

THE WORLD-TO-COME

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Ya'akov said, "Sell me your firstborn birthright." Eisav said, "I'm about to die! For what do I need the birthright?" (Bereishis 25:31-32)

This is one of the greatest deals of all history, but it has an inherent contradiction. Eisav came home from the fields hungry enough to die. He asked Ya'akov to feed him from the food he was making, which Ya'akov agreed to do if Eisav would sell him the right of the firstborn. Eisav accepted the offer based on the fact that the right of the firstborn would be worthless to him if he died, so a deal was struck.

However, implicit in Eisav's words was that, should he live, the firstborn right would be of value to him. Therefore, Ya'akov trapped Eisav in a kind of a Catch-22: in order to live, you have to surrender that which you value while alive, which is why, perhaps, Eisav makes the following statement later on:

"Is that why they named him Ya'akov? He has tricked me twice. He took my birthright, and now he has taken my blessing!" (Bereishis 27:36)

Regarding the blessing that Yitzchak had just given Ya'akov, Eisav was absolutely right: no deal had been made between him and Ya'akov regarding who gets the blessing. However, with respect to the right of the firstborn, Eisav had signed off on that, even if under duress. He had only himself to blame for losing the birthright.

Or, perhaps this is exactly what Eisav meant. Yes, he agreed to sell the birthright to survive, but Ya'akov had tricked him, or so Eisav had thought, or at least wanted to believe, into making the deal in the first place. Somehow, Eisav complained, Ya'akov was responsible for Eisav selling the birthright against his better judgment, something he only realized after he regained his senses, which he could only do once he was no longer desperate to survive.

What Eisav failed to take into account was why he was desperate for food in the first place, namely because he had been out in the fields doing all kinds of terrible things. Indeed, Ya'akov wouldn't have even wanted the birthright had Eisav not acted in a way unbefitting of the future leader of the Jewish people. Ya'akov had been more than content to sit quietly in the tents of Torah, learning all day long, leaving the the day-to-day running of the Jewish nation in the hands of some other capable and worthy descendant of Yitzchak Avinu. It had been Eisav's own behavior that forced

Ya'akov to take up a more direct role in the future of the Jewish people.

But that's Eisav (and Yishmael for that matter as well), for you: blame the Jewish people for their own problems, and even kill them just to avoid facing the truth.

Ya'akov was the trickster?

Only to combat the trickiness of Eisav, Lavan, and all the dishonest and self-centered anti-Semites over our long and often torturous history. They trick us a matter of life; we have had to trick them as a matter of survival.

Which brings me to the following article from The Blaze (November 7, 2011):

In a "faux pas" for the ages, President Barack Obama conducted what he assumed was a private conversation about Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with French President Nicolas Sarkozy after the G20 summit on Thursday. The only problem, however, was that the microphones the two men were wearing from their earlier press conference, had not in fact been turned off. What ensued was a major public embarrassment after both Obama and the French PM disparaged Netanyahu, saying they cannot "stand" dealing with him. According to a Monday report in the French website "Arret sur Images," Sarkozy told Obama, "I cannot stand him [Netanyahu]. He is a liar." Rather than exercising diplomacy, however, Obama hopped on the bash-wagon, reportedly telling Sarkozy: "You're fed up with him, but I have to deal with him every day!" According to Ynet, a member of the media confirmed Monday that "there were discussions between journalists and they agreed not to publish the comments due to the sensitivity of the issue." That explains why the world has not heard about the incident until now. Even more troubling, is the fact that journalists are meant to expose the truth, not hide it. While it perhaps comes as no surprise that Obama harbors little affection for the Israeli PM, to have his true feelings revealed publicly in such a manner highlights the disingenuousness of any of his past complimentary sentiments for Netanyahu, and thus, is truly a cringe-worthy moment for the president.

It is amazing that this event took place at all, especially since it is not the first time such a faux pas has occurred in the past. This is nothing short of amazing Hashgochah Pratis, and I think it is important to learn from it what it has to teach.

How many Jews over the ages, while being captured, taken hostage, tortured, and finally killed, have asked the question either to themselves or their captors, "What have I done wrong?" We have minded our own business, paid our taxes, and have contributed to the betterment of the society in which we live, and the ones beyond our borders. In our minds, we have been model citizens (recently, with some notable exceptions), and have hidden behind our social standing as a form of protection, only to find out that it was paper-thin and that we were still contemptible in the eyes of our enemies, as if guilty of the most heinous of crimes.

Our first mistake is in assuming that we have to do something wrong to be guilty in Eisav's world. All that has to happen for us to be guilty in Eisav's world is for him to make a mistake, for which he has no trouble blaming us, and that happens all the time. The question is never, "Why are they coming after us?" The question is, "Why haven't they come after us more often?"

This is the meaning of the saying:

It is a law that Eisav hates Ya'akov. (Midrash HaGadol 28:1)

When you like someone, everything he does wrong becomes a reason to forgive, and even judge him to the side of merit. However, when you hate someone, just the opposite is true: everything he does wrong becomes a reason to hate him more and condemn him.

It is even worse when we do something right. Then our haters have to go out of their way to find reasons to unearth demerits. I see this a lot when reading some of the comments of readers of articles praising, once-in-a-blue-moon, the Israelis for some contribution they have made to society. The detractors cannot say thank you, but quickly revert to some irrelevant criticism that usually is based upon opinion and not fact. "Got ta hate those Jews," you can almost hear them saying.

Even still, the main battle for the Jew at the End-of-Days, explains the GR"A, is not what we might think it is, as the following article by Caroline Glick of the Jerusalem Post points out.

Jewish American Community in Danger

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This year at Jewish Federations of North America's annual General Assembly, they invited the newly minted anti-Israel activist Peter Beinart to speak. They also showcased the Boston Globe's resident anti-Israel columnist James Carroll. These moves as well as much of the program of the 3-day conference which presented several panels discussing whether anti-Zionists should be embraced by the community are indicative of the advanced suicidal tendencies of the American Jewish community. This is a community that has for generations seamlessly merged its definition of Judaism with leftist politics. And now that this generation of leftists has cast its lot with the anti-Semites, the young American Jews coming of age have embraced anti-Semitism to show their moral purity. It may have once gone without saying, but apparently it is no longer obvious that this embrace of Jew hatred by young American Jews is a death embrace for the community.

We have a technical term for Jews who are so left as to actually become anti-Semites in their own right: Erev Rav. Literally, it means Mixed Multitude, and traditionally it has referred to the Egyptians

who converted to Judaism and whom Moshe Rabbeinu took out of Egypt with the Jewish people. However, over the generations, it has come to refer to Jews who are so assimilated and influenced by non-Jewish values that they make themselves into enemies of the Jewish nation.

Regarding the Erev Rav, the GR"A writes the following:

Armeliush, the angel of the Erev Rav, is the one who attempts to join Eisav and Yishmael, and this could destroy Israel and the entire world, God forbid. The main desire of the Erev Rav is to join Eisav and Yishmael and to separate the two Moshiachs (i.e., Moshiach Ben Yosef and Moshiach Ben Dovid). Our main task is to counter, even battle such deeds; we must destroy the might of the Erev Rav, the klipah of the wicked Armeliush, and drive them out of Israel. The Erev Rav is our greatest enemy, for it separates the two Moshiachs. The klipah of the Erev Rav operates only by delusions and indirectly. Therefore the war against the Erev Rav is the most difficult and bitter, and we must fight it and overpower them with all our might. Anyone who does not participate in the war against the Erev Rav, is actually becoming a partner with the klipah of the Erev Rav. Such a person would have been better off not being born. (Kol HaTor, Chapter 2:2)

Until recently, such a prediction might have been confusing. However, today it is quite clear, thanks to J Street and its adherents who masquerade as Jews working on behalf of the Jewish people when in fact they work against us and Jewish values. They are so influenced by Western values and leaders that they have bought into the false history that has given rise to the Palestinian lie, and work to unite Edom and Yishmael against Israel.

They have even become anti-Semitic, which of course is what makes them so dangerous. For, when gentiles say about the Jewish people what the Erev Rav says, they are called anti-Semitic. However, when the Erev Rav says it, they are called introspective, self-honest, puritans, courageous, when in fact what they really are is self-hating.

In fact, the placard of a Peace Now activist read, "It takes courage to make peace." In another part of the world, that might be true, but over here in the Middle-East it takes something else altogether different: blind faith in a process that was dead before it began. In this case, it takes a lack of intelligence to make peace, because the only peace that can result is spelled p-i-e-c-e, referring to the Arab demands for more Jewish land, and the war that will probably follow.

This is the reason why it has taken so long to make peace: the Arabs are not capable of making it. They are only able to manipulate others, and one another, to at least make themselves feel as if they get their cake and eat it too. It is their culture, always has been, as history and the Torah points out, which is why they keep teaching death to the Jews while at the same time telling us to trust their intentions.

However, all along governments and organizations have ignored those nitty-gritty facts, as if they are peripheral. But that's because, for many governments and organizations, Israel's security is peripheral. Contrary to what we Jews want to believe, the world does not care that much about us, and the ones that do, unfortunately, are not in a position to do much about it. And for Jews without Jewish pride, that is too much to handle and they would rather join them than beat them.

So, unfortunately, though we are one of the most peace-loving nations in the world, we are in a constant state-of-war. We are blamed for the shortcomings of others, and heavily criticized for the ones we really have. And, if the war is not physical, it is verbal, or psychological, none of which we can ever truly win. The best we can do, it seems, is buy time until the next war starts, just like Ya'akov Avinu had to keep running even after he wanted to settle down.

There are many reasons for this, but the most prominent one is that we are a fish out of water. This is not our world, just a stop along our way home to the World-to-Come. For Eisav and the Erev Rav, this is it. It does not get much better, which is why they keep trying to squeeze this world for all it will give.

The Jewish people, on the other hand, are only passing through. This world is just a stepping stone to our final destination, and it can be slippery at times, and rather dangerous. The nations of the world have constantly told us that we don't really belong here, and you know what, they are right, just not for the reasons they think. In fact, if they truly understood where we're actually heading, they would make us more welcome here than they do.

In the meantime, we have to persevere and make the best of each moment, using it to increase our portion in the World-to-Come. As we have seen throughout history, the Shechinah is always with us, protecting us, provided that we remember on our own that this world is not where it is at, and that the next one is.

Text

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