

# MYSTERIOUS EVENTS

*by Rabbi Berel Wein*

Life generally and Jewish life particularly, is unpredictable, surprising, mysterious and enigmatic. Yaacov expects that after his encounter with Lavan and Eisav the worst is behind him. But the fun is just about to begin. Who could predict that after the sibling controversies between Yishmael and Yitzchak, Yaacov and Eisav that the greatest sibling controversy in Jewish history would now begin?

All sorts of mysterious and inexplicable events conspire to bring this story along. Why does Yaacov give Yosef a special tunic and show such favoritism in front of his other children? Why does he send Yosef on such an apparently dangerous mission to find his brothers? Who is the mysterious man that leads into the lair of Shimon and Levi? And why is the final result of all of this the sale of Yosef as a slave destined for Egyptian bondage?

Later in the parsha, how does Yehuda commit such an apparently immoral act and why is he nevertheless rewarded as being the ancestor of Jewish royalty and messianic destiny? And why does Peretz push his way out of his mother's womb ahead of Zerach?

The Torah grants us no answers to any of these fantastic events. Midrash offers various comments and interpretations to help us somewhat understand this chain of events. But at the end of the story, it all remains one great enigma wrapped in heavenly mystery. I am very poor at solving mysteries or explaining very difficult, complex torah issues and biblical narrative. Therefore I content myself with observing in wonder the story that the Torah relates to us.

The prophet Yeshayahu taught us that God's ways are not our ways and that his guiding hand in all human affairs remains invisible, mysterious and most wondrous. This is the basic thrust of how Jewish tradition viewed not only Biblical narrative but all of Jewish and human history.

In our time the Holocaust was unforeseen unbelievable and even after its occurrence it is still subject to denial by millions of people. Who could have imagined a Jewish state emerging in the Land of Israel against internal and external odds, expectations and predictions? And how, after millennium of Torah tradition and ritual observance would that State bring forth as an apparent bastion of secularism and even atheism?

Yet all of this has happened, and the wonders of Jewish life continue to expand before our very eyes. Israel has become much more of a Jewish state than a socialist one. Anti-Semitism has never been stronger and yet the Jewish people have never felt as emboldened and strong as it is today.

The enormous rebirth of Torah scholarship and study within the Jewish people the world over and especially here in Israel is perhaps the greatest surprise of our time. All of this should make us wary of expert predictions, all-knowing politicians and other savants who claim to know our future and what is really in our best interests. Mysteries of the parsha are themselves the message of the parsha.

Shabbat Shalom,

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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](http://www.rabbiwein.com)