

AN ONGOING BATTLE

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Yitzchak his father answered, and said to him, "Your settlements will be in fat places of the earth, and from the dew of heaven above. You shall live by your sword, and serve your brother. But, when the time comes that you feel justified to complain, you will break his yolk from off your neck." (Bereishis 27:39-40)

We live in a very modern society, quite unbiblical. There are many people who live within it who believe in Torah, or the Bible, as some call it, but for the most part, it is a very secular world that does not really give too much credence to statements like the one above from the Torah. And, the religious, including those who are faithful to religions other than Torah, do not focus on the above verses in order to understand the dynamics of world history.

What they don't know can hurt them, and has certainly caused unimaginable suffering to the Jewish people. For, even though Eisav has greatly grown in number over the years, and even though the Jewish people have not, remaining still a very small portion of the world's population, nevertheless, the headlines are still disproportionately dominated by news of the struggle between the descendants of Ya'akov, and the descendants of Eisav. It's really quite amazing when you step back and consider it.

This means that when you read the newspapers, and you see articles that involve some form of conflict between the Jewish people and a Western nation, you are actually reading a current update of the ongoing battle between Ya'akov and Eisav. Therefore, if you pay close attention to what is actually going on and what is being said, you will be able to detect patterns that can be traced back to the Torah itself, and the original Ya'akov-Eisav battle.

This does not mean that the players know that they are functioning in these roles, or that they are even aware that they are the current generation of Ya'akov's and Eisav's, continuing the ancient conflict. How much more so is this the case when they are secular, not believing in the Divinity of Torah or of Jewish history. Rather, they make the mistake of thinking that everything they are thinking, saying, and doing, is only a function of their own line of reasoning, having nothing to do with God or His master plan in any way. They couldn't be more wrong.

However, this also means that if someone does believe that the Torah is the basis of all of history, every single moment of it, then he can consciously choose to play a role within it. Such a person can look Jew and gentile alike in the eye, and talk to them as he would anyone else in the modern world,

while at the same time wondering what is spiritually driving the person, from a Torah point of view.

This is especially so on the level of the leaders. People who play significant roles in history have significant souls, good or bad. If someone rises to the top of society, especially in such a way as to impact many others, especially if those "many others" happen to be Jews, then it is an indication that, from Heaven's point of view, he is a "somebody," a unique soul called into action at that point of history to further God's cause for Creation, one way or another.

That is the challenge of man, and in particular, the Jew. It is to not be fooled by the externalities, and taken in by the nuances of change from generation to generation. Yes, societies evolve, sometimes positively, sometimes negatively. Yes, the clothing changes, as do the "toys" and distractions, as technology advances. However, underneath all of those changes is the same man who has always existed, with the same primal instincts and motivations.

Likewise, though the Americans may now pursue what is called the "Saudi Initiative," an upbeat name for a deadbeat plan that has the Jewish people, God forbid, once again turning over Jewish land and developments to a hostile Arab people, in return for recognition that should have been automatic from Day One, it is not what it seems to be on the surface. It is not just the American people saying, "Hey, we all want peace. Don't you? Well, this is the best way to make it happen for everyone, so don't be stubborn, and just sign on the dotted line." This is Eisav working (today, in partnership with the Erev Rav) to undermine, and if possible, stop Ya'akov dead in his tracks.

The Zohar predicted this in many places. Later rabbis, such as the Vilna Gaon, warned us about it. They were real with Tanach, and saw all of history, past and present events, in those terms. They had to deal with Caesars and Roman Generals, kings, and priests, but they always saw the external aspects of the gentiles of their time only as the current clothing on an ancient adversary.

They didn't see things as we do today: we tend to look at the peoples of today's world as if they are the descendants of nations that only came into existence only after Tanach was closed, and therefore, as if they have nothing to do with ancient rivalries. We live as if Yitzchak's blessing to Eisav no longer applies, as if we can prevail at the same time that his descendants do, as if our success is not inversely related to his.

And, so they say. They approach the Jewish people and our land as if they are only addressing modern-day issues, as if what is going on today has nothing to do with what went on in the past, as if their solution to the Middle- East peace crisis is good for all of us, Ya'akov and Eisav alike. And, they sincerely believe it, because they do not understand their primordial feelings towards the Jewish people and Eretz Yisroel. Indeed, they don't even consider them to be primordial feelings at all!

And, so you might think to yourself, even if they are, what difference does it make to us? How does a Jew benefit from seeing such hidden realities driving the revealed ones, if the rest of the world is not on the same page?

Well, take a look at Europe, around 1929. Sure enough, there was anti-Semitism in different parts of Europe. However, for the most part, at least in the minds of the Jews living then, there was nothing Biblical about it. After thousands of years of being hated and abused, it would have been stranger to them if there hadn't been any anti-Semitism.

Then, in 1933, Hitler, y"s, came to power. Today, we know who he was today, because we have seen what he did. However, in the beginning, even Jews saw in him the possibility of financial redemption, a solution to the desperately dying Weimar Republic. Indeed, according to historical accounts, the gentile leaders of that time saw Hitler's, y"s, fascist movement as a messianic movement.

Yes, there were concerns amongst the Jews about his writings and speeches, which had clearly been anti-Semitic. However, most probably, they had assumed, or at least hoped, that once in power, Hitler, y"s, would mellow out, and only focus on restoring financial stability for everyone, leaving the Jewish people alone.

Even by 1938, after Kristallnacht revealed where Nazi Germany was headed, Jews living through it still only held their breath and hoped that the latest bout of anti-Semitism would pass quickly, and do minimal damage to Jewish lives and property. Few, it seems, stood up and questioned that maybe what was happening was part of something far bigger than they had previously assumed, and that, perhaps, it demanded examination, analysis, and perhaps even a new approach to life in exile.

In retrospect, the Holocaust was an event of biblical proportions. In hindsight, it seems as if it was an Amalekian attack on the Jewish people, perhaps a deadly threshold over which we had to cross to get to the next stage of redemption. Regardless, events occurring between 1938-45, we now appreciate, were far more "meaningful" than we had imagined at the time, and our error in judgment resulted in disaster.

To be fair, there were people living through all of it who suspected that something biblical was happening. They saw Hitler's, y"s, unusual rise to power, and his mesmerizing control over the minds of the German population, as signs of something unique, something quite ominous. Some even picked up and fled Europe for a distant country, surviving the war as a result, though others, at the time, had mocked them for doing so. That is the difference, and it is a fundamental difference. When people and events can be seen in biblical terms, then they can also be seen as Divine methods to accomplish biblical tasks. Then, a person, with such a perspective, can surmise where history is going, even though, at the time, and on the surface, it might not yet be apparent. And THAT, saves property, and in many cases, lives as well.

With that in mind, take a look at the rapidly changing world around you. Study it well, especially the parts that will definitely impact the future of the Jewish people, and ask yourself, "From a Torah perspective, what might all of this be leading to?" You may not like the answer you come up with, but it can, nevertheless, be the source of your very own survival.

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