

# LET SLEEPING FOGS LIE

*by Shlomo Katz*

## **Hamaayan / The Torah Spring Edited by Shlomo Katz**

### **Vayishlach**

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Today's Learning:

Tevul Yom 1:3-4

Orach Chaim 25:1-3

Pesachim 111

Yerushalmi Beitzah 7

Ramban writes: This parashah was written to inform us that Hashem saved his servant and redeemed him from one who was stronger than he. This parashah further teaches us that Yaakov did not rely on his own righteousness, but instead took whatever steps he could to protect himself. [For example, Yaakov sent gifts to Esav while simultaneously preparing for war.]

In addition, Ramban writes, this parashah contains allusions to what will befall future generations, for all that occurred to our Patriarch in connection with Esav will repeat itself over and over between us and Esav's descendants [i.e., the Roman Empire and nations and religions that grew out of that empire.] Therefore, we should follow in the ways of the tzaddik and use the three tools that Yaakov was prepared to use: prayer, gifts to Esav, and defensive war.

Ramban continues: Chazal criticize Yaakov for sending messengers to Esav. Rather, in the idiom of the midrash, Yaakov should have let sleeping dogs lie. Similarly, in the time of the second Bet

Hamikdash, the Jewish kingdom invited the Romans into the Land and thus began the process that led to the end of Jewish independence.

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*"And Yaakov was left alone and a man wrestled with him . . . he struck the socket of his hip . . . Therefore Bnei Yisrael are not to eat the gid hanasheh/displaced sinew on the hip- socket to this day . . ." (32:25-26, 33)*

R' Yaakov Kaminetsky z"l (see page 4) writes: This "man" - Esav's guardian angel - was able to attack Yaakov precisely because Yaakov was alone. Had he been part of a tzibbur/congregation at that moment, he would have been safe from the forces of Esav.

Although the angel could not defeat Yaakov, he injured Yaakov's hip. According to Chazal, this is a euphemism for, and a symbol of, Yaakov's descendants. Why is this a reason not to eat the gid hanasheh? Because laws that restrict what we may eat unite us into a congregation and distance us from the descendants of Esav. (Emet Le'Yaakov)

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*"He [Esav] raised his eyes and saw the women and children, and he asked, 'Who are these to you?'  
"He [Yaakov] answered, 'The children whom G-d has graciously given your servant'." (33:5)*

The midrash Tanna D'vei Eliyahu Zuta (ch.19) explains this exchange as follows:

When Yaakov and Esav were yet in their mother's womb, Yaakov said to Esav, "Esav, my brother! We are two brothers and there are two worlds in front of us - This World and the World-to-Come. This World has in it eating and drinking, business, marriage and raising children, while the World-to-Come has none of these. If you would like, you take This World, and I will take the World-to-Come."

Esav agreed. However, when Yaakov returned from Lavan's house and Esav saw that Yaakov had wives and children and slaves, animals, gold and silver, Esav said to Yaakov, "Did you not say that I would take This World? Why do you have so much of This World - wives, children, money, and slaves?"

Yaakov answered him, "This is the small amount that Hashem gave me to use in This World as needed."

R' Shmuel Heida z"l ("R' Shmuel Hakattan"; died 1685) explains Yaakov's answer: "It is impossible to exist in this world without some possessions, but I do not seek any enjoyment from this world."

R' Heida adds that this also explains the prayer that the author of the Mishnah, R' Yehuda Hanassi (known as "Rebbe"), uttered on his deathbed. Rebbe was an extremely wealthy man and always had many types of delicacies on his table. Still, before he died, he lifted his fingers toward the heavens and proclaimed that he had never taken any enjoyment from this world. He then prayed, "May it be

Your will that I rest in peace."

Why did Rebbe pray thus? Because of his riches, it might appear that Rebbe had taken Esav's portion in This World and, therefore, was not entitled to a place in the World-to-Come. "No!" said Rebbe. "I never took anything from This World that was not essential [to maintaining my stature as the political head of the Jews]. Therefore, let me rest in peace in my place in the World-to-Come." (Zikukin D'Nura)

R' Akiva Yosef Schlesinger z"l (died 1922) explains Yaakov's answer to Esav differently. Yaakov said, "The children asher chanan Elokim/whom G-d has graciously given your servant." The word "chanan" implies a matnat chinam/an undeserved gift. In other words, "You are right; This World is yours, not mine. Even so, Hashem has given me these children as an undeserved gift." (Tosfot Ben Yechiel)

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*"Esav . . . went to a land because of Yaakov his brother." (36:6)*

Rashi writes (on verse 7): Esav traveled far away from Yaakov because he was embarrassed at having sold the birthright.

R' Yisrael Yaakov Lubchansky hy"d (see page 4) observes: Esav sold the birthright when he was fifteen years old. In our verse, he was at least 100 years old. Such is the effect of one foolish act; it may continue to embarrass a person almost a century later. (Ikvei Yisrael)

A similar thought: The patriarch Avram was 99 years old when his name was changed to Avraham. Yaakov was almost 98 when he received the name Yisrael (in our parashah). In contrast, Esav was only fifteen when he was given the name Edom. Moreover, he was given that name because of one improper remark (25:30 - "Pour into me now some of that very adom/red stuff").

In short, one must work a lifetime to earn a good name, but one foolish act in one's youth can assure a person a bad name. (Heard from R' Raphael Mendlowitz shlita)

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[In connection with our parashah's discussion of the relationship between Yaakov and Esav, the following teaching by R' Reuven Grozovsky z"l (see page 4) is relevant:]

Even when one must hate a rasha/wicked person, it should be because one actually loves him and feels a kinship with him; it should be because one feels immense pain at the fact that his brother is sullyng his pure soul. This is the meaning of the verse (Tehilim 139:22), "With the utmost hatred, I have hated them; they have become enemies unto me." The verse is asking a question: "I have hated them only because I love them. Why, then, have they become enemies to me?"

If one must pursue a rasha, it should be the way a homeowner pursues a mouse, not the way a cat

pursues a mouse. (Cats are glad that mice exist, for they enjoy pursuing them. Homeowners wish mice did not exist.) R' Moshe Cordevero wrote in Tomer Devorah (end of chapter 2), "In one's heart, one must love even the wicked and must pray that they repent and become tzaddikim." (Ba'ayot Ha'zman p.57-58)

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R' Simcha Avrohom Hakohen Sheps z"l

born April 18, 1908 or 1911 - died November 5, 1998 (16 Marcheshvan 5759)

This week marks thirty days since the passing of R' Simcha Sheps, a longtime maggid shiur/Talmud instructor at Yeshiva Torah Vodaas in Brooklyn. R' Sheps was born in Wysokie Mazowieckie, Poland (near Lomza).

At thirteen, young Simcha traveled to Baranovitch to study under R' Elchanan Wasserman and R' David Rappaport. At first, the yeshiva refused to accept the boy because it was already overcrowded; however, he announced that he would learn there anyway, but would not eat with the other boys in order not to be a burden on the yeshiva. For a period, the boy sustained himself by eating the scraps left behind by the other students. When this was discovered, he was invited to eat all of his meals in the home of the yeshiva's mashgiach/dean of students (presumably R' Yisrael Yaakov Lubchansky).

From age sixteen until World War II (except for 1936-37), R' Sheps learned in the Mir Yeshiva. He soon attracted the attention of the rosh hayeshiva, R' Leizer Yehuda Finkel, and the latter invited the young man to learn with him all night, every Wednesday night. R' Finkel reportedly said of his student, "You can awaken him at any time of the night and ask him about any part of the Talmud, and he will answer you." (The two years that he was not in Mir, he was in Brisk, studying under R' Velvel Soloveitchik.)

In 1941, R' Sheps escaped Europe through Siberia and Japan, and settled in New York. Soon after, he joined the faculty of Torah Vodaas, first as a tutor, and then, in 1943, as the substitute for the ill rosh yeshiva, R' Shlomo Heiman. After R' Heiman passed away and was replaced by R' Yaakov Kaminetsky and R' Reuven Grozovsky, R' Sheps continued delivering a daily shiur in the yeshiva.

When recalling their teacher, R' Sheps' students spoke not only of his Torah learning and teaching, but also of his love for them. R' Sheps had an income independent of the yeshiva and gave generously to support married students. He also was known for the trait of hakarat hatov/acknowledging the good done for him by others. He once insisted on attending the funeral of a chassidic rebbe with whom he had no particular connection only because he had once refreshed himself in the air-conditioned lobby of the rebbe's bet midrash. (Source: Yated Ne'eman, 24 Cheshvan 5759)

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