

In this week's *Parashah*, we read about the reunion of Yaakov and Esav. Seemingly, Yaakov humbled himself before Esav and Esav's entire attitude toward Yaakov changed, as we read (33:3), "[Yaakov] bowed earthward seven times until he reached his brother. Esav ran toward him, embraced him, fell upon his neck, and kissed him; then they wept."

If so, asks R' Moshe Zuriel z"l (1938-2023; *Mashgiach Ruchani* of Yeshivat Sha'alvim and a prolific author), why did Yaakov reject Esav's further peace overture (33:12), "Travel on and let us go--I will proceed alongside you"? Instead, Yaakov replied (33:14), "Let my lord go ahead of his servant; I will make my way at my slow pace . . . until I come to my lord at Se'ir"--a promise Yaakov has not yet fulfilled (see *Rashi z"l*).

The truth, writes R' Zuriel, is that the encounter between Yaakov and Esav is an encounter between two approaches to life that cannot be reconciled. Esav is a slave of his desires. He will never stop trying to fulfill those desires and will never stop trying to kill Yaakov. Even when he hugged Yaakov, seemingly sincerely, he was like a wrestler hugging his opponent--always picturing himself crushing the other. Yaakov knew this, and he never really subdued himself before Esav. Rather, when he appeared to bow down seven times, he really was taking pains to avoid looking a *Rasha* (Esav) in the face.

R' Zuriel adds: With *Chanukah* approaching, it is a propitious time to beware modern-day Hellenists who think the solution to anti-Semitism is imitating or mixing with Esav's descendants and their culture. (*Otzrot Ha'Torah*)

Shabbat

"This is the song of praise of the seventh day: that on it G-d rested from all his work."

(From the *Shabbat* morning prayers according to *Nusach Sefard*)

R' Don Segal *shlita* (Yerushalayim and Brooklyn, N.Y.; a leading contemporary teacher of *Mussar*) asks: How is it a praise of *Hashem* that He rested on the seventh day? To the contrary, if He had continued creating for another day, He would have demonstrated His greatness and glory that much more!

R' Segal answers: The *Gemara* (*Megilah* 31a) teaches, "Wherever you find *Hashem's* greatness, there you find His humility." That is the praise expressed by our prayers, *i.e.*, that *Hashem* could have demonstrated his greatness even more by creating for another day, but He held Himself back, so-to-speak, as an expression of His humility.

R' Segal continues: We find this trait of *Hashem* mentioned elsewhere in the context of Creation. We read (*Bereishit* 1:26), "*Elokim* said, 'Let us make man'." Who is "us"? Our Sages explain that *Hashem* was consulting with His *Bet Din* / the Heavenly tribunal. Does *Hashem* need advice from angels? Moreover, the use of the plural in this verse permits heretics to argue that there is more than one G-d! Nevertheless, say our Sages, *Hashem* is willing to run that risk in order to teach humility--*i.e.*, that even He Who does not need advice sought advice and considered it. Thus, where we see the greatness of *Hashem*--*i.e.*, in creating man--we see His humility.

R' Segal adds: Another act of humility evident in Creation is that *Hashem* hides the true awesomeness of His deeds. Indeed, the word "*Olam*" (*עולם*) / "world" is related to the word "*He'elem*" (*העלם*) / "concealment." Imagine, writes R' Segal, if someone from our era met a person from 1,000 years ago and described to him air travel, telephones, etc. Of course, his words would be met by incredulity. Yet, all of the natural forces that make this technology possible have always existed; they were merely hidden, waiting to be revealed when *Hashem* decided the time was ripe.

(*Ma'adanei Shabbat* p.126)

Hamaayan / The Torah Spring

10815 Meadowhill Road, Silver Spring, MD 20901 / 301-775-9623

Send e-mail to: TheTorahSpring@gmail.com

Back issues at: www.TheTorahSpring.org

Donations to *Hamaayan* are tax deductible.



“These are the sons of Yaakov, who were born to him in Padan Aram.” (35:26)

The *Gemara* (*Makkot* 23b) teaches: “Six hundred thirteen *Mitzvot* were said to Moshe at Sinai.” However, the *Gemara* never lists the 613 *Mitzvot*, leading many *Rishonim* / sages of the early Middle Ages to propose their own lists of which items to include in the 613 Commandments.

R’ Moshe ben Maimon *z”l* (*Rambam*; 1135-1204; Spain and Egypt) writes in the introduction to his list: It is not proper to count among the 613 *Mitzvot* any enactments of the Sages, only Commandments whose origin is the Torah itself. He continues: It should not be necessary to say this, but I saw that some wanted to include such things as lighting *Chanukah* candles and reading *Megillat Esther*, which are Rabbinic enactments, not Torah laws.

Ramban (see facing page) defends those who include *Rabbinic* enactments in the list of 613 *Mitzvot*. He explains: Even though the *Gemara* says that 613 *Mitzvot* were said to Moshe at Sinai, the *Gemara* could mean that there are 613 *Mitzvot* and most of them were said to Moshe at Sinai, but some were not. Even the Torah itself speaks this way, *Ramban* writes, for our verse says, “These are the sons of Yaakov, who were born to him in Padan Aram.” In fact, one of Yaakov’s sons who is listed (Binyamin) was not born in Padan Aram; he was born in Canaan. However, the Torah, and likewise the *Gemara*, makes general statements that encompass the majority of cases.

(*Sefer Ha’mitzvot: Shoresh Rishon Im Hasagot Ha’Ramban*)

R’ Chizkiyah ben Manoach *z”l* (France; 13th century) writes: Even though Binyamin was not born in Padan Aram, he was born as a result of a prayer that was uttered in Padan Aram. Specifically, when Rachel had her first child, she named him “Yosef,” saying (30:24), “May *Hashem* *Yosef* li / add on for me another son.” As such, it is as if Binyamin, too, was born in Padan Aram.

(*Chizkuni*)

Based on the *Chizkuni*, Rabbi Yonason Sacks *shlita* (*Rosh Ha’yeshiva* of Beis Medrash L’Talmud-Lander College) explains the *Gemara* (*Berachot* 54a) which states: If one sees the rock on which Moshe sat during the battle with Amalek, he says the blessing, “Who performed a miracle for me in this place.” Did the miracle occur where Moshe prayed? Seemingly, the miracle occurred on the battlefield down below. However, just as the Torah teaches that Binyamin was “born” in the place where his mother prayed for his birth, so too Amalek was defeated in the place where Moshe prayed for its defeat.

(*Shiur* at Yeshivat Kerem B’Yavneh, 15 *Cheshvan* 5784)

“Yaakov became very frightened . . . I have been diminished by all the kindnesses and by all the truth that You have done [for] Your servant.” (32:8, 11)

Rashi z”l explains: Yaakov feared that the acts of kindness that *Hashem* had already performed for Yaakov combined with any sins Yaakov may have committed would prevent the fulfillment of *Hashem*’s promise to return Yaakov home safely. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R’ Moshe ben Nachman *z”l* (*Ramban*; 1194-1270; Spain and *Eretz Yisrael*) teaches: Anyone who has *Bitachon* / trust in *Hashem* necessarily has *Emunah* / faith in Him as well. But not everyone who has *Emunah* has *Bitachon*, for one may worry that he is unworthy of *Hashem*’s protection because of his sins. One whose *Bitachon* is complete, however, does not share that worry; rather, he trusts in *Hashem*’s promise no matter what.

Ramban continues: According to the above, Yaakov’s fear of Esav was wrong. However, one could say that Yaakov interpreted *Hashem*’s promise (28:15), “I will guard you wherever you go,” as assuring only the physical safety of Yaakov and his immediate family. That promise did not necessarily guarantee the safety of all of Yaakov’s servants and property. True, *Hashem* also promised (*ibid*), “I will not forsake you,” but that would be fulfilled even if Yaakov suffered some property loss; it did not assure that Yaakov would emerge from his encounter with Esav completely unscathed. Notably, when Yaakov divided his camp for safety, he did not divide his family, only his servants and property. This is reasonable behavior even by someone who has *Bitachon*, if his intention is to avoid troubling *Hashem* [*i.e.*, to lessen the need for *Hashem*’s interference in nature].

(*Ha’emunah Ve’ha’bitachon* ch.1)

R’ Yosef Yozel Horowitz *z”l* (1847-1919; the *Alter* of Novardok) writes: In reality, a person should not let his sins interfere with his trust in *Hashem*, as *Ramban* states. Thus, we read (*Tehilim* 32:10), “Many are the agonies of the wicked, but as for one who trusts in *Hashem*, kindness surrounds him.” This means that even a wicked person, who is full of sins, will be surrounded by *Hashem*’ kindness if he trusts in Him.

Nevertheless, Yaakov had good reason to fear the consequences of sin. Yitzchak had blessed Esav (27:40, as understood by *Rashi*), “When *Yisrael* will transgress the Torah and you will have reason to feel aggrieved about the blessings, then you will pull his yoke from your neck.” Yaakov was not secure from Esav if Yaakov had sinned, because Esav had been blessed that he could take advantage of Yaakov’s sins. This unique situation justified Yaakov’s fear, notwithstanding his level of *Bitachon* generally.

(*Madregat Ha’adam: Ma’amar U’vacharta Va’chaim* ch.5)