

# SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

VAYISHLAH

Haftarah: Obadiah 1:1-21

NOVEMBER 27-28, 2015 16 KISLEV 5776  
DEDICATIONS: In memory of Ezra Schwartz

Thanksgiving Morning Shahrith at 8AM

Friday November 27<sup>th</sup>  
Minha & Arbit 4:12PM -  
Candle Lighting 4:12PM

Friends – We need assistance and a commitment for Friday evenings

Shabbat NEW TIME FOR THE WINTER SEASON  
Class with Rav Aharon 8:30AM – Latest Shema 8:35 AM  
Shahrith 9:00 AM, Torah not before 10:00 and Musaf not before 10:30AM  
Chazot is 11:42

Kiddush sponsored by  
Nellie Ostrovsky and her family  
to commemorate the Yahrzeit of Dr. Moshe Chaim Ostrovsky

Please be generous and donate a Kiddush  
As we pray Mincha after Kiddush during the winter,  
we need a sponsor every week  
Mincha Follows Kiddush – Amida after 12:06 PM

Shabbat Morning Children's Program 10:30 - 11:30 with Jennifer Ages 2-5 - in the Playroom/ Girls Ages 6-12 - In the Upstairs Library / Treats, Games, Stories, Prayers and Fun!

Children's program at Sephardic at 3:00PM –  
Ladies Class at the Lembergers at 4:00

Seudah Shelishi at Home  
Shabbat Ends at 5:12 Return for Arbit at 5:30 PM

GENERAL MEETING  
SATURDAY NIGHT NOVEMBER 28th  
IN THE SYNAGOGUE 6:30PM

This is an informational meeting open to Members in good standing ONLY  
To check your standing, please email us and the treasurer will respond directly.

SUNDAY MORNING Shahrith at 8AM

DAILY MINYAN  
Monday, Thursday 6:55, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at 7:00AM

ANNOUNCEMENTS  
Hanukah Begins Sunday Night Dec 6th through Monday the 14th

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## Editors Notes

### Angels and Men

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

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

This week the portion begins with Jacob sending messengers. Rashi tells us that these messengers were literally angels. Jacob is sending these angels messengers to his brother Esav.

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

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

When an angel in the guise of a man comes to foretell to Tzlalponit and Manoah of the imminent birth of their son who will be Sampson, they offer a sacrifice to Hashem. Imagine their shock when the man ascends to heaven within the flames of the offering. They fall on their faces to the ground and Manoah fears that having seen the angel, they will die.

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

Angels are said to be standing, while people are moving. Angels are one-dimensional: each angel has one specific form of Divine service. The angel who battles Jacob cannot give Jacob his name, because as Rashi explains based on the Midrash, The Angel is saying, we have no permanent name. Our names change, (all) according to the service we are commanded [to do] in the mission upon which we are sent.

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

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

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

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

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

I saw that Rabbi Sholom DovBer once described the feelings he experienced while reciting the daily morning prayers: "When I recite the part of prayer which describes the praise that the angels sing

before G-d, I envy them. But when I read the Shema, the praise that the Jew sings before G-d, I wonder: "Where have all the angels gone?"

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

Our potential is endless.

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

### **Ezra Schwartz's life-saving legacy**

After his bar mitzvah five years ago, Ezra Schwartz donated his gift money to United Hatzalah, which used it to buy an "ambucycle" • New England Patriots observe moment of silence for Schwartz, an avid Patriots fan who was killed by a terrorist last week.

The New England Patriots observed a moment of silence on Monday for Ezra Schwartz, the native of Sharon, Massachusetts, who was killed in a terrorist attack last Thursday in Gush Etzion.

Before Monday night's game against the Buffalo Bills at Gillette Stadium, the announcer asked fans to stand and honor Schwartz, who was a huge Patriots fan.

"Ladies and gentlemen, in a month when the NFL salutes the service of our brave men and women in our armed services, we also pause to remember the many who have recently lost their lives in senseless terrorist attacks abroad," the announcer said. "Last Thursday, this reality struck close to home, when 18-year-old Ezra Schwartz, a native of Sharon, Massachusetts, was gunned down nearly 5,500 miles from home while studying abroad.

"At this time, we would like to honor Ezra Schwartz and hundreds of victims like him with a moment of silence."

Patriots owner Robert Kraft has been an active supporter of Israel. He took a group of NFL Hall of Famers on a trip to Israel over the summer.

After his bar mitzvah five years ago, Schwartz donated gift money he had received to United Hatzalah, an Israeli emergency medical services

organization. The money was used to buy a motorcycle ambulance, known as an "ambucycle," which is still in use by the organization.

"Five years ago, I had the privilege to speak with some very special bar mitzvah boys at a dedication ceremony in Sharon, Massachusetts," said United Hatzalah President Eli Beer.

"Together, they had donated an ambucycle to United Hatzalah. One of the boys who made that dedication ceremony possible was Ezra Schwartz.

"It hit me like a ton of bricks when I realized that the amazing young yeshiva student who was killed here last week in a terror attack in Gush Etzion was Ezra from Sharon, and that his name had been riding on a United Hatzalah ambucycle here in Israel since 2010. Our volunteer medics responded to the attack but it was out of our hands.

"My heart goes out to the Schwartz family. I have no words to express the loss I feel over Ezra's being taken in this way. All I can do is echo the words of Lynn, one of the mothers of the bar mitzvah boys of five years ago, 'It gives us such great comfort to know that Ezra's name and neshama [spirit or soul] is riding through the streets of Jerusalem saving lives.'"

Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, who hails from Schwartz's native Massachusetts, said on Tuesday while in Israel on a one-day visit, "Just yesterday, I talked to the family of Ezra Schwartz from Massachusetts, a young man who came here out of high school, ready to go to college, excited about his future, and yesterday his family was sitting shiva and I talked to them and heard their feelings, the feelings of any parent for the loss of a child."

Kerry lamented Schwartz's death as "another young life cut short."

"There's no excuse for any of the violence," Kerry said. "There's just no rationale."

### **Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading**

Va'yishlach - Yaacov meets up with Esav

- 1- Esav is coming toward Yaacov to kill him. Yaacov splits up his camp and prays.
- 2- Yaacov prepares presents for Esav. Yaacov fights with the malach (of Esav).
- 3- Yaacov meets up with Esav
- 4- Yaacov bows and gives presents to Esav. Esav go to Seir. Yaacov goes to Succoth and then to Shechem.
- 5- Shechem rapes Dina. Shimon and Levi kill the people of Shechem. Yaacov goes back to Beit Kel.

Devorah dies. Hashem blesses Yaacov and changes his name.

6- Binyamin is born. Rachel Dies. Reuben moves the bed. Yaacov returns home to his father in Hebron. Yitshak dies. The descendants of Esav.

7- The children of Seir. The 8 kings of Esav. The chiefs of Esav.

### THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

#### **"G-d has been gracious to me and inasmuch as I have everything." (Beresheet 33:11)**

The way of the great Sadikim is to always be content with what they have, even if they live in abject poverty. They never feel they are missing anything. They manage with very little and all of their aspirations are only regarding to accomplish more in their study of the Torah.

When Rabbi Ovadia Yosef zt"l was in his twenties, he lived with his family in a tiny apartment. He had four children in this small dwelling but he never complained that it was too tight. One day on Hol Hamo'ed a group of the greatest Rabbis came to visit him – Rabbi Ezra Attiya, Rabbi Yaakov Ades, and the great mekubal Rabbi Ephraim Hakohen zt"l. They made a special visit to him to show him how much they valued his Torah accomplishments. The only problem was that there was no room to fit them. There was only room for the table and the beds. Rabbi Ovadia Yosef had no choice but to greet them and entertain them in the outside yard of his dwelling.

Fortunate is the one whose life is so meaningful that his worldly needs are always fulfilled. Rabbi Reuven Semah

#### **"Why do you ask my name?" (Beresheet 32:30)**

As Ya'akov prepared to meet his brother Esav, he met up with a "man" and struggled with him the entire night. The Rabbis tell us that this was the angel of Esav who wanted to overpower Ya'akov, and fought with him until morning. When Ya'akov asked him his name, the angel responded, "Why do you want to know my name?" Some of the commentaries tell us that in reality he answered his question, because the angel of Esav, who represents the yeser hara (evil inclination) wants us not to know him. Therefore, he says, "Why do you ask my name?" which means don't find out about me; that's my identity and my essence.

The yeser hara works best when we don't ask questions. He convinces us to do things that we shouldn't do but his success lies in the fact that we don't bother checking if it's correct. So in reality his name, which means his identity, is "Don't ask me my name." We have to learn from here not to take his advice but rather to ask before we do or don't do

anything. This way we will be able to overcome him. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

#### **UNDER-PROMISE, OVER-DELIVER**

Shammai says: "Say little and do much!" (Pirkei Abot 1:15)

For most of us, this is easier said than done. We prefer to give a big build up – to "hook 'em" – and then give whatever we can or whatever suits us when the time comes to deliver.

There was once a great Rabbi who excelled in hachnasat orchim (hosting guests). Late one Friday afternoon, several Jewish businessmen returning from an exposition came upon his home and requested lodging for Shabbat, as it was too late to them to reach the nearest hotel before nightfall.

"I will give you all the best accommodations and the most pleasurable Shabbat you will ever spend away from home," replied the Rabbi, "and each of you will only have to pay the sum of five gold coins!" Shocked by the exorbitant request, but with no choice due to the lateness of the hour, they agreed.

True to his word, the host attended to every request and served his guests impeccably. The guests were very demanding; as businessmen, they wanted to get their money's worth!

The surprise came after Shabbat, when the host refused payment.

"Why did you quote us a price – only to give us everything for free?" inquired the puzzled merchants.

"I wanted to fulfill your every desire," replied the Rabbi, "and I knew that if you believed you were paying, you would freely express all of your wishes."

The Rabbi had said a little, and done a great deal.

One day you may catch yourself making a promise. Think for a moment. Make sure that it is within your power to perform 110% of what you are agreeing to undertake. This important moment of reflection will help you absorb the lesson of Shammai – say a little and do much. (One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

#### **RABBI ELI MANSOUR**

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[MishnaBerura.com](http://MishnaBerura.com), [LearnTorah.com](http://LearnTorah.com)  
A Lesson In Showing Gratitude**

The Tur (Rabbenu Yaakov Ben Asher, Germany-Spain, 1275-1349) writes that the three pilgrimage festivals – Pesah, Shabuot and Sukkot, when all of Beneh Yisrael would go to the Bet Ha'mikdash – correspond to the three patriarchs. The festival of Pesah corresponds to Abraham, Shabuot is

associated with Yishak, and the holiday of Sukkot relates to Yaakob.

The connection between Abraham and Pesah is reflected by the story of the angels' visit to his tent, which, according to our tradition, took place on Pesah. Shabuot commemorates the event of Matan Torah, the Revelation at Sinai, and our Sages teach that the Shofar sound that Beneh Yisrael heard at the time of Matan Torah was produced by a horn taken from the ram of Akedat Yishak. After Abraham placed Yishak upon the altar as a sacrifice, an angel ordered Abraham to withdraw his sword, whereupon he offered a ram as an offering in Yishak's stead. The horn from that ram was used as the Shofar when Beneh Yisrael received the Torah at Sinai, thus establishing an association between Shabuot and Yishak Abinu. Furthermore, Yishak embodies the quality of self-sacrifice, which is the fundamental basis underlying Kabbalat Ha'Torah – committing oneself to Torah and Misvot, the commitment which we commemorate and renew on Shabuot.

But while these associations are fairly straightforward, the connection between Yaakob and the holiday of Sukkot seems far more obscure. The basis of this association is a verse in Parashat Vayishlah (33:17), which tells that when Yaakob arrived back in Canaan after his peaceful reunion with his brother, Esav, he constructed a house outside the city of Shechem. The verse then adds that Yaakob built "Sukkot," shacks, for his cattle, and on account of these shacks the site was called "Sukkot." These "Sukkot" that Yaakob built for his sheep form the basis of the connection between him and the annual celebration of Sukkot.

How are we to understand this connection? Why is it significant that Yaakob built huts for his herds, and how does this relate to the festive occasion of Sukkot?

Rav Bergman explained that Yaakob built shelters for his cattle because he felt indebted even to his animals. The importance of "Hakarat Ha'Tob," gratitude, was so deeply ingrained within Yaakov's consciousness that it led him to feel appreciative to his flocks, which were his family's source of livelihood. Remarkably, he felt he owed it to his sheep to provide them with comfortable living quarters, which would protect them from the elements.

Yaakov's greatness in this particular area of gratitude can help explain a famous, but perplexing, account in the Midrash concerning the experiences of Yosef after he was sold as a slave in Egypt. The Torah

relates that his master's wife attempted to seduce him, but he resisted her advances and ultimately fled. The Midrash tells that Yosef nearly succumbed to his temptations, but then he saw the image of his father, Yaakob, at which point he immediately withdrew and fled. How did Yaakov's image help Yosef restrain his sinful impulse? How did this vision empower Yosef to resist?

Yaakov's image reminded Yosef of the extent to which the obligation of "Hakarat Ha'tob" extends. His father felt a debt of gratitude even to his animals. Certainly, then, he, Yosef, must show gratitude to his master, Potifar, who treated him well and cared for his needs. He was indebted to his master – how could he now commit adultery with his wife? It was by contemplating Yaakov's example of "Hakarat Ha'tob" that Yosef garnered the strength and resolve to avoid sin.

This is why Yaakov is associated with the festival of Sukkot, when we celebrate to give thanks to the Almighty for all we have. When the time comes to say "Thank you" to God, we are reminded of the example of our patriarch Yaakov, who took this value so far as to feel indebted to his animals.

We perhaps cannot be expected to feel grateful to our material possessions, as Yaakov did, but we must learn from his example, at very least, to show gratitude to the people around of us, and to God, for all we have. It is easy and convenient to criticize and to complain, but this is not the attitude we've inherited from our great patriarch. He has taught us to be grateful, to appreciate all we've been given, and to be thankful for what we have, rather than complain about what we don't have. This is the great legacy of Yaakov which we are obliged to preserve and pass down to the next generation.

**VICTOR BIBI  
SOD HAPARASHA  
THE DISLOCATION OF THE THIGH AND THE  
FLASK OF OIL**

Yaakov transfers his family and belongings to the land of Israel. We are then told that Yaakov returns to retrieve some small flasks פכים קטנים - which he had forgotten on the other side of the Yabbok River. There, he encounters the Angel of Esav who proceeds to wrestle with Yaakov. A few obvious questions must be asked. What causes him to forget these פכים קטנים small flasks? What is the nature of these פכים? What can we learn about the encounter with the angel and what was the nature of the struggle?

## YAAKOV LOSES THE BATTLE FOR HOD - HIS THIGH IS DISLOCATED

Our sages teach that there are ten Divine channels whereby the Creator dispenses spiritual influx into the worlds. The eighth is known as the channel of הוד Hod; which in relationship to the body of man is associated with his thigh. As we noted in a previous essay it appears as if the struggle between Yaakov and the Angel of Esav was for control of the eighth channel of הוד which is associated with the blessing given by Yishak to his son(s). The angel in his attempt to spiritually wrestle the blessing away was unsuccessful but was nevertheless able to damage or disjoin the thigh of Yaakov. In doing so the angel exposed the fact that Yaakov was susceptible in the area associated with הוד or the eighth blessing.

## THE ANGEL CONTROLS THE GID HANASHE - TEMPLE (HOD) DESTROYED

As a result the Torah forbids us, Yaakov's descendants, to consume the גיד הנשה the sciatic nerve located by the thigh. This sinew which is controlled by the Angel of Esav is 1 of the 365 sinews in man. This parallels the 1 day of תשעה באב also controlled by the Angel of Esav of the 365 days of the solar year. It was thru this form of negativity of the גיד הנשה that the eighth channel known as הוד is destroyed. As referenced in the Talmud (Ber 58) that Hod הוד is associated with the Bet Hamikdash בית המקדש. Hence as a result of losing control of this eighth channel we have the destruction of the both Temples (Hod) on that very same day of תשעה באב.

## THE פכים REPRESENT HOPE FOR THE FUTURE TO REGAIN THE CHANNEL OF HOD

The פכים were flasks of oil that Yaakov had used to pour on the stone that he had rested upon during his infamous dream at Bet-El of the angels ascending and descending the ladder. The Satan had caused him to forget the flasks on the other side of the river through the negative forces of forgetfulness שכחה. Namely via the negative power of this sinew הנהגה which means to forget. Once Yaakov returned to collect the flasks the Angel of Esav attempted to defile them. Yaakov however had kept them hidden & sealed through the use of certain הקדושים - holy names. As a result of the fight with the angel, Yaakov had lost the battle for the channel of Hod הוד; as it says ויגע בכף ירכו - The angel struck the socket of

his hip. However, the outcome of the war was not sealed. The socket called kaf כף having the same letters as פכ flask was only dislocated but still remained in tact. This is expressed in the fact that Yaakov did retain these פכים in his possession saving and protecting them for his future descendants. This would be known in a later era as the פך שמן - the flask of oil, by which his descendents would reveal the ultimate triumph when they would gain access once again to the spiritual channel of Hod.

## THE YEVANIM ATTEMPT TO TAKE CONTROL EVEN OF THE פכים ATTEMPTING TO COMPLETELY WIN THE WAR BEGAN BY ANGEL OF ESAV

The Syrian-Greeks Yevanim had temporarily usurped the position of Esav and his angel as the primary antagonist of Israel during the era of the Hashmonaim. Our sages reference their ascendancy as a world power from the verse in Bereshit על וחושך על פני תהום; "They are as a force of darkness who nourish from the face of the depth." The sages here are referring to their ability to nourish from the first three holy letters מנצ"ך of the five final letters of the hebrew alphabet. The latter are found only on the tails of hebrew words and are known as סופיות ending letters. Their position at the end of words relates to their susceptibility for negative forces to suckle from their holiness. The three letters מנצ"ך have a numerical value of 180, paralleling the years of Syrian-Greek hellenist rule. What remained in contention between the Syrian-Greeks and the Jews were these final letters of פ"ך. This evidently is the reemergence of the battle between Yaakov and the Angel of Esav regarding the פכ flask and כף socket. Through a series of harsh decrees meted out during the reign of the King Antiochus, the Greeks had the specific intent to permanently defile the spiritual channel of Hod. This included the defilement of the jars of oil which as noted earlier are associated with the Gid Hanashe. The Yevanim entered the היכל hekhal; the portal through which all spiritual influx flowed to the people of Israel. It was here that the Greeks gained access to a physical manifestation of the Torah's wisdom which was the oil of the Menorah. There, they contaminated all the oils that were in the היכל hekhal; attempting to permanently render impotent the wisdom of the Torah and take control of the channel of Hod. This attempt to cause the Torah to be forgotten was effectuated via the

negative force of the gid hanashe; as we noted earlier that **שחה** connotes forgetfulness.

#### HASHMONAIM ARE INHERENTLY CONNECTED TO THE **פנים**.

Additionally the Gemara notes that while a horn; **קרן** was used to anoint Kings of the Davidic dynasty, a flask; **פך** was used to anoint those who would ascend to the **מלכות** temporarily. As an expression of their service to wrestle the spiritual sparks associated with Hod back from the external force of Yavan, the Gemara (Shabbat 22) assigns them the appellation of Malchut bet Hashmonaim. A temporary kingdom of the Hashmonaim. Hence their ascendancy or anointment is solely associated with a **פך שמן** flask of oil.

#### THEY LOCATE THE OIL AND REALIGN THE SOCKET OF THE THIGH **כף** FOR ISRAEL. ALLOWING US THE GAIN CONTROL OF THE CHANNEL OF HOD

It is therefore befitting that they were the ones to search and find a single flask of oil. This **פך** according to the Talmud had the seal of the kohen gadol. According to a Hasidic source this seal was that of Yaakov Avinu who had retrieved the **פך** hiding it for a time, until it would be needed to help restore the channel of Hod and the Torah to Israel. For the characteristic of remembering in defiance to forgetting the Torah is reminiscent in the finding of the pure olive oil as it says in the Talmud (Horayot 13) that this oil has the power to return the learning of seventy years. This is an expression of the return of the wisdom of the Torah to its glory and the channel of Hod from the negative clutches of the Yevanim. This **פך** flask besides containing the oil, represented the two letters **כף** that remained aloof from the Yevanim as well as the realignment of the **כף** the socket of Yaakov. The light it provided would last for eight days reflecting the Tikun of the eighth spiritual channel of **הוד** Hod.

#### **Rabbi Wein** **HOORAY FOR THE MURDERERS**

The trend over the past century and especially in our current twisted times has been to try to discover the motives that drive people to kill other people. The victims being killed are many times unknown to their

killers and are personally innocent of any guilt in their death. Their fault lay in being of a certain race, nationality, religious belief and even simply (and unfortunately) being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

This mindset, of understanding the murderer while almost ignoring the murdered, reached new heights of official callousness, which bordered on idiocy. A Swedish official in that country's Foreign Ministry explained that the massacre of one-hundred, twenty-nine innocent people in Paris was caused by Israel's "occupation" of Palestine. Israel's provocative stance of defending itself from Palestinian terror somehow explains and may even justify the murderous behavior of the radical Islamist killers in Paris, is apparently how he explains the situation.

Well, Sweden is pretty much a hopeless case anyway as far as any sensibility regarding Israel is concerned, so we can rack up that statement as just Sweden being Sweden. But then along came John Kerry, the Secretary of State of the United States, who opined that the killings at the Charlie Hebo magazine in Paris a few months ago were understandable, though still illegal, since the magazine had sinned in publishing a cartoon of Mohamed in one of its previous editions.

This gaffe was immediately pulled back by the media people at the State Department and Kerry then stated that there was and is no justification whatsoever for that or any other terror attack. But his original statement on the matter was a most revealing insight into the thinking and value system that pervades much of America's foreign policy decisions today.

The media jumped all over John Kerry's words and criticized him for having spoken in such terms. But they did so for the wrong reason. They simply missed the point. They saw his words as weakening of a basic principle of Western democratic societies – that of freedom of speech. But the real gaffe was that of a lack of a true sense of morality, of right and wrong, of the inherent difference between the murderer and the victim.

Freedom of speech will be of little value in society if that society has lost its moral bearings and cannot clearly identify right from wrong. As always, Israel and the Jewish people are the canary in the mine. The world overlooked all Arab terrorism against Israel and Jews and then, surprise, surprise, New York, London, Madrid, Paris and Mali occurred.

There are no more good guys and bad guys left in our world. Moral equivalency reigns supreme. There

are only varying degrees of grey that exist, and good and evil are relative terms of reference, certainly not to be considered as being absolute. Israelis protecting themselves are just as innocent or guilty as Arabs stabbing them with kitchen knives!

The Arabs have a grievance. And that grievance is that the Jews had the temerity to build a strong, prosperous, democratic state in the midst of an Arab region of repression, violence and constant turmoil. The existence of such an infidel state is sufficient enough to justify boycotts, violence and hatred of Israel, Jews and Judaism worldwide.

Any sort of moral compass or direction has been completely obliterated. We should no longer punish or forcibly defend ourselves against the murderers. Rather, we should attempt to understand them, sympathize with them and then they will become docile and peaceful people. This Alice in Wonderland view of the world prevails in much of academia, media and government.

The President of the United States even refuses to give the murderers a name and an identity lest it sound provocative and derogatory to the murderers amongst us. Such a lack of moral clarity is foreboding for our future and for world society generally.

The European Union is busy labeling Israeli products while Europe is under Moslem siege from migrants, bombings and a culture war. Talk about misdirected priorities and inimical policies. But this is almost what can be expected from a society that cheers and understands murderers and evades any responsibilities to the victims. The injustice of this is appalling. However we should not be deterred from holding firm even in the face of such blatant hypocrisy and woolly-headed thinking.

Eventually truth and common sense will prevail though tragically it may take a few more Paris massacres to drive home the essential moral truth – that there is a difference between murderers and their victims. Stop understanding the murderers, just concentrate on destroying them

### **Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks Feeling the Fear**

It is one of the most enigmatic episodes in the Torah, but also one of the most important, because it was the moment that gave the Jewish people its name: Israel, one who “wrestles with God and with men and prevails.”

Jacob, hearing that his brother Esau is coming to

meet him with a force of four hundred men, was terrified. He was, says the Torah, “very afraid and distressed.” He made three forms of preparation: appeasement, prayer and war (Rashi to Gen. 32:9). He sent Esau a huge gift of cattle and flocks, hoping thereby to appease him. He prayed to God, “Rescue me, I pray, from the hand of my brother” (32:12). And he made preparation for war, dividing his household into two camps so that one at least would survive.

Yet he remained anxious. Alone at night he wrestled with a stranger until the break of dawn. Who the stranger was is not clear. The text calls him a man. Hosea (12:4) called him an angel. The sages said it was the guardian angel of Esau.[1] Jacob himself seems sure that he has encountered God himself. He calls the place where the struggle took place Peniel, saying, “I have seen God face to face and my life was spared” (32:30).

There are many interpretations. One, however, is particularly fascinating both in terms of style and substance. It comes from Rashi's grandson, Rabbi Shmuel ben Meir (Rashbam, France, c.1085-1158). Rashbam had a strikingly original approach to biblical commentary.[2] He felt that the sages, intent as they were on reading the text for its halakhic ramifications, often failed to penetrate to what he called *omek peshuto shel mikra*, the plain sense of the text in its full depth.

Rashbam felt that his grandfather occasionally erred on the side of a midrashic, rather than a “plain” reading of the text. He tells us that he often debated the point with Rashi himself, who admitted that if he had the time he would have written further commentaries to the Torah in the light of new insights into the plain sense that occurred to him “every day”. This is a fascinating insight into the mind of Rashi, the greatest and most famous commentator in the entire history of rabbinic scholarship.

All of this is a prelude to Rashbam's remarkable reading of the night-time wrestling match. He takes it as an instance of what Robert Alter has called a *type-scene*,[3] that is, a stylised episode that happens more than once in Tanakh. One obvious example is *young-man-meets-future-wife-at-well*, a scene enacted with variations three times in the Torah: in the case of Abraham's servant and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel, and Moses and Tsipporah. There are differences between them, but sufficient similarities to make us realise that we are dealing with a convention. Another example, which occurs many times in Tanakh, is *birth-of-a-hero-to-a-hitherto-infertile-woman*.



Rashbam sees this as the clue to understanding Jacob's night-time fight. He relates it to other episodes in Tanakh, two in particular: the story of Jonah, and the obscure episode in the life of Moses when, on his way back to Egypt, the text says that "When they were in the place where they spent the night along the way, God confronted Moses and wanted to kill him" (Ex. 4:24). Tziporah then saved Moses' life by giving their son a brit (Ex. 4:25-26).[4]

It is the story of Jonah that provides the key to understanding the others. Jonah sought to escape from his mission to go to Nineveh to warn the people that the city was about to be destroyed if they did not repent. Jonah fled in a boat to Tarshish, but God brought a storm that threatened to sink the ship. The prophet was then thrown into the sea and swallowed by a giant fish that later vomited him out alive. Jonah thus realised that flight was impossible.

The same, says Rashbam, applies to Moses who, at the burning bush, repeatedly expressed his reluctance to undertake the task God had set him. Evidently, Moses was still prevaricating even after beginning the journey, which is why God was angry with him.

So it was with Jacob. According to Rashbam, despite God's assurances, he was still afraid of encountering Esau. His courage failed him and he was trying to run away. God sent an angel to stop him doing so.

It is a unique interpretation, sobering in its implications. Here were three great men, Jacob, Moses and Jonah, yet all three, according to Rashbam, were afraid. Of what? None was a coward.

They were afraid, essentially, of their mission. Moses kept telling God at the burning bush: Who am I? They won't believe in me. I am not a man of words. Jonah was reluctant to deliver a message from God to Israel's enemies. And Jacob had just said to God, "I am unworthy of all the kindness and faith that You have shown me" (Gen. 32:11).

Nor were these the only people in Tanakh who had this kind of fear. So did the prophet Isaiah when he said to God, "I am a man of unclean lips." So did Jeremiah when he said, "I cannot speak: I am a child."

This is not physical fear. It is the fear that comes from a feeling of personal inadequacy. "Who am I to lead the Jewish people?" asked Moses. "Who am I to deliver the word of God?" asked the prophets. "Who am I to stand before my brother Esau, knowing that I will continue the covenant and he will not?" asked

Jacob. Sometimes the greatest have the least self-confidence, because they know how immense is the responsibility and how small they feel in relation to it. Courage does not mean having no fear. It means having fear but overcoming it. If that is true of physical courage it is no less true of moral and spiritual courage.

Marianne Williamson's remarks on the subject have become justly famous. She wrote:

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others." [5]

Shakespeare said it best (in Twelfth Night): "Be not afraid of greatness: some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em."

I sometimes feel that, consciously or subconsciously, some take flight from Judaism for this very reason. Who are we to be God's witness to the world, a light to the nations, a role model for others? If even spiritual giants like Jacob, Moses and Jonah sought to flee, how much more so you and me? This fear of unworthiness is one that surely most of us have had at some time or other.

The reason it is wrong is not that it is untrue, but that it is irrelevant. Of course we feel inadequate to a great task before we undertake it. It is having the courage to undertake it that makes us great. Leaders grow by leading. Writers grow by writing. Teachers grow by teaching. It is only by overcoming our sense of inadequacy that we throw ourselves into the task and find ourselves lifted and enlarged by so doing. In the title of a well known book, we must "feel the fear and do it anyway."

Be not afraid of greatness: that is why God wrestled with Jacob, Moses and Jonah and would not let them escape. We may not be born great, but by being born (or converting to become) a Jew, we have greatness

thrust upon us. And as Marianne Williamson rightly said, by liberating ourselves from fear, we help liberate others. That is what we as Jews are meant to do: to have the courage to be different, to challenge the idols of the age, to be true to our faith while seeking to be a blessing to others regardless of their faith.

For we are all children of the man who was given the name of one who wrestles with God and with men and prevails. Ours is not an easy task, but what worthwhile mission ever was? We are as great as the challenges we have the courage to undertake. And if, at times, we feel like running away, we should not feel bad about it. So did the greatest.

To feel fear is fine. To give way to it, is not. For God has faith in us even if, at times, even the best lack faith in themselves.

[1] Bereishit Rabbah 77:3.

[2] He sets this out in his commentary to Genesis 37:2.

[3] See Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*.

[4] Rashbam to Gen. 32:29. Rashbam also includes the episode of Bilaam, the donkey and the angel as a further instance of this type-scene.

[5] Marianne Williamson, *A Return to Love*, HarperCollins, 1992, 190.

### **AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL "And Jacob was exceedingly afraid and distressed" (32:8)**

The "Duties of the Hearts" (Shaar Bitahon, preface) states: "Among the benefits of Bitahon (Trust in Hashem) is the repose of the mind from worldly worries...And the joy at whatever he encounters... because of his trust that G-d would do to him only that which is the best for him."

Jacob surely was not deficient in trust in Hashem. Then why did his Bitahon not sustain him, and why was he 'exceedingly afraid' when he heard that Esav was coming with 400 men?

The answer is that the words of the "Duties of the Hearts" refer to circumstances that have no immediate or clear peril. We learn here an important law in the subject of Bitahon: Hashem desires that men become greatly afraid of Him when they see an immediate or clear peril confronting them.

The purpose is twofold:

- 1) To gain fear of Him and to recognize our need of Him and to call out to him for support.
- 2) To stir ourselves to immediate and energetic action to rescue the children of the living G-d so that they live and succeed in continuing to serve Him in this life.

The great fear and distress are bestowed upon men as a stimulus to accomplish these two meritorious achievements:

- 1) The outcry to G-d and the sharpened awareness that He alone is the Master of our lives.
- 2) The effort to rescue those (including one's self) whom He wishes that we rescue.

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