summer of 2014, Israel was engaged in a bitter struggle with Hamas in

Gaza in which more than 1,000 people died. The state of Israel had no more desire to be engaged in this kind of warfare than did our ancestor Jacob. Throughout the campaign I found myself recalling the words earlier in our parsha about Jacob's feelings prior to his meeting with Esau: "Jacob was very afraid and distressed" (Gen. 32: 8), about which the sages said, "Afraid, lest he be killed, distressed lest he be forced to kill." [10] What the episode of Dina tells us is not that Jacob, or Shimon and Levi, were right, but rather that there can be situations in which there is no right course of action; where whatever you do is wrong; where every option involves the abandonment of some moral principle.

That is Schmookler's point, that "power is like a contaminant, a disease, which once introduced will gradually but inexorably become universal in the system of competing societies." [11] Shechem's single act of violence against Dina forced two of Jacob's sons into violent reprisal and in the end everyone was either contaminated or dead. It is indicative of the moral depth of the Torah that it does not hide this terrible truth from us by depicting one side as guilty, the other as innocent.

Violence defiles us all. It did then. It does now.

[1] Disapproved of biblically: see Deut. 13: 13-19, 1 Samuel 15: 13-26, Esther 9: 10, 15-16.

[2] The Midrash is critical of Dina: see Midrash Aggadah (Buber) to Gen. 34: 1. Midrash Sechel Tov is even critical of her mother Leah for allowing her to go out.

[3] Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilkhos Melakhim 9: 14.

[4] Arama, Akedat Yitzhak, Bereishit, Vayera, Gate 20, s.v. uve-Midrash.

[5] Nahmanides, Commentary to Genesis 34: 13.

[6] Sternberg, Meir. The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985. 444-81.

[7] Elhanan Samet, Iyyunim be-Parshat ha-Shevuah, third series, Israel: Yediot Aharonot, 2012, 149-171.

[8] Andrew Bard Schmookler, The Parable of the Tribes: The Problem of Power in Social Evolution. Berkeley: U of California, 1984.

[9] Ibid., 21.

[10] Quoted by Rashi ad loc.

[11] Schmookler, ibid., 22.

## AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL "And they wept" (33:4)

Esav and Jacob wept when they met each other. Jacob wept when he encountered Rachel (29:11), And Joseph wept when his brothers came (43:30, 45:2, and 45:15). Esav and Jacob kissed each other, Jacob kissed Rachel, and Joseph embraced his brothers and kissed them. He fell upon the neck of Benjamin, and Benjamin wept on Joseph's neck. And Jacob "kissed and embraced" his grandchildren (48:10).

We see that this family expressed their love of kin in highly emotional manner, and we learn that it is an excellence of the soul to love one's kin with powerful emotion. By loving one's kin, one comes to love his kin's kin, and eventually he attains the feeling that the entire house of Israel are his kin.

The perfection of character toward one person tends to spread, and is subsequently broadened to include others. The fact that even Esav ran toward his brother Jacob "and embraced him and fell upon his neck and kissed him, and they wept" demonstrates how deeply ingrained the fervent love of kin was in this unique family.

We see from the conduct of this family that they expressed their affection by kissing and embracing. Instead of being cold philosophers ("Stoics") that are ashamed of emotions, our Fathers expressed their love by acts of demonstrative affection. And they thus served Hashem by encouraging the feelings of kindness and love which cause Perfection of the soul. Quoted from "The Beginning" By R' Miller ZT'L

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