

# NEITHER YOUR BITE NOR YOUR KISS

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

*These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: Tape # 75, Tombstones.*

*Rabbi Frand respectfully requests that people should daven and learn for the benefit of Rabbi Yitzchak Isbee. [Yitzchak ben Chaya Rochel] Good Shabbos!*

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## Guarding Against Esav the 'Biter' as well as Against Esav the 'Kisser'

This week's parsha teaches us how Yaakov has to deal with Esav in order to survive in Galus [exile].

We read the story of Yaakov, who, with great trepidation, was meeting Esav for the first time after all these years. Yaakov offers a prayer to G-d: "Please save me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esav..." [Bereishis 32:12].

Yaakov's prayer contains an apparent redundancy -- "the hand of my brother, the hand of Esav." Shouldn't Yaakov have said, "save me from the hand of my brother, Esav?" However, the pasuk [verse] seems to indicate a prayer to be saved from two different people -- from his brother and from Esav.

Rav Shlomo Breur gives a very nice insight into this 'redundancy.' Rav Breur says that there are in fact two individuals about whom Yaakov is worried. Yaakov is worried about Esav -- the rough sibling who is out to kill him. But Yaakov is also worried about being saved from the hand of his 'brother.'

Esav can have two faces. He can be the Esav who will kill you, have pogroms against you, try to throw you out of his country and have Inquisitions against you. We certainly have to be saved from this Esav.

However, there is another disguise that Esav uses, and that is the loving brother. This is not the Esav that kills you, it is the Esav that loves you. But the Esav that loves you is sometimes as dangerous as the Esav that will kill you. If we have lost hundreds and thousands and even millions of Jews to the Esav that kills us -- we are losing hundreds of thousands of Jews to the Esav who loves us, the Esav that wants to marry us, marry our sons and daughters, and who offers us "salvation through love."

This is Yaakov's prayer. Save me from Esav *and* save me from my brother.

The Pardes Yosef comments on a later pasuk [33:4], where the Torah says that Esav kissed Yaakov (vayishakeihu). The word 'vayishakeihu' has dots on top it. Rash"i explains that Esav really wanted to bite Yaakov, but the Medrash says that Yaakov's neck turned to stone and Esav wasn't able to bite him, so instead Esav kissed him.

The Pardes Yosef quotes a Yalkut that Esav said, "I won't kill Yaakov with bows and arrows, but with my mouth and my teeth..." In other words, I will kiss him to death. That is to say, Esav tries two approaches. First he tries biting; but if biting doesn't work, then the other approach is kissing. A Jew can be literally kissed to death.

This is what Chaza"l are telling us -- we need to be on guard against both the Esav who wants to shoot arrows and against the Esav who wants to stretch out his hand.

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### **The Legacy of 'Gid HaNashe'**

With this approach, Rav Breur says a beautiful insight in the chapter of the 'Gid HaNashe' and makes some beautiful inferences ('diyukim').

The Torah tells us of the battle that Yaakov has against the Angel of Esav. This is such a crucial event in Jewish history that the Torah wants to remind us about it for all time. As a result of this event, the Torah says "Therefore the Children of Israel do not eat the 'gid haNashe'" [32:33]. Every time we sit down and eat a kosher meat meal we are constantly reminded why we are we not eating porter-house or T-bone steaks or sirloin. The reason is because of this incident.

Since the Torah makes a reminder for this event, to be remembered for all generations, clearly the Torah wants us to learn something from the event. What does the Torah want us to learn?

The pasuk tells us that "Yaakov remained alone. A stranger wrestled with him until just before daybreak. When the stranger saw that he could not defeat him, he touched the upper joint of Yaakov's thigh. Yaakov's hip joint became dislocated as he wrestled with the stranger" [32:25-26]. At this point, the Torah does not mention any manifestation of consequence resulting from the incident.

Later [32:31], the pasuk says that Yaakov named the place Peniel, saying, "I have seen the Divine face to face, and my soul has withstood it." The next verse [32] continues "the sun rose and was shining upon him as he left PenUel" (rather than Penlel) and then concludes "He was limping because of his thigh." This is the first time we learn that Yaakov has a physical impairment as a result of his wrestling with the Angel. Why didn't the Torah tell us 5 verses earlier that as a result of the battle Yaakov was limping?

Rav Breur says that this parsha is telling us that during the struggle in the night, when Yaakov was

struggling with the Angel of Esav and Esav tried to damage him, there were no lasting effects. We have had Inquisitions and pogroms and Holocausts. Unfortunately, we have lost many. But a lasting effect on Yaakov is not visible, because we can cope with that Esav. That battle we can withstand.

However, when "the sun rises," when it becomes brighter, when it becomes an age of Enlightenment, when things become good and fine and secure [the sun connotes the new bright day], when Esav shines his face upon Yaakov, takes him into his society, accepts him as an equal, shows him the kiss, shows him the shake of the hand -- that is when it is obvious that "he is limping on his thigh." The effects of the "hand of my brother," of assimilation, of the loving brother Esav are devastating. That is what is going to kill us. That is what is going to damage us permanently.

When Yaakov meets Esav at night, and succeeds, he calls it Penlel. This is the Face of G-d. But when the dawn arrives and we get the 'brotherly love' of Esav, then it is PenUel. Meaning 'penu E-l' -- G-d clears away, He leaves. When one is fighting and must struggle with Esav, one can be assured of Penlel -- the Face of G-d is present. One knows that "I'm a Jew and he's Esav." It may be tough, it may be difficult, but one knows he is a Jew and he knows this is the Face of G-d.

However, when the "sun comes up" and Esav tries to 'love you to death,' then it becomes 'Penu El' -- G-d, so to speak, turns away. Then, the real impact is evident -- "and he limps on his thigh."

This is the legacy of 'gid haNashe' -- to know that Esav can try to kill us and extinguish us and burn us, but we can survive. We must be afraid, however, of the 'hand of my brother,' the 'and the sun rose upon him,' the Esav that would have our sons marry his daughters and his daughters our sons, and who would offer his "salvation through love." That is the Esav that leaves the lasting effect of "he limped upon his thigh."

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## Vocabulary

**Galus** -- Exile

**Gid HaNashe** -- (literally the displaced nerve), sciatic nerve, the large main nerve of the lower extremity running down the back of the leg. Since it is very difficult to remove this nerve with all its branches, practically speaking Jews do not eat the hindquarter of the animal.

**fleisheke** -- (yiddish) meat

**goy** - Gentile

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## Personalities & Sources:

**Rav Shlomo Breur** -- (1850-1926) succeeded father-in-law R. Samson Rav Hirsch as Rav in Frankfurt, Germany

**Rash"i** -- (1040-1105) R. Shlomo Yitzchaki "Father of all Torah commentaries"; Troyes and

Worms,France.

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion (#75). The corresponding halachic portion for this tape is: Tombstones: Halachic Questions and Answers. The other halachic portions for Vayishlach from the Commuter Chavrusah Series are:

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