

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE VAYISHLAH

NOVEMBER 15-16, 2013

16 KISLEV 5774

This week's newsletter is dedicated by Abraham J. Jerome and TD Bank. I've known Abraham my entire life. Give him a call and let him be your Personal and Commercial Lender. 329 1st Avenue in Manhattan, Please email him at abraham.jerome@td.com I am sure he can help!

Candles and Mincha: 4:19 PM – From now til spring, Mincha is at candle lighting
SHABBAT 9:00 AM - Please say Shema at home by 8:29

New Shabbat Morning Children's Program with Morah Avital. For children ages 0 to 5. 10:30 to 11:30 in the playroom.

KIDDUSH SPONSORED BY: Rebecca in honor of Herman's birthday (which is Sunday). Abal 120 and Thanks Class and Sermon by Rav Aharon

Mincha at Noon – Amidah not before 12:04

Shabbat Ends – 5:18 PM
Return for Arbit – 5:35 PM / Havdalah – 6: 00 PM / Children's Program – 7:00 PM
Game Night sponsored by The Grill Family

Sunday, November 17th @ 6:00 pm

Join our friends at the Bach for a delicious Carlos & Gabby's Dinner and a personal encounter with professional first ranked world champion boxer, Dmitriy Salita who keeps kosher, refuses to fight on the Sabbath and puts on Tefillin daily. at the BACH Jewish Center - 210 Edwards Blvd. Long Beach

This program is geared for teens, preteens and their parents only and is FREE OF CHARGE.
First 10 attendees who come with a parent will receive an apple iTunes gift card.

Special raffle: Authentic Salita autographed boxing gloves.

For more info: 516.897.2473 or www.bachyouth.com

Sponsored by the Jan Eisenstein Teen Speaker series of the BACH

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

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

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

Monday Night Class with Rabba Yenai – 7PM –
Daily class with Rabbi Colish at 6:30AM

Communal Shabbat dinner next - Friday night November 22nd, Shabbat Vayesheb. Please join us.
You must reserve by Sunday!!!!

It will be Chinese. RSVP a must to either Patti, Tina or email Hindy at hmizny@gmail.com. \$20 for those 10 and up \$ 10 for kids 3-9. Last year we had a Thanksgiving dinner on Friday night and it was a huge success. We would like everyone to prepare a minute or two of what Sandy Taught Me!

We are happy to announce that in addition to the Friday night dinner we are planning for November 22, Mr. Richard Altabe, Headmaster Yeshivat Shaare Torah in Brooklyn and former member of the Sephardic Shul, whose father was a past president and close friend of rabbi Abittan ZT"L and whose mother designed the beautiful stain glass windows in the front of our Shul, will be joining us a scholar in residence for Shabbat November 22-23. Mr. Altabe will be speaking at the dinner and again shabbat during lunch. Please make sure to send in your reservations to Patti, Tina or email Hindy (hmizny@gmail.com). We look forward to a wonderful Shabbat together.

Family Chanukah Party

Please join us Sunday Morning December 1st for a Family Chanukah Party with Games, Prizes, Music, Latkes, Bagels, Doughnuts and more! 9:30 AM - 11:00 AM. Please speak with Rabbi Colish for more details.

We are working on securing the recreation center field for Thursday morning Thanksgiving Football. Details to follow

Dr. Reeva Simon - Whose Jerusalem? The role of religion and politics in the history of Jerusalem. Motzeh Shabbat - Saturday night, December 14 at 7:30pm.

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Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue, 17th Floor, Artistic Frame at 4PM – Please join us! 212-289-2100
 B'H, I will be in Florida this Shabbat

Editors Notes

We see that Jacob approaches his brother armed with prayer, gifts and at last resort a battle. Which is the most powerful of the three?

I was looking through my notes and noticed that four years ago, this week, my dear friend Ely Altarac, a man who keeps our Synagogue going, a man who volunteers and does so much for so many organizations and asks nothing in return, a man who in his true humility doesn't even accept credit where credit is more than due, lost his wife of 56 Years, Sandra. Sandra suffered for many years with illness and pain and in all that time Ely lovingly cared for her.

At that point I had spoken at a few funerals but never led one. Funerals in the Syrian community are somewhat informal when compared to what we see on TV. Although there are usually a great many people filling every inch of space, the services take place in the old Magen David Synagogue and almost everyone knows everyone else. I was hoping my part time partner on the pulpit, Rabbi Dr. Meyer Abittan who during the day directs the Cardiology Department at St Francis and who knew Ely and Sandra his entire life would take the lead. But that night he called to let me know that he suddenly had back to back to back surgeries scheduled for the next morning. There were lives to save. So leading the funeral would fall on my shoulders.

Here with Ely and his family being so well liked and respected in circles extending well beyond the Jewish community the funeral would be attended by members and officials of the fire department, the police department, of the State and local government as well as War Veterans and leaders of other houses of worship.

Granted as I went to sleep that night, I was a bit concerned. For the most part, it was out of my respect and affection for Ely and wanting to do the

right thing for him and his family. But perhaps more so because there were so many people from outside the community and here was a situation of potential Kiddush Hashem or G-d forbid a terrible chilul Hashem. And my worries were compounded because of a recent funeral on Long island where the Rabbi, a seasoned, polished and excellent speaker apparently fell well short of expectations causing a great deal of disappointment and talk. The last thing I wanted was to be the cause of something similar and I was but a novice.

As I went to sleep I did what the Rabbi had often told me to do. I prayed that Hashem assist me in my efforts and place in my mind that which needed to be said. I prayed that people would receive me well.

At 3AM that night I was woken by loud banging noises. The wind was blowing off the ocean with a fierce power. The few furniture pieces left out for the winter were literally being lifted into the air and moved around like ping pong balls. Both Chantelle and I got up. I tried to rearrange some things but to no avail, the wind was in control and wouldn't let up.

It's unusual for the wind to blow so fiercely off the southern shore. And I remembered a similar wind waking me at night almost four years prior. It was the night Rabbi Abittan, z'sl had passed away. Hashem was reminding me to simply recall what the rabbi would tell me. And I could hear his voice. "Be sincere, speak from your heart, make sure you are doing this LeShem Hashem and most important ask Hashem to help you. Do that and don't worry"

And with Hashem's help, as the service ended I felt that all went as well as can be expected for a sad occasion. Still you wonder!

After the service I was approached by a number of the firemen – Irish Catholics - who thanked me for explaining everything and leading such a dignified service. I was then approached by Father Thomas Donahue, who has since passed on. He was a respected clergyman, a dear friend of Ely, and a friend of the Rabbi who told me how much he enjoyed the homily and how impressed he was that that I could be informative and keep the interest and move people from so many different walks of life.

Father Tom told me he had been on the pulpit for 47 years and judged me to be close to 50 and wondered how many years I had held the pulpit imagining I was doing this for many years. I thanked him for his kind words and recalled how the rabbi spoke fondly of him and explained that this was my first funeral and I was not looking forward to a second. He thought I was kidding and found it difficult to believe. I took this as a

compliment and looked up and thanked Hashem that at least the non-Jews liked it and we had made a Kiddush Hashem today.

Then the Rebetzin told me that if Rabbi Abittan was listening to us from Shamayim that day, he certainly would have been beaming with pride over his student. That meant a great deal.

That day I expressed my gratitude to Rabbi Danny Greenwald who is today at the Edmond J Safra Synagogue in Manhattan and who gave me pointers from his experience, to my father for his advice. To my friend Lloyd for suggesting a topic and to Sammy Shetrit for being there and making sure we did everything correctly.

I recall a story Rabbi Dwek told me many, many years ago. As I recall it was from his days at Ner Yisroel in Baltimore. It was at Havdalah when the Rosh Yeshiva paused for a moment and appeared to whisper a prayer. Puzzled, the students asked him what he was praying for at that moment. The Rabbi laughed and explained that his wife was upset as the woman who helped her with housework had moved away and she was hoping to find someone new to help. He was asking Hashem for assistance. There was a great lesson in the explanation.

The Rabbis teach us that Hashem asks that we, place our burdens on His shoulder. Hashem wants us to ask. And He is ready willing and able. As the Rabbi explained, we should ask with sincerity, we should ask for the things Leshem Hashem and we should speak from the heart. If we do this, we can rest assured that Hashem is hearing us. Many He grant Kol Mishalot LiBeynu LeTovah – all the requests of our hearts for the good. Amen! Shabbat Shalom, David Bibi

PS ... When I originally wrote this, I posted a related story I heard from Rabbi Abittan. The story has been told by Rabbi Yisrael Pesach Feinhandler quoting from the book Sheal Avicha Veyegadcha. (Obviously the story took place many years ago ...)

In London there lived a Jewish lawyer who knew almost nothing about Judaism. One day, he was conversing with a friend of his, who happened to be religious. The lawyer confided that he had a terrible problem. He had taken on a gentile client who was accused of committing a crime. During the trial, the judge discovered that this defendant was a well-known criminal. He became furious at the defendant and also at his lawyer. He accused the lawyer of knowing of his client's crookedness and trying to

mislead the court. The judge was so angry that he decided to press charges against the lawyer.

In England the judicial system is very strict; a lawyer must be extremely careful to avoid even the smallest stain on his reputation. Therefore, the lawyer was in great danger; not only could he lose his license to practice law, but he might also have to pay a tremendous fine. The lawyer told all this to his friend and concluded that he did not know how to extricate himself from this situation.

His friend told him, "The best advice I can give you is to do what every other Jew does when he is in trouble, pray to G-d to save you from this situation."

"Pray to G-d?" replied the astonished lawyer, "That I cannot do. Why not? Because once I was saved by G-d, and I made a promise then that I would not ask Him ever again for anything else."

Then the lawyer related the following story.

A few years before, he had been invited by a client to take care of some business in Australia, which would take six or seven months. He made the trip, taking with him his beloved only daughter, who was seven at the time.

While they were in Australia, the child became critically ill. In the hospital, she went through a battery of tests, and the terrible diagnosis was that the girl had cancer. She immediately began treatment, but her condition continued to deteriorate, until one Shabbat a few weeks later, the doctor told her father that she did not have more than a few hours to live.

The father was devastated. After the initial shock, he decided to go immediately and look for a synagogue. Although he knew almost nothing about Judaism, he did remember that when he was thirteen years old his father had taken him to the synagogue to put on tefillin.

It was noon when he ventured out. After a few hours he finally found one. At this time of day the synagogue was empty, but fortunately the doors were open. He went inside and cried for two hours without stopping. While he was crying he said, "G-d, I must ask something of You, and I promise that I shall never ask anything else ever again! I beg You to save my beloved daughter."

After crying and praying some more, he gradually began to feel a little better. Finally he decided to return to the hospital.

When he got to the hospital, the doctor greeted him and said, "Something unusual has happened. Your daughter has opened her eyes and seems to have taken a turn for the better!" The doctor proceeded to examine her, and said, "Take a look. Contrary to all our expectations, there is hope!"

The next morning when the father returned to the hospital, his daughter was asking for water and two weeks later she was able to get out of bed and walk around.

This amazed the doctors, and they decided to take another battery of tests. Did she or did she not have cancer? They took new x-rays and noticed something miraculous. There was no cancer! All the doctors were astonished and could not believe their eyes. In their excitement they gathered together all the doctors of the city, and showed them the previous x-rays where the cancer was clearly present, and the new x-rays, where it had completely disappeared. The only explanation the doctors could give was that this recovery was a miracle.

At this point the lawyer concluded his story and said to his religious friend, "Now you have heard my story and about the promise I made at the time not to ask G-d again for anything. How can I break my promise?"

His friend answered him by saying, "There is no problem at all, my dear friend. G-d is not like a human being. Although you promised that you would not ask again, you can still go and talk to Him. He is endlessly compassionate and His mercy has no limitations. He can answer you as often as you ask."

Once the lawyer heard this, he decided that he would go and pray again. His prayer was answered, and he was found innocent at his subsequent trial.

So lets not forget the power of prayer

THE NAZI NEXT DOOR New York magazine ran the following quoting the New York Post ...

In 2003, the Justice Department revealed that Jakiw Palij, a Polish immigrant who had lived in New York for more than 50 years, was a former Nazi guard and began efforts to deport him. "Let them come and get me," Palij told the New York Times, "I'm not running. What will they do? Shoot me? Put me in the electric chair? Where are they going to deport me to? What country is going to take an 80-year-old man in poor health?" As it turns out, Palij's prediction that other

nations wouldn't be eager to take in an elderly ex-Nazi was right. The now 91-year-old Palij is still living in his house in Jackson Heights, despite the routine protests outside his home over the last decade. During another rally on Sunday morning, Palij told the New York Post, "I am starting to get used to it."

Palij was stripped of his American citizenship for falsely claiming in the fifties that he worked on a farm and in a German factory during the war. Federal officials allege that as a guard at an SS slave labor camp in Poland he prevented prisoners from escaping and "directly contributed to their eventual slaughter." Palij has insisted all along that he never wore a Nazi uniform and was forced into service by the German army as a teenager. "If you tried to run away, they take your family and shoot all of them," he said, "I am not SS. I have nothing to do with SS."

Nevertheless, Brooklyn Assemblyman Dov Hikind, whose parents are Holocaust survivors, is keeping up the fight to have Palij deported. "He is responsible for the murder of at least 6,000 Jews at a notorious Nazi camp," Hikind said at Sunday's rally. "He lives in our community. That is unacceptable." The protesters, including more than 100 students bussed in from Rambam Mesivta, a Jewish high school on Long Island, chanted phrases like "put him on a boat" and "kick him out."

While Palij says he's grown accustomed to the demonstrations, they're still bothering several of his neighbors. "Every year, they come and scare my children," Juan Azzaro told the Post. "Look at them, up on the old man's stoop, pounding on his door! Is this legal?" ***The paper made its stance on the matter clear, quipping that the neighbors "showed more sympathy for the Nazi next door than, apparently, the memory of millions of dead Jews."***

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 it came to pass as her soul was departing – for she had died." (Beresheet 35:18)

Rachel Imenu passed away tragically at a young age during childbirth. The Zohar says the reason she passed away young was due to a statement made by Ya'akob Abinu. When Ya'akob left Laban's home to return to his homeland, he left without informing Laban. Laban pursued Ya'akob and when he finally caught up with Ya'akob, he accused Ya'akob of stealing his idols. Ya'akob was sure no one had stolen his idols, so he said, "With whomever you find your gods, he shall not live" (Beresheet 31:32). Little did he know that Rachel had stolen the idols. The Angel of Death took the words of Ya'akob and used them to hurt Rachel until she passed away. From here we learn how important it is to be careful with one's words. Do not say anything that gives an opening to the Angel of Death. This is even more important concerning a Torah scholar, because his words are more potent, as we can see with Ya'akob, who declared that the thief should die even though he didn't know that it was Rachel who took them.

We find great Rabbis who were very careful not to speak derogatorily about Jews despite the fact that they desecrated the Shabbat. Rabbi Aharon Rokeach zt"l, the late Belzer Rebbe, was speaking about secular Jews. He described them as "Jews who don't differentiate between Shabbat and Sunday." In his eyes they were holy Jewish people who, due to circumstances beyond their control, didn't know better. He was careful not to speak down about them even in a situation where he was involved in a battle for the sake of Torah. Our words have great effect. Use them with care.

Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

“Esav said, ‘I have plenty’...And Ya’akob said, ‘I have everything’” (Beresheet 33:9-11)

When Esav saw the lavish gift given to him by his brother, Ya’akob, he tried to demur and say he has plenty, he doesn’t need this gift. However, Ya’akob insisted and in his statement back to Esav, he said, “I have everything.” This slight contrast in their attitude towards materialism says much about their different values and priorities. Esav, who favors this world and all of its alluring possessions, says he has plenty. He may have a tremendous amount, but he still says it’s only plenty, not all. There’s always room for more! Ya’akob, whose goal in life is to become closer to Hashem, using his worldly possessions to achieve spiritual accomplishments, says, “I have it all! Everything I have is enough for me. I am not missing anything!”

There is a fellow who was buying a new car, and after weeks of shopping and planning, finally got the one he was looking for. The right color, the right interior, and all of the right accessories, as much as he could afford. His happiness lasted one day, because the next day, his neighbor bought the higher priced model with all the new gadgets, and parked it right next door. The first one who bought the car that he could afford all of a sudden lost his excitement because he didn’t have it all!

Are we similar to Esav, who could always use more and are not happy with what we have because something can always be added, or are we like Ya’akob, that whatever we have is everything? Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

MAGNIFYING GLASS – Raymond Beyda

When I was young, a boy with a magnifying glass could easily be the center of attention during recess or after school. He would gather his friends, get a piece of paper, and focus a beam of bright sunlight through the magnifier until it was concentrated on one tiny spot. Seconds later the paper would start to burn, and his friends would shower him with accolades as if he had just hit a game-winning home run.

The boy’s great feat was really not so difficult. It was merely a matter of concentrating the sun’s power on a single spot.

In contrast, many of us can’t focus our energy on the spot where it will be most effective. Overwhelmed with multiple responsibilities, and surrounded by “time-saving” devices that, in actuality, consume out time, we try to do it all – simultaneously. As we attempt to multi-task, we pile up lists of unfinished business and incomplete projects until our “to do” list becomes overwhelming and meaningless.

The trick to success is to focus your energy on the task at hand. When you are reading, you

should not be listening to the radio, and when you are eating, you should not be reading. Whenever you are involved in something, do it to the exclusion of all other distractions that come your way. Turn off your electronic interrupters when praying, working on a project, or having a serious conversation.

When you are involved in something and an “intruder” tries to interrupt, finish what you’re doing! Do it well, and then you can attend to something else. Your concentrated efforts will unleash powers that will enhance your success rate day after day.

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

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Yaakov Abinu and the Power of Torah

We read in Parashat Vayishlah of Yaakov’s prayer before his feared encounter with his brother, Esav. In this prayer, Yaakov acknowledges that he feels unworthy of all the kindness Hashem had bestowed upon him, noting, “I crossed this Jordan River with my stick, but now I have become two camps” (32:11). Rashi, citing the Midrash, explains this to mean that when Yaakov fled from Eretz Yisrael, he placed his stick in the Jordan River and the waters split.

This miracle is of course reminiscent of the miracle that would occur much later, when Yehoshua led Beneh Yisrael across the Jordan River into Eretz Yisrael, as described in the Book of Yehoshua. When the Kohanim, who were carrying the Aron, placed their feet in the waters of the Jordan, the waters formed a wall, allowing the people to easily cross. The root and source of that miracle was Yaakov Abinu, who split the Jordan River when he left Eretz Yisrael. We indeed find a close association between Yaakov and the Aron carried by the Kohanim. In the previous Parasha, Parashat Vayeseh, we read that when Yaakov woke up after his famous dream, he exclaimed, “Ma Nora Ha’makom Ha’zeh” – “How awesome is this place!” (28:17). If we spell the word “Nora” backwards, we arrive at “Aron.” (It should also be noted that the holy books comment that the divine Name of “Nora” is used in reference to the attribute of “Tiferet,” which was embodied by Yaakov Abinu.) The Aron transported by the Kohanim thus represented Yaakov, and in the spirit of “Ma’aseh Abot Siman La’banim” – the actions of our patriarchs established the model of what would happen to their descendants – the river split for the Aron just as it split for Yaakov.

We can develop this concept further in light of the comments of the Or Ha’haim (Rav Haim Ben Attar, 1696-1743) regarding another episode involving the

splitting of a river. The Gemara in Masechet Hulin (6) tells that Rav Pinhas Ben Yair once needed to cross a river, and as soon as he reached the riverbank, the waters split so he could cross. Behind him there was a non-Jewish traveler who also needed to cross the river, and so in order to make a Kiddush Hashem, Rav Pinhas had the river split a second time to help that traveler. The Or Ha'haim raised the question of how Rav Pinhas Ben Yair was able to perform this great miracle twice with such ease. The Midrash relates that when Moshe Rabbenu wanted to split the sea to rescue Beneh Yisrael from the pursuing Egyptians, the sea initially refused. It argued that as it was created on the third day of creation, whereas mankind was not created until the sixth day, it could not be expected to alter its course for the benefit of human beings. Hashem had to intervene and specifically instruct the sea to split. Why, the Or Ha'haim asked, did Moshe have a hard time splitting the sea just once, while Rav Pinhas Ben Yair split the river twice without any protests or difficulty?

The Or Ha'haim answered that Moshe Rabbenu split the sea before the Torah was given. The Torah has the special power to overcome the laws of nature, and thus after the Torah was given, the sea and river no longer had any argument. When confronted by the power of Torah, the river retreated.

The Or Ha'haim's insight also explains the splitting of the Jordan River by Yaakov, and in the time of Yehoshua. Yaakov, the "dweller of tents," represented Torah. He arrived at the banks of the Jordan River with seventy years of intensive Torah study behind him, and it was with this power that he was able to split the waters. In the time of Yehoshua, too, it was the Aron, which contained the tablets representing the Torah, that split the sea. The power of Torah allowed for overturning the laws of nature without any obstacles, and without necessitating G-d's direct intervention as was needed in the time of Moshe Rabbenu.

Even before Matan Torah, Yaakov Abinu was capable of performing great miracles through his power of Torah. The miracle that was difficult for Moshe Rabbenu proved effortless for Yaakov, who possessed the unique power of Torah obtained through his extraordinary diligence and devotion to its study.

Rabbi Wein

Many commentators over the ages have seen in the two confrontations between Yaakov and Eisav – first the struggle with Eisav's angel and then the meeting with Eisav in the flesh – the two-front war that

Judaism and the Jewish people have been forced to fight over millennia in order to simply survive.

The struggle with Eisav's angel, as described in the parsha, represents a spiritual and intellectual fight, a contest of ideas, beliefs and debate. The meeting with the physical Eisav in turn represents the struggle of the Jewish people to simply stay alive in a bigoted, cruel, and nearly fatal environment.

Yaakov does not escape unscathed from either confrontation. He is crippled physically and somewhat impoverished financially. Eisav's "evil eye" gazes upon his children and Yaakov is relieved to escape alive, even if damaged in body and purse, separating himself from Eisav physically and from his civilization and worldview.

The scenario is pretty much set for the long dance of Jewish history, with the Jews always attempting to survive in a constantly challenging and brutal society governed by Eisav. The rabbis of Midrash discussed the possibilities of coexistence and even cooperation with Eisav.

Though this debate did not result in any permanent or convincing conclusion, the opinion of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai that Eisav's hatred of Yaakov is completely irrational and implacable seems to be borne out by history, past and present. The anti-Semitism in today's seemingly enlightened world is so pervasive as to be frightening. And we seem to be powerless to do anything about it.

As is painfully obvious to all, these struggles for continued Jewish existence are ongoing and seemingly unending. All of the foreign ideas and current fads of Western society stand almost unanimously opposed to Torah values and traditional lifestyle. The angel of Eisav changes his program from time to time, but he is always opposed to Torah and moral behavior.

He wavers from totalitarian extreme conservatism to wild liberalism but always is able to wound the Jewish psyche and body no matter what philosophy or culture he now advocates. We limp today from this attack on Jewish values and Torah study and practice.

Jewish parents in America sue school boards for anti-Semitic attitudes, policies and behavior. Yet they would not dream of sending their children to a Jewish school or giving them an intensive Jewish education. The lawsuit is the indicator of the limp inflicted upon us by Eisav's cultural angel.

All agree that Europe is currently a lost continent as far as Jews are concerned. The question most asked of travel agents by Jews today is "Can I wear a kippah on the street there?" Billions of dollars of Jewish treasure pillaged during World War II and immediately thereafter still lie in the hands of Eisav.

And yet we certainly would be satisfied if the world just let us alone but that seems to be a forlorn hope. So our struggle continues but the Lord's promise to us that we will somehow prevail remains valid and true. And that is our hope for continuing on as loyal and steadfast Jews.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks

I have argued in previous years of Covenant and Conversation that the episode in which the Jewish people acquired its name – when Jacob wrestled with an unnamed adversary at night and received the name Israel – is essential to an understanding of what it is to be a Jew. I argue here that it is equally critical to understanding what it is to lead.

There are several theories as to the identity of "the man" who wrestled with the patriarch that night. The Torah calls him a man. The prophet Hosea called him an angel (Hosea 12:4, 5). The sages said it was Samael, guardian angel of Esau and a force for evil (Bereshith Rabbah 77; Rashi; Zohar). Jacob himself was convinced it was God. "Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared" (Gen. 32: 31).

My argument is that we can only understand the passage against the entire background of Jacob's life. Jacob was born holding on to Esau's heel. He bought Esau's birthright. He stole Esau's blessing. When his blind father asked him who he was, he replied, "I am Esau your firstborn." Jacob was the child who wanted to be Esau. Why? Because Esau was the elder. Because Esau was strong, physically mature, a hunter. Above all because Esau was his father's favourite: "Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebecca loved Jacob" (Gen. 25: 28). Jacob is the paradigm case of what the French literary theorist and anthropologist Rene Girard called mimetic desire, meaning, we want what someone else wants, because we want to be that someone else.

The result is tension between Jacob and Esau which rises to an unbearable intensity when Esau discovers that Jacob has taken the blessing Isaac had reserved for him, and vows to kill him when Isaac is no longer alive.

Jacob flees to Laban where he encounters more conflict and is on his way home when he hears that Esau is coming to meet him with a force of 400 men. In an unusually strong description of emotion the Torah tells us that Jacob was "very frightened and distressed," frightened, no doubt, that Esau would try to kill him, and perhaps distressed that his brother's animosity was not without cause.

Jacob had indeed wronged him. Isaac says to Esau, "Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing." Centuries later the prophet Hosea said, "The Lord has a charge to bring against Judah; he will punish Jacob according to his ways and repay him according to his deeds. In the womb he grasped his brother's heel; as a man he struggled with God" (Hos. 12: 3-4). Jeremiah uses the name Jacob to mean someone who practises deception: "Beware of your friends; do not trust anyone in your clan; for every one of them is a deceiver [akov Yaakov], and every friend a slanderer" (Jer. 9: 3).

As long as Jacob sought to be Esau there was tension, conflict, rivalry. Esau felt cheated; Jacob felt fear. That night, about to meet Esau again after an absence of twenty two years Jacob wrestles with himself and finally throws off the image of Esau that he has carried with him all these years as the person he wants to be. This is the critical moment in Jacob's life. From now on he is content to be himself. And it is only when we stop wanting to be someone else (in Shakespeare's words, "desiring this man's art, and that man's scope, With what I most enjoy contented least") that we can be at peace with ourselves and with the world.

This is one of the great challenges of leadership. It is all too easy for a leader to pursue popularity by being what people want him or her to be, a liberal to liberals, a conservative to conservatives, taking decisions that win temporary acclaim rather than flowing from principle and conviction. Presidential adviser David Gergen wrote about Bill Clinton that he "isn't exactly sure who he is yet and tries to define himself by how well others like him. That leads him into all sorts of contradictions, and the view by others that he seems a constant mixture of strengths and weaknesses."

Leaders sometimes try to "hold the team together" by saying different things to different people, but eventually these contradictions become clear – especially in the total transparency that modern media impose – and the result is that the leader will seem to lack integrity. People will no longer trust his or her remarks. There will be a loss of confidence and authority that may take a long time to restore.

The leader may find that his or her position has become untenable and may be forced to resign. Few things make a leader more unpopular than the pursuit of popularity.

Great leaders have the courage to live with unpopularity. Lincoln was reviled and ridiculed during his lifetime. In 1864 the New York Times wrote of him: "He has been denounced without end as a perjurer, a usurper, a tyrant, a subverter of the Constitution, a destroyer of the liberties of his country, a reckless desperado, a heartless trifier over the last agonies of an expiring nation." Churchill, until he became prime minister during the Second World War, had been written off as a failure. After the war he was defeated in the 1945 General Election. He himself said that "Success is stumbling from failure to failure with no loss of enthusiasm." John F Kennedy and Martin Luther King were assassinated. When Margaret Thatcher died, some people celebrated in the streets.

Jacob was not a leader; there was as yet no nation for him to lead. Yet the Torah goes to great lengths to give us an insight into his struggle for identity, because it was not his alone. It happens to most of us (the word *avot* used to describe Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, means not only "fathers, patriarchs" but also "archetypes"). It is not easy to overcome the desire to be someone else, to want what they have, to be what they are. Most of us have such feelings from time to time. Girard argues that this has been the main source of conflict throughout history. It can take a lifetime of wrestling before we know who we are and relinquish the desire to be who we aren't.

More than anyone else in Genesis Jacob is surrounded by conflict: not just between himself and Esau, but between himself and Laban, between Rachel and Leah, and between his children, Joseph and his brothers. It is as if the Torah were telling us that so long as there is a conflict within us, there will be a conflict around us. We have to resolve the tension in ourselves before we can do so for others. We have to be at peace with ourself before we can be at peace with the world.

That is what happens in this week's parsha. After his wrestling match with the stranger, Jacob undergoes a change of personality. He gives back to Esau the blessing he took from him. The previous day he had given him back the material blessing by sending him hundreds of goats, ewes, rams, camels, cows, bulls and donkeys. Now he gives him back the blessing that said, "Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you." Jacob bows down seven times to Esau. He calls Esau "My lord,"

and himself "your servant." He actually uses the word "blessing," though this fact is often obscured in translation. He says "Please take my blessing that has been brought to you" (Gen. 33: 11). The result is that the two brothers meet and part in peace.

People conflict. They have different interests, passions, desires, temperaments. Even if they didn't, they would still conflict, as every parent knows. Children – and not just children – seek attention, and you can't attend to everyone equally all the time. Managing the conflicts that affect every human group is the work of the leader; and if the leader is not sure of and confident in his or her identity, the conflicts will persist. Even if the leader sees him- or herself as a peacemaker, the conflicts will still persist.

The only answer is to "know thyself," to wrestle with yourself as Jacob did on that fateful night, throwing off the person you might like to be but are not, accepting that some people will like you and what you stand for while others will not, and that it is better to seek the respect of some than the popularity of all. This may involve a lifetime of struggle, but the outcome is an immense strength. No one is stronger than one who knows who and what he is.

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky Parsha Parables

Yaakov's family faced a tremendous crisis. While passing through the city of Shechem, Dena, their sister was attacked and was violated by Shechem, the son of King Chamor, who bore the same name as the city. Shechem later claimed that he desperately wanted to marry her! No one in the entire city brought the prince to justice and Yaakov's sons were not going to ignore that behavior.

They were not ready for open warfare either, and so they developed a ruse. They claimed that they were ready to form a harmonious relationship with the entire population of the city of Shechem. "We will give our daughters to you, and take your daughters to ourselves; we will dwell with you, and become a single people" (Braishis 34:16). However, there was one condition. Every male of Shechem had to circumcise. Yaakov's children insisted that it would be a disgrace for the daughters of Abraham to marry uncircumcised men. Upon direction from King Chamor and Prince Shechem the entire town agreed, and three days later, when the people of Shechem were in painful recuperation from their surgery, Yaakov's children avenged Dina's honor. Despite Yaakov's consternation, they attacked the male population and wiped them out.

The question is simple: Why ask the people of Shechem to circumcise? If Yaakov's children wanted to attack them, why go through a process of converting them? They should have asked them to fast for three days. That would have made them even weaker. They could have asked them to hand over all their weapons. Why ask them to do an act so blatantly Jewish?

On September 30, 2000, the word intafada was almost unknown to the average American. And then the riots began. On one of the first days of what has now been over three years of unceasing violence, against innocent Israelis, The New York Times, Associated Press and other major media outlets published a photo of a young man who looked terrified, bloodied and battered. There was an Israeli soldier in the background brandishing a billy-club. The caption in everyone of the papers that carried the photo identified the teen as an innocent Palestinian victim of the riots -- with the clear implication that the Israeli soldier was the one who beat him. The world was in shock and outrage at the sight of the poor teen, blood oozing from his temple crouching beneath the club-wielding Israeli policeman. Letters of protest and sympathy poured in from the genteel readers of the gentile world.

The victim's true identity was soon revealed. Dr. Aaron Grossman wrote the NY Times that the picture of the Israeli soldier and the Palestinian on the Temple Mount was indeed not a Palestinian. The battered boy was actually his son, Tuvia Grossman, a Yeshiva student from Chicago. He, and two of his friends, were pulled from their taxicab by a mob of Palestinian Arabs, and were severely beaten and stabbed. The Israeli soldier wielding the club was actually attempting to protect Tuvia from the vicious mob.

All of a sudden the outrage ceased, the brutal attack was almost ignored and a correction buried somewhere deep amongst "all the news that is fit to print" re-identified Tuvia Grossman as "an American student in Israel." It hardly mentioned that he was an innocent Jew who was nearly lynched by Arabs. This blatant hypocrisy in news coverage incidentally help launch a media watchdog named Honest Reporting.com.

Rav Yonasan Eibeschutz, zt"l, explains that Yaakov's children knew something that was as relevant in Biblical times as it is in today's "New York" times. Yaakov's sons knew the secret of society. Have them circumcised. Make them Jews. Then you can do whatever you want with them and no one will say a word. You can wipe out an entire city -- as long as it

is not a gentile city. If Shechem had remained a gentile city had the people not circumcised according to the laws of Avraham then Yaakov's children would have been condemned by the entire world. But Yaakov's children knew better. They made sure that the Shechemites, went through a Jewish circumcision. Shechem now was a Jewish city; and when a Jewish city is destroyed, the story becomes as irrelevant as an American student attacked by a Palestinian mob in Yerushalayim! Unfortunately it is that simple and that old.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

"And Jacob said: G-d of my father Abraham and G-d of my father Isaac" (32:10)

Jacob here provides a model for prayer. He begins by appealing to the G-d of his fathers, just as we do, and not to the G-d of the world. The people of Israel emulate Jacob who addressed the G-d that had made especial covenants with the fathers, because the merit of the fathers is our chief reason for our hope to gain Hashem's favor.

"This is one of the principles one which the Torah depends; That all the good that Hashem did for us or will do is for the merit of our Fathers Abraham Isaac and Jacob, who kept the way of Hashem to do righteousness and justice" (More' Nevuchim 3, 43).

By constantly entreating G-d for the merit of the Fathers, we thereby are constantly reminded to emulate them and to continue in the ways that gained them G-d's favor. We see here that despite Hashem's explicit promises to Jacob (28:13-15, 31:13), yet Jacob considered it necessary to pray fervently that the promises be fulfilled. This is a phenomenon that we see everywhere; the righteous must pray that Hashem fulfill His covenant. Thus G-d said: "I shall uphold My covenant with them...and also I have heard the outcry of the sons of Israel" (Shemot 6:4-5). The promises are conditional on the outcry.