

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE VAYISHLAH

DECEMBER 10, 2011 14 KISLEV 5772

In memory of Frieda Azrak Schmertzler – Frieda Bat Sarina

Daily Minyan – 59th Street and Third Avenue - 4PM Monday thru Thursday – 20 minutes Mincha and Arbit – Please join us, we could use your support. Artistic, 979 Third Ave, #1705 between 58th and 59th – More information ... call Rabbi Danny Greenwald 212-289-2100

And for those in the area of 5th and 36th – Daily at 4:10 Mincha – possibly followed by Arbit. at 385 Fifth Avenue 4th Floor- iGear and Royal Footwear. Please join and support the effort. Contact Joey Setton at 917-519-3514 for more information

SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION OF LONG BEACH SCHEDULE AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Tuesday night sisterhood dinner. Honoring Alan and Karen Cohn.
Chosen Island 7PM. Men and Women Invited!

If you have not made a reservation or placed an ad in the journal, please do so today.

We need everyone's participation to make it a successful event.

Email HMizNY@gmail.com or SephardicCongregation@Gmail.com with your ad and who is coming

We still need a dozen people to fulfill our commitment to the restaurant.

This is our Synagogue and we should all participate as best as we can to support the functions.

REFUAH SHELEMAH - Tzirel bas Basha, Riki Mehira Rut bat Zerizah, Yisroel Moshe ben Chasya Miriam

FRIDAY NIGHT

- **Mincha** at 4:10 – Followed by Kabbalat Shabbat and Arbit (Candle Lighting: 4:10)

SHABBAT SCHEDULE

- **Shaharith:** 9:00 Kiddush this week is sponsored by Ely Altarac to commemorate the yahrtzeit of his wife Sandra and by Nellie Ostrofsky and Family to commemorate the yahrtzeit of their father, husband and son Michael.
- **Mincha** following Kiddush
- **Benai Asher Youth Program** 10:45 – 11:45 with Rikki Waldman
- **Women's Learning Group** 4:15 Alternating speakers, seudat shlishit served, at the Lemberger's 1 West Olive. Class is always cancelled if there is inclement weather.
- **Arbit** at 5:25pm followed by Havdalah – Shabbat ends at 5:10pm
- **Motzi Shabbat– 5:45 class - Angels and Men.** Two Worlds or Two Sides of a Single Coin – The Hidden and Revealed, What We Can Do and What They Can Do. In Memory of Michael Ostrofsky on his Yahrzeit and Frieda Bat Sarina who passed away this week.
- **LIGHTS CAMERA ACTION!** 5:45pm Getting ready for our Chanukah Play, led by Ariella Amiel, Riki Waldman, Yosef Kahn and Moses Bibi. Under the supervision of Rabbi Yosef Colish
- **Kids Movie Night - Melvah Malka** – 6:30 PM. Pizza from Dave's Famous Pizza. To sponsor please speak to Rabbi Yosef Colish or email SephardicCongregation@Gmail.com. Its only \$75 to sponsor and last week we had over twenty kids, ken yirbu. Maybe next week, we'll need more pizza!

WIN A FREE IPOD THIS CHANUKAH

- **YEHUDI** With Chanukah approaching, let's consider: What is the origin of the name, the meaning of the word, and what does it mean to you? Submit your answer to ChouxBB@aol.com. *The best answer will be printed in the newsletter and the writer will receive the Ipod. To those adults who wanted to know why all our contests are only for the kids, this one is for EVERYONE!*

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

- **Shaharit** Sunday 8:00, Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

- **Tefilla Class** 8:45 AM Sunday Morning with David Bibi or Rabbi Yosef Colish
- **"How to Retire Young & Wealthy"** Mon-Fri 6:30 AM - based upon The Duties of the Heart (Gate of Trust) Led by Rabbi Yosef Colish
- **Pizmonim** Monday Nights 9:30-10:00 Led by Barry Pinto
- **Tuesday night sisterhood dinner.** Honoring Alan and Karen Cohn. Chosen Island 7PM. If you have not made a reservation or placed an ad in the journal, please do so today. We need everyone's participation to make it a successful event.
- **Men's Halacha Class** Tuesday Nights 8:30-10:30 Basar BeChalav. We hope to have this week's class at Chosen following the dinner speeches.
- **Women's Learning Group** Tuesday Night 8:00 -9:15.

SPECIAL EVENTS

- **Sephardic/Young Israel Chanuka Carnival** – December 26th 1 PM-3 PM. Details to follow. Save the date
- **Fire Station Chanuka Safety Tour** – Sunday December 18th 4pm for children of all ages. Led by Sam Pinto. Meet at the shul at 3:45.

Hanukkah Mall - The Young Israel of Long Beach will be having their annual **Hanukkah Mall** on Wednesday, December 14th from 7 – 10 pm at 120 Long Beach Road, Long Beach, NY.

Fabulous vendors selling the hottest (and most fun) educational toys, ties and cufflinks, Judaica, beautiful handbags and jewelry, unique housewares and gorgeous gifts for everyone on your list. No admission charge and great raffle prizes. Anyone who brings a gift for a child to put in the OHEL box will receive one complimentary entry for the raffle drawing

This event will benefit the Sisterhood of the Young Israel of Long Beach.

For more information, please call: 516-431-2404 or email: ilana@civilizedpeople.com

**AND FINALLY HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO
SAM SHETRIT AND ELI SACHAROW!
WHAT HAPPENED TO OUR BIRTHDAY LIST?**

ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com
Editors Notes

“Eating in the Dark at Blackout!”

Last week I started to tell you about one of the most unique dining experiences in our lives. And we never even saw the food we were eating.

While in Israel last week, it was the portion of Toldot where Jacob comes in disguise to take his brother's blessing from their father Isaac. Isaac has become blind and apparently per the verses did not recognize Yaakov. We wondered would blindness really prevent a father from recognizing his son.

At the same time our youngest Mariyah was working on a report on Helen Keller. She just finished reading, *The Miracle Worker*, and afterwards watched the movie with Chantelle (and was so excited while watching as she saw my mother in law who was an actress way back when on screen). And finally her class went to see the play as well. She was intrigued at how Helen Keller could do so much under such adverse conditions.

With all this in mind, Mikhayla who is in school in Israel, had an idea. She would provoke the discussion further by making us a reservation at a restaurant called Blackout.

What's Blackout? It is a restaurant where one eats in total, absolute, pitch darkness. One can't see the table, the chair, the plate, the food, the person next to him, the waiter or even one's hand an inch in front of your face!

I panicked at the thought and told the family they could have fun,

but I would be at a local pizza joint and hear about it after.

But Chantelle doesn't take "no" for an answer and so with tremendous trepidation, Eitan our driver picked us up for the trip to Tel Aviv and the Jaffa Port. After making some stops we arrived at The NaLaga'at Center. There, they provide employment and income for the deaf and blind through their theater and two dining areas. Blackout is a kosher dairy restaurant. It is open three nights a week with two seatings per night.

We were early and we sat in the lobby at tables with markers and built in dry erase boards. We doodled and watched. The theatre was just letting out. The actors are all deaf or blind or both. A large crowd of young adults was communicating in sign language. Others were being led through the lobby out to the street. Still others were at the bar having drinks and talking.

Soon we were given wine and menus and asked to select an appetizer, main course and desert. Or we could opt for the surprise which was a mystery dish not even on the menu. Of Course Chantelle and Aryana took the surprise and I along with Jonah and Moses was still trying to figure out how to get back to Eitan and join him for pizza.

Once we made our choices, a host led us to the restaurant. No cell phones, lighters, watches or anything that emitted light was allowed in. We stepped into the door and the door closed. There was still some light. Here was where we met our waitress and our eyes adjusted. Our waitress would be our guide and caretaker as we stepped behind curtain after curtain into another world.

She had us hold onto each other, each of us putting our hands on the shoulders of the one in front of us as a human train. Now it was Moses' turn to panic. He refused to go in. The waitress promised that if at any point any of us was uncomfortable, she would immediately lead us out. Moses accepted that and we continued. Lauren whispered something to Jonah. Jonah whispered some reassurance to her and then we followed our legally blind waitress into the darkness. I could hear myself breathing. This was not for me. Chantelle what did you get me into this time, I wondered.

We moved slowly through the dark until we arrived at a table for 8. We would sit four opposite four with one end against the wall and the other meeting what we later figured was the waiters path. We each felt our chairs and sat. The waitress told us that in front of each of us was a plate. To our right was a fork and knife with an empty glass above them. Those sitting next to the wall would find above the plate a full pitcher of water. The waitress asked them to pour water for themselves and pass the pitcher down. It only took a few seconds before, "Oh my gosh, I spilled the water all over". That broke the ice!

So we wondered. Do we close our eyes or keep them open, because it looked the same either way? How did the waitresses and waiters get around? How will we wash? What if someone needed the restroom? How did they know what each dish was? Will we be able to eat in the dark? And we talked and talked. And we realized that because we couldn't see each other, the volume went up. The place was so nosy that one waiter came in and announced that everyone in the restaurant had to quiet down a bit. The waiters wore bells so they

could hear each other and if they couldn't hear, there might be a big mess when two of them crashed into each other.

We continued to talk and to laugh and became comfortable. The bread came, along with a bowl and washing cup. The appetizers came and guessing what the mystery dishes were was fun. Wondering how you eat without seeing, we managed just fine. And by the time the desert came, we were passing the plates around. True, the room was pitch black, and I couldn't see my hand inches in front of my eyes, but by desert I clearly "saw" everyone at the table. In fact two weeks later I can still perfectly see Mariyah in front of me, holding my hand with Moses, Mikhayla and Aryana to her right. Chantelle is sitting to my left, with Lauren and Jonah by her side. I can see my plate, my fork, knife, and glass, the bottle of diet sprite with its straw and the pitcher of water in front of me. Its amazing!

When we were done we guessed that it was 10:30, an hour and a half is a long time for us to have dinner. Well when we got out we saw that it was 11:30. We lost complete track of the time. We were having such fun. Back at the doodling tables, we were given cups of tea and allowed some time to reflect on what it meant to be blind or deaf and how we must appreciate our blessings.

On Sunday night while we sat in the airport waiting for our 1AM flight back home, I asked the family what the highlight of the trip was. And aside from spending time with Mikhayla everyone agreed it was experiencing Blackout. And we did so many incredible things this trip including driving ATVs up and around a mountain in the rain and night.

On Shabbat I spoke about the experience. It made me realize that it's true when they say our greatest fear is fear itself. More than that though was having a better understanding of the ability we have to adapt. And being able to adapt is so important to being a Jew. These weeks we read about Jacob who is constantly forced to adapt and in adapting he not only survives, but he thrives and most importantly never gives up his identity.

Some people when faced with very difficult situations take the elevator to the roof, write a quick note good bye and jump. But not us. For thousands of years, since Abraham was thrown into the fire in Ur Kasdim and our ancestors became slaves in Egypt and we were exiled to Babylon, then Rome and through the pogroms, the inquisitions, the attacks and even the Holocaust, we have refused to give up. We have adapted and survived and as our forefather, we too maintained our identity.

We all face challenges. We face them every day. But no matter the difficulty, no matter the darkness, we must remember that even in the darkest night there is a light. And whether we can see it with our physical eyes or only with our spiritual eye, that light, no matter how small is a beacon forward and beyond our troubles. Something important for all of us to remember.

Shabbat Shalom,
David Bibi

Obama Default Mode: Blame Israel By Mona Charen

HAL ... Is Mona Charen your Pen Name?

After a two-hour meeting in Cairo, Khaled Mashaal, unelected leader of Hamas, and Mahmoud Abbas, unelected leader of the

Palestinian Authority, were all smiles. "We want to assure our people and the Arab and Islamic world that we have turned a major new and real page in partnership on everything to do with the Palestinian nation," Mashaal announced. "There are no more differences between us now," agreed Abbas.

In other words, the "moderate" Abbas is now a full partner with the leader of an organization whose charter is committed not just to the destruction of Israel but also to the elimination of all Jews everywhere. This is the same Abbas who forfeited whatever slim claim he held to a moderate status by declining to accept Israel as a Jewish state, refusing to engage in direct negotiations with Israel (as recently as last week chief Palestinian Authority negotiator Saeb Erekat declined a Quartet request to sit down with the Israelis), and flouting the Oslo Accords by going to the United Nations to demand recognition. Now, he is formally partnered with a genocidal, Islamist organization. But the Obama administration thinks Israel is the problem.

Meanwhile, in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood won 40 percent of the vote in parliamentary elections, while another 25 percent went to Salafi forces. The Salafis regard the Muslim Brotherhood as squishes. Sheik Abdel Moneim el-Shahat, leader of the Salafis, is scornful of the Muslim Brotherhood for talking about citizenship and freedom outside the strictures of Islamic law. El-Shahat is not so broad-minded. "I want to say: citizenship restricted by Islamic Shariah, freedom restricted by Islamic Shariah, equality restricted by Islamic Shariah." So two-thirds of the Egyptian electorate support candidates who will find Hamas utterly congenial. But the Obama

administration is dismayed by Israel.

In Syria, the regime's brutal massacres of peaceful protesters continue. The U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, said this week "We are placing the figure at 4,000. But the information coming to us is that it's much more." Guess who the Obama administration is angry at?

In Turkey, the Islamist party won a huge victory in June, permitting the government to crack down on opposition voices (jailing hundreds of critics) and move the once-Western oriented Muslim country more firmly in the direction of an Islamist state. Turkey has also noisily supported Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria and Islamists in other Muslim nations.

Inexorably, Iran continues its march toward nuclear weapons.

The Muslim world is in turmoil, and so far, the results do not bode well for peace, democracy or development. But what worries the Obama administration? Israel.

Twice in the past week, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta has declared that a military attack on Iran's nuclear capabilities would do more harm than good. This is a signal not just that the Obama administration (its promises never to permit an Iranian bomb notwithstanding) has no intention of using force to prevent Iran from going nuclear, but also that it seeks to prevent Israel from acting. Panetta also dispensed advice to Israel, snapping, "Get back to the damn table," as if Israel, not the Palestinian Authority, were the party boycotting negotiations. It is Israel's responsibility, the defense secretary implied, that the region is becoming ever more

radicalized and that Israel's formerly cordial relations with Egypt and Turkey are fraying. Repairing to the favorite expression of those with nothing on the line, Panetta demanded that Israel "take risks."

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also managed to put a finger in the eye of the region's lone democracy. Speaking to a Brookings Institution gathering, Clinton expressed dismay about Israel's treatment of women. She had read a Washington Post column suggesting that some Israeli busses in ultra Orthodox neighborhoods were sex segregated, forcing women to sit in the back. Clinton fumed that it reminded her of Rosa Parks and Iran. She failed to mention that the issue has already been litigated in Israel. The High Court has declared sex segregation illegal. But why acknowledge the workings of a vibrant democracy when you can posture about Rosa Parks?

In Belgium, Ambassador Howard Gutman suggested that Arab anti-Semitism springs from the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. He later insisted his comments were "taken the wrong way."

Speaking to potential Jewish donors, President Obama preened, "I try not to pat myself too much on the back, but this administration has done more for the security of the state of Israel than any previous administration." Both clauses of that sentence are priceless.

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.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

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

In Our perashah Ya'akob Abinu returns home to his father's house. Ya'akob went back alone across the Yabok River to retrieve some small jars. It was at that time that the angel of Esav – Satan – in the guise of a man attacked Ya'akob and struggled with him. Ya'akob won the struggle and Satan was forced to bless him before departing. Their physical struggle symbolized a deep spiritual struggle. The Be'er Yosef explains that Ya'akob returned for seemingly insignificant small jars because such is the way of a saddik. Ya'akob knew that he had acquired these jars through Divine Providence (Hashgachah Peratit). Therefore, there must be some purpose in owning them and he had no right to leave them behind.

The Gemara relates the word ??????????(and he wrestled) to ??? (dust) and comments that in their struggle Ya'akob and the angel "brought up dust that reached the Heavenly Throne." They struggled over dust, seemingly unimportant things. Ya'akob maintained that even the small things in life "reach the Heavenly Throne," that is, they happen through Divine intervention. Satan tried to convince him otherwise, but Ya'akob, who

symbolized truth, could not be swayed.

We descendants of Ya'akob must strengthen ourselves in the belief that whatever happens in our lives, even seemingly insignificant happenings, is orchestrated by Hashem. The more we live with this belief, the more we will come to recognize Hashem's involvement in our daily lives, which is a source of happiness.

A true story related by Rabbi Shimon Finkelman tells it all. One day Yisrael David and Ezriel Dillman, yeshivah students, were walking down a main avenue in Boro Park during their lunch break. Suddenly they heard the ringing of a pay phone on the street. "It's surely a wrong number," Yisrael said to his friend as he lifted the receiver.

"My I speak to Yisrael David?" said the voice on the other end. "Mom...?" Yisrael couldn't believe it...It was his mother calling! "Oh Yisrael! How wonderful that you should be the one to answer the phone! Mazel Tov! Uncle Yisrael and Rivki just had a baby girl!"

After responding to the news, Yisrael asked, "Mom, do you know where I am right now?" "What do you mean, Yisrael? Of course I know where you are – at the pay phone of the yeshivah!" Yisrael looked at the pay phone's number; it was almost identical to the yeshivah's pay phone number, only the last digit was different, by one. His mother had meant to phone him at the yeshivah but Hashem had caused her to misdial by one digit so that she could reach her son as he walked down the street and share the good news with him. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

"Esav ran toward his brother and hugged him...and kissed him" (Beresheet 33:4)

Rashi tells us that although it is well known that Esav hates Ya'akob, this time, when he saw Ya'akob bowing down to him, he was filled with pity and he kissed Ya'akob with genuine feeling. The Rabbis tell us that the way we feel towards others will reciprocally make them feel towards us, as the pasuk in Mishle (Proverbs 27:19) says "As in water, face answers to face, so the heart of a man to a man".

Many times we feel stalemated in our relationships with others, and we look for ways to thaw the coldness between us. The Torah teaches us that if we could muster genuine good will towards others, be understanding of their ways and try to see them in a positive light, then the feelings will be communicated heart to heart, and we will see the same and more from them to us. Let's try it and we will benefit the most. Shabbat Shalom
Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

Do you have a nickname? Most people would prefer to be called by their given name rather than a name that might imply something odd or unusual about them. Sometimes childhood friends give each other nicknames, and these names stick to them throughout their lives. Children might tease a person about physical characteristics, and names such as "Shorty" or "Red" might replace a victim's real name for many years to come. Others are given names based on similarity in looks or behavior to a famous personage. In all cases, a nickname is not chosen; it is given to a person by friends or associates.

Individuals, say the Sages, have three names:

- 1) The name given by their parents;
- 2) The name given by their friends;
- 3) The name people give themselves.

The names given by parents do not really represent who people are or what they are about.

The names given by others can only be based on what they see of a friend's exterior, and what these same friends choose to reveal about their thoughts.

The name people make for themselves, however, is their true identity.

During any given day, people face many situations in which they can enhance or, Hashem forbid, detract from their reputation. The behavioral choices they make build upon past performance to establish reputation. "A good name is better than good oil," said King Solomon, the wisest of all men; yet some value the material gains yielded by unethical or immoral acts more than they value their own good name.

Whenever you are confronted with a behavioral choice, use your good sense to make the decision that will give you a good name. The name you make for yourself is the real you. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR Jewish Photosynthesis

We read in Parashat Vayishlah of the angel that attacked Yaakob Abinu as he made his way back to Eretz Yisrael from the home of Laban. The Rabbis teach us that this angel was Satan himself.

Every nation has a heavenly angel that advocates on its behalf, so-to-speak, in the heavens. Satan "volunteered" for the job of being the angel of the nation established by Esav, which represents evil and the antithesis of everything that Am Yisrael is meant to represent. Satan's attack on Yaakob Abinu was launched in order to prevent Yaakob Abinu from establishing Am Yisrael, the nation that would, for all eternity, struggle against the evil of Esav. Fortunately, Yaakob Abinu won this battle, and although he was injured, symbolizing a diminution of Am Yisrael's power, nevertheless, he triumphed over Satan and indeed we, his descendants, are still able to wage this struggle against the evil spiritual forces in the world.

Rav Elhanan Wasserman (1874-1941) raised the question of why Satan waited until the emergence of the third of our patriarchs before launching this assault. Why did he not try to attack Abraham Abinu, who founded the nation that was destined to be Satan's nemesis? Wouldn't it have been wiser for Satan to try to "nip it in the bud," to cut off Am Yisrael at its very root, the moment Abraham Abinu came onto the scene? And even if, for whatever reason, Satan deemed it unwise to launch this assault against Abraham, why did he not attack during the time of Yishak? Why did he wait until the time of Yaakob?

Rav Wasserman answered this question by analyzing the particular points of strength of the three patriarchs. They were all towering spiritual figures, but each had his own "specialty," his unique forte, if you will. Abraham excelled especially in the area of Hesed, loving kindness. But although he bequeathed this quality to his descendants, and Am Yisrael has always

distinguished itself through its generosity, charity is not a uniquely Jewish quality. Many gentiles are also selfless and giving, as are many non-observant and unaffiliated Jews. Satan did not launch his attack against Abraham, because a nation that is defined primarily by Hesed is not guaranteed to endure. He did not feel threatened by Abraham, because a nation built mainly around loving-kindness, as important as this quality certainly is, will not likely last.

Yishak, too, did not pose an immediate risk to Satan. Yishak, who was offered as a sacrifice, signifies the quality of prayer (which is associated with sacrifices). Prayer, like Hesed, is a crucial aspect of religious life, but does not guarantee Am Yisrael's survival. Many synagogues here in the United States and elsewhere were unable to continue past the first generation after their establishment. Satan did not feel threatened by Yishak because he knew that praying is not enough to produce another loyal generation of God-fearing Jews.

Yaakob Abinu, however, posed a grave threat to Satan. Yaakob is described as a "Yosheb Ohalim" ("tent-dweller"), a devoted student of Torah. His outstanding quality was Torah learning. Once Yaakob came onto the scene, Satan realized he was in trouble. A nation that devotes itself to learning and education is guaranteed to endure. If there are yeshivot where children are trained and educated to follow the nation's laws, values and customs, the nation will continue to reproduce itself, generation after generation. And this is why Satan launched an attack against Yaakob. Seeing Yaakob's commitment to Torah, Satan realized that Yaakob is indeed

capable of producing an eternal nation that will hinder his attempts to promote evil. He therefore attacked Yaakob, and although he succeeded in inflicting an injury, making it more difficult for Yaakob and his descendants to fulfill their mission in the world, Yaakob prevailed.

Needless to say, every aspect of Judaism is critically important and may not be ignored. But we can learn from Satan that Torah education is what holds the key to Jewish survival. Satan can handle packed synagogues on Shabbat and charity events, but Torah learning is his kryptonite. It is our greatest weapon against him.

In nature there is a process called photosynthesis which is vital for life. Plants receive energy from the sun, and they process this energy in order to produce oxygen. Without this process, of course, we would not be able to live. In Judaism, we have another kind of "photosynthesis," which occurs not in plants, but within our precious children. The children receive the "energy" from the Torah, and with this spiritual force they produce our "oxygen" – the key to our survival. When we send our children off to school to learn Torah, we are doing our part to produce our nation's "oxygen," ensuring our continued existence.

Torah study is the ammunition we need to fight the Satan. The more we invest in Torah education, the more successful we will be in this ongoing battle, and ensure that Kedusha will prevail and triumph over evil.

Rabbi Wein

There was once a fascinating commentary on life in the form of a comic strip called Pogo. One of its most telling captions to my memory was the paraphrasing of the famous line "We have met the enemy and they are ours" into

"We have met the enemy and they are us!" The time, energy and effort spent on fighting imagined enemies and illusory dangers in the Jewish world, including the observant Jewish world is fairly mind-boggling. This is unfortunately in line with much of Jewish history where identifying the real problems, the true enemies of Jewish existence and comfort was somehow secondary to quarrels about fabricated enemies and minor issues of differing ritual and custom.

In the middle of the nineteenth century the great Chasidic rebbe, Rabbi David Tolnoah, changed one word in the daily prayer service because of a holy dream that he claimed to have had. This touched off a war in Jewish Galicia that split families, caused divorces and created violent confrontations. This dispute lasted generations until it was finally settled by Hitler who didn't care what word was used by Jews in whatever prayers they recited.

All of the energy, wealth and talent expended on that issue a century and half ago could certainly have been better used to combat the rising tide of assimilation, secularism, anti-Semitism and poverty that was then threatening the observant Jewish community in that part of Poland. The enemy was misidentified.

The real enemy escaped with almost nary a scratch. Well, this sad situation is being reenacted in our times and societies as well. We simply are tilting at windmills while the real enemies of Jewish life and growth insidiously march on to attempt to overwhelm us.

I feel that one of the great enemies of traditional Judaism in the United States is the high cost

of tuition in Jewish day schools and yeshivot. Everyone talks about it and recognizes the problem. Families have fewer children because of it. Jewish children from otherwise observant families are sent to Charter Schools and Public Schools because of it. Both the quality and quantity of Jewish education suffer because of it. But apparently nothing is done about it.

The major national organizations are busy with their political offices, fighting turf battles and using their funds as they wish. They are legally entitled to do so but I would think that they could and should allocate a given percentage of their budgets to support local day schools and yeshivot that lower tuition rates. That is the true enemy, not all of the supposed deviations from the "true" faith that each group finds present in the other group or organization.

The argument over the age of the earth is a sterile one that will not be resolved through articles, speeches and conventions. And worse, it is completely irrelevant to the current problems that face the Jewish world. How can we improve the world that we live in is the question that faces us. How to create a Torah society in Israel and the Diaspora; how to protect ourselves physically and spiritually from the enemies that threaten us so menacingly is the true issue that needs to be addressed. It should not be ignored.

In Israel the supposed enemy is the Charedi society. The media is obsessed with it and the only thing apparently that Israel has to fear is that there will soon be more Charedim in its midst. But again this is a false enemy.

The true enemy lies in the secular society where the rate of disaffection from Israeli army service is far greater than with the Charedim. It lies in a university system that somehow under the guise of academic freedom produces the greatest number of Israel bashers and haters of Judaism than anywhere else in the Western world. The enemy can be found in a generation of youth who feels entitled to being given everything without having to work for it and who does not in the main have a sense of Jewish solidarity and traditional loyalty.

The enemy lies within an electoral system and judicial system that is devoted to only replicating itself and its particular viewpoints. And the external enemy is a real one. Pious statements about how the Moslem brotherhood will become moderate once in office fly in the face of the reality of our history of the last century.

Iran is an existential threat to Israel. In short, there is no shortage of real enemies both within and without our society. These enemies should be identified and combated - and we should no longer invest our energies in dealing with enemies who are either nonexistent or long ago defeated and dealt with.

Ricky Cohen The Tick Tock Diner

The Talmud is filled with inspiring and insightful stories about great sages who met in one of their homes or at a nearby inn to discuss issues that boggled the human mind and challenged his spirit.

Invariably these men would emerge with a direction or an understanding that would resolve the issue for the moment - and provide insight on that issue for all time. From time to time, angels

interacted with man to further clarify an understanding of some of the subtle and profound issues necessary to succeed in life. And then there were those times when the angels themselves met to deal with the workings of the universe in its grand scheme.

I imagined one of those angel only meetings held today in a popular local setting. My sense is it may have gone something like this (excerpted from my book From Me to My Children):

The Angel of Love, the Angel of Honesty, and the Angel of Death came together for an important meeting in the Tick Tock Diner on 34th street and 8th avenue in Manhattan, to decide who had the most difficult mission.

Death spoke first and said, "My mission is the toughest of all, in that man has yet to understand that I am a friend not a foe, a blessing not a curse, a beginning not an ending. I am G-d's partner in the dynamic forever of creation, and the quest for man's greatness, for man's happiness."

The Angel of Love spoke next, "My mission is certainly the most difficult. People are afraid to work hard, as hard as they must, to feed me, so that I may live between them; so that I may live within them."

After much thought, the Angel of Honesty spoke in a low voice, with carefully chosen, measured words interrupted by tears. And he said:

"I am a man's future, I am his past
I am his ability to see, to hear, to cry, to smile
I am his ability to love
I am his understanding of death, in that only through me may he experience life"

As with that they rose to leave.
And G-d took care of the tab.

Intrapersonal honesty - the honesty expressed between a person and himself, is one's greatest challenge, most powerful tool, and most defining asset.

The most difficult person to be absolutely honest with is yourself.

We've been created with a great level of cunning, enabling us to spin life's events many different ways. In fact, seeing something for what it truly is, is almost superhuman, demanding a level of awareness and self-connectedness that is beyond what the average person enjoys.

It takes great strength of character to force the "pointing fingers" to be pointed inward and the most piercing questions to be asked from you to you.

At certain times it is inappropriate to speak the absolute truth to another. To safeguard the feelings of another, you may ignore something or present it in a way that is "more correct for the moment".

But there is absolutely no time, within the context of building your life and being a leader to you, that you may confront yourself with anything but the absolute truth: Why you did what you did, how it was received, and what the ramifications may be.

The words of the 3rd angel spoken in the Tick Tock Diner should ring loud in our ears:

"I am a man's future, I am his past
I am his ability to see, to hear, to cry, to smile
I am his ability to love..."
That angel is the angel of honesty.

Sir Jonathan Sacks The Jewish Journey

Why is Jacob the father of our people, the hero of our faith? We are "the congregation of Jacob", "the children of Israel." Yet it was Abraham who began the Jewish journey, Isaac who was willing to be sacrificed, Joseph who saved his family in the years of famine, Moses who led the people out of Egypt and gave it its laws. It was Joshua who took the people into the Promised land, David who became its greatest king, Solomon who built the Temple, and the prophets through the ages who became the voice of God.

The account of Jacob in the Torah seems to fall short of these other lives, at least if we read the text literally. He has tense relationships with his brother Esau, his wives Rachel and Leah, his father-in-law Laban, and with his three eldest children, Reuben, Shimon and Levi. There are times when he seems full of fear, others when he acts – or at least seems to act – with less than total honesty. In reply to Pharaoh he says of himself, "The days of my life have been few and hard" (Gen. 47: 9). This is less than we might expect from a hero of faith.

That is why so much of the image we have of Jacob is filtered through the lens of midrash – the oral tradition preserved by the sages. In this tradition, Jacob is all good, Esau all bad. It had to be this way – so argued R. Zvi Hirsch Chajes in his essay on the nature of midrashic interpretation – because otherwise we would find it hard to draw from the biblical text a clear sense of right and wrong, good and bad. The Torah is an exceptionally subtle book, and subtle books tend to be misunderstood. So the oral

tradition made it simpler: black and white instead of shades of grey.

Yet perhaps, even without midrash, we can find an answer – and the best way of so doing is to think of the idea of a journey.

Judaism is about faith as a journey. It begins with the journey of Abraham and Sarah, leaving behind their "land, birthplace and father's house" and travelling to an unknown destination, "the land I will show you."

The Jewish people is defined by another journey in a different age: the journey of Moses and the Israelites from Egypt across the desert to the Promised Land.

That journey becomes a litany in the parsha of Massei: "They left X and they camped in Y. They left Y and they camped in Z." To be a Jew is to move, to travel, and only rarely if ever to settle down. Moses warns the people of the danger of settling down and taking the status quo for granted, even in Israel itself: "When you have children and grandchildren, and have been established in the land for a long time, you might become decadent" (Deut. 4: 25).

Hence the rules that Israel must always remember its past, never forget its years of slavery in Egypt, never forget on Sukkot that our ancestors once lived in temporary dwellings, never forget that it does not own the land – it belongs to God – and we are merely there as God's gerim ve-toshavim, "strangers and sojourners" (Lev. 25: 23).

Why so? Because to be a Jew means not to be fully at home in the world. To be a Jew means to live within the tension between heaven and earth,

creation and revelation, the world that is and the world we are called on to make; between exile and home, and between the universality of the human condition and the particularity of Jewish identity. Jews don't stand still except when standing before God. The universe, from galaxies to subatomic particles, is in constant motion, and so is the Jewish soul.

We are, we believe, an unstable combination of dust of the earth and breath of God, and this calls on us constantly to make decisions, choices, that will make us grow to be as big as our ideals, or, if we choose wrongly, make us shrivel into small, petulant creatures obsessed by trivia. Life as a journey means striving each day to be greater than we were the day before, individually and collectively.

If the concept of a journey is a central metaphor of Jewish life, what in this regard is the difference between Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

Abraham's life is framed by two journeys both of which use the phrase *Lech lecha*, "undertake a journey", once in Genesis 12 when he was told to leave his land and father's house, the other in Gen. 22:2 at the binding of Isaac when he was told, "Take your son, the only one you love - Isaac - and go [*lech lecha*] to the region of Moriah."

What is so moving about Abraham is that he goes, immediately and without question, despite the fact that both journeys are wrenching in human terms. In the first he has to leave his father. In the second he has to let go of his son. He has to say goodbye to the past and risk saying farewell to the future. Abraham is pure faith. He loves God and trusts Him absolutely. Not everyone can

achieve that kind of faith. It is almost superhuman.

Isaac is the opposite. It is as if Abraham, knowing the emotional sacrifices he has had to make, knowing too the trauma Isaac must have felt at the binding, seeks to protect his son as far as lies within his power. He makes sure that Isaac does not leave the Holy Land (see Gen. 24: 6 – that is why Abraham does not let him travel to find a wife). Isaac's one journey (to the land of the Philistines, in Gen. 26) is limited and local. Isaac's life is a brief respite from the nomadic existence Abraham and Jacob both experience.

Jacob is different again. What makes him unique is that he has his most intense encounters with God – they are the most dramatic in the whole book of Genesis – in the midst of the journey, alone, at night, far from home, fleeing from one danger to the next, from Esau to Laban on the outward journey, from Laban to Esau on his homecoming.

In the midst of the first he has the blazing epiphany of the ladder stretching from earth to heaven, with angels ascending and descending, moving him to say on waking, "God is truly in this place but I did not know it . . . This must be God's house and this the gate to heaven" (28: 16-17). None of the other patriarchs, nor even Moses, has a vision quite like this.

On the second, in our parsha, he has the haunting, enigmatic wrestling match with the man/angel/God, which leaves him limping but permanently transformed – the only person in the Torah to receive from God an entirely new name, Israel, which may mean, "one who has wrestled with God and man" or "one who has become a prince [*sar*] before God".

What is fascinating is that Jacob's meetings with angels are described by the same verb *p-g-'*, (Gen. 28: 11, and 32: 2) which means "a chance encounter", as if they took Jacob by surprise, which clearly they did. Jacob's most spiritual moments are ones he did not plan. He was thinking of other things, about what he was leaving behind and what lay ahead of him. He was, as it were, "surprised by God."

Jacob is someone with whom we can identify. Not everyone can aspire to the loving faith and total trust of an Abraham, or to the seclusion of an Isaac. But Jacob is someone we understand. We can feel his fear, understand his pain at the tensions in his family, and sympathise with his deep longing for a life of quietude and peace (the sages say about the opening words of next week's parsha that "Jacob longed to live at peace, but was immediately thrust into the troubles of Joseph").

The point is not just that Jacob is the most human of the patriarchs but rather that at the depths of his despair he is lifted to the greatest heights of spirituality. He is the man who encounters angels. He is the person surprised by God. He is the one who, at the very moments he feels most alone, discovers that he is not alone, that God is with him, that he is accompanied by angels.

Jacob's message defines Jewish existence. It is our destiny to travel. We are the restless people. Rare and brief have been our interludes of peace. But at the dark of night we have found ourselves lifted by a force of faith we did not know we had, surrounded by angels we did not know were there. If we walk in the way of Jacob, we too may find ourselves surprised by God.