YAAKOV'S LESSON

by Rabbi Berel Wein

As is well known, our father Yaakov is the prototype for the future generations of the Jewish people descended from his loins. Thus when Yaakov after a long, painful, dangerous and crippling experience in exile returns to his ancestral home he wishes only to dwell in peace and tranquility with himself and his neighbors. But immediately there descends upon him the ongoing tragedy of Yosef and his brothers which will occupy the latter decades of the life of Yaakov.

In fact it will now dominate his life completely, not allowing restful sleep or spiritual growth. In his sadness over the disappearance of Yosef he becomes disconnected from God's spirit, so to speak, and is distracted from his vocation and goal of promoting monotheism and Godly values in an otherwise pagan world. Returning to the Land of Israel has not solved any of Yaakov's difficulties in life. In fact, it has exacerbated them. It is in the Land of Israel that his beloved wife Rachel dies and it is in the Land of Israel that his beloved son Yosef is sold as a slave by his own brothers.

Yaakov's daughter Dena is assaulted and her brothers Shimon and Levi resort to brutal violence to free her from Shechem and return her home. All of this is in the Land of Israel, the "promised land" of holiness and goodness. How ironic that all of these events and struggles should befall Yaakov in his beloved homeland, the Land of Israel. Having come home at last from decades long exile, Yaakov apparently felt that his troubles were behind him. But in fact they were just beginning.

There is a great parallel in all of this to our current situation here in the Land of Israel and in the Jewish world generally. We thought, that returning to the Land of Israel en masse and establishing a Jewish sovereignty within its borders would solve our problems. Herzl promised an end to anti-Semitism, Ben Gurion promised world acceptance, Golda Meir and Moshe Dayan promised security and safety, Rabin and his successors promised peace. Sadly none of these promises have been realized.

The Land of Israel guarantees us no material benefits. Just as Yaakov did, so too do we face bitter internal divisions, violence, abductions, enmity and tragic deaths. In fact many if not most of the problems that Jews and Jewish society as a whole faced in the Exile are still omnipresent and sometimes even in a more virulent form here in Israel today.

We also wish for peace and tranquility, to dwell peacefully with our neighbors and ourselves. So far this goal has escaped us. But the lesson of Yaakov's life is perseverance and tenacity. That is the lesson and agenda for us as well. The ride may be a very bumpy one but the road, nevertheless,

leads to greatness and the ultimate tranquility and peace that we all crave. Yaakov stays the course because he has no other alternatives. That is most probably the lesson and prediction for us as well.

Shabat shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com

Text Copyright © 2006 by Rabbi Berel Wein and **Torah.org**