

SHABBAT LASHEM

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תנועת בני אקיבא
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PARASHAT VAYISHLACH | ISSUE 08

ELI MAMAN | BOGER DVAR TORAH

After decades of separation, Yaakov is about to meet Esav and try to reconcile their differences. In order to prepare for the encounter Yaakov sends emissaries to Esav. “Thus shall you say, “To my lord, to Esav, so said your servant Jacob: עַם לְבוֹן גֵּרְתִּי, I have sojourned with Laban and have lingered until now” (Genesis 32:4).

Rashi explains on a simple level that Yaakov was stating that he became neither an officer nor a prince. He remained a sojourner. Therefore, Esav has no reason to bear ill will. Rashi then gives another explanation. He explains that there was a cryptic message hidden within the words. The word גֵּרְתִּי has the numerical value of 613, corresponding to the number of mitzvot. Yaakov is telling Esav, “during my stay I have kept the 613 mitzvot, and I have not learned of Lavan’s evil ways”. Isn’t this statement redundant? If Yaakov kept the 613 mitzvot in the house of Lavan then it is obvious that he did not learn from his evil ways! Why repeat it?

Rav Emanuel Feldman once said the following in response to a survey regarding the state of orthodoxy in America:

“Can it be truly said that today’s Orthodox individual is any less self-indulgent, less hedonistic, less undisciplined than those who don’t perform mitzvot? Disagreements within the Torah community are

not always models of civility and restraint. Tzniut in dress is not always extended to tzniut in words. Is it truly possible in this day of resurgent Orthodoxy to have a shul with a proper mechitzah yet you can’t hear the Torah reading because the noise volume is so high? To be fully observant but to adopt the worst attitudes of the society around us and still claim to be Orthodox? Is it possible to be observant and yet never think about what God wants of us, but only of what we want of God?”

Strong words.

Perhaps Yaakov’s message to Esav is a message to each one of us. Esav was no barbarian. As Rav Simcha Bunim would say, “Esav wore the rabbinical garb as well!”

So, Yaakov told him, I kept all the mitzvot. But that means nothing. One can keep all the mitzvot, they can sway in the synagogue with fervour and rally against gossip. But, unfortunately, they can still learn from Lavan’s devious ways.

Therefore, Yaakov’s statement is hardly redundant. We need him to say both: I kept the mitzvos and did not learn from Lavan’s crafty ways. We need to keep the codified mitzvos, but we also must make sure to keep the mitzvos that are uncoded as well. We must not only keep the commandments, we cannot learn from Lavan’s ways. Shabbat Shalom.

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December 02
Kislev 14
5778

Shabbat
Times

London
In: 15:40
Out: 16:48

Manchester
In: 15:35
Out: 16:42

Leeds
In: 15:31
Out: 16:38

Oxford
In: 15:40
Out: 16:47

Cambridge
In: 15:33
Out: 16:40

Bristol
In: 15:46
Out: 16:54

Birmingham
In: 15:39
Out: 16:46

Jerusalem
In: 15:55
Out: 17:24



RAV AHARON HERSKOVITZ | RAV SHALIACH

At the beginning of this week's parsha, Yaakov prepares for his encounter with Esav in a variety of different ways. The Ramban has an introduction to the parsha, in which he explains the lessons the story is meant to teach us. As part of this, he writes:

יש בה עוד רמז לדורות כי כל אשר אירע לאבינו עם עשו אחיו יארע לנו תמיד עם בני עשו, וראוי לנו לאחוז בדרכו של צדיק, שנומין עצמנו לשלשת הדברים שהומוין הוא את עצמו, לתפלה ולדורון ולהצלה כדרך מלחמה לברוח ולהנצל, וכבר ראו רבותינו הרמז הזה מן הפרשה הזאת כאשר אזכיר.

“Additionally, there is a hint for the future generations, that everything that happened to our forefather with his brother Esav will happen to us always with the descendants of Esav, and it is proper for us to grasp the way of the tzaddik [Yaakov], that we prepare ourselves for the three things that he prepared himself: prayer, a gift and salvation through the way of war by running and being saved, and our Rabbis already saw this hint from the parsha, as I will mention.”

In other words, we are meant to look at the actions of Yaakov in his dealings with Esav and emulate them. This is an expansion on the idea of אבות סימן לבנים “An action of the fathers is a sign for the children”, which the Ramban and others mention over the course of the stories regarding the Avot and Imahot. In other contexts (for example, Bereishit 12:6), it seems clear that the Ramban understood this concept to mean that there is a spiritual or mystical connection between their actions and ours. The Ramban there views this connection as being twofold, and directed at both our ancestors and their descendants. There, he describes that Avraham first came to the city of Shechem “to hint to him that his descendants will conquer this place first before they get the rest of the land”. In other words, it's a message to Avraham, letting him know what the future will bring for his children.

Additionally, he explains that the actions of our ancestors are a type of “preparation” for us. He gives examples where prophets told kings to perform certain symbolic actions that had later military effects and writes “And know, that when any Divine decree that leaves the realm of [merely] decree and becomes an action [even to a slight degree] the decree will be at least partially fulfilled.” In other words, when the forefathers do something, such as travelling the length and breadth of the Land of Israel, this aids the fulfillment of the Divine decree that their children will eventually walk that same land.

In our parsha, however, the Ramban's use of this concept is fundamentally different: it is not merely a hint to Yaakov, nor is it a mystical action of his that still affects us. Rather, we, as the descendants of Yaakov, are tasked with actively examining his actions and trying to understand lessons from his story.

This responsibility includes learning positively from his example, such as preparing ourselves for different possibilities by acting on multiple fronts (prayer, gifts and war). Additionally, we must as well learn negatively from his example, as evidenced by Chazal's criticism of Yaakov's attempt to reach out to Esav at all. There are a series of midrashim at the beginning of the parsha that end with the statement of Hashem: לדרכו היה מהלך והיית: “(see for example Bereishit Rabbah 75:1-3)- “[Esav] was walking on his path [i.e. minding his own business] and you send to him saying “This is what Yaakov says”?!”

On a very deep level, our forefathers act as signposts for our path: both in a mystical way, and also as models for our interactions with others, our relationships with Hashem and our communal decisions. May we all learn from them as best possible.

DVAR HALACHA: WEEKLY QUESTION

Have a question? Please email rav@bauk.org or call Rav Aharon at 07976642135.

Question from Salford BA: Sviva activities have begun ending around the time Shabbat ends. Many of the chanichim go directly home, and therefore would not hear havdalah as part of maariv in shul. To ensure that everyone hears havdalah, may we make havdalah with all of the chanichim together, even if we have not yet davened maariv?

Answer: The Magen Avraham (489:7) discusses counting Sefirat HaOmer before davening maariv, and mentions explicitly that one may as well make havdalah before saying maariv, as it is already considered night time (additionally, he extends this

to making kiddush on Friday night). This psak is echoed by the Mishneh Berurah (ibid, note 18). Both point out that it is forbidden to do any melacha until making havdalah, and it therefore seems that whomever will be handling the candle should preferably recite the words “Baruch HaMavdil Bein Kodesh LiChol” before doing so.

Over and above the halachic permissibility of making havdalah before maariv, in the situation as you described I would consider it preferable to recite havdalah at the end of the sviva activities, to ensure that as many chanichim as possible hear havdalah in addition to having it take place as a communal and educational event. May you continue your great work!



**Applications for Tafkidim for camp are still open!
Contact hannah@bauk.org to apply.**



**WINTER
MACHANE**
5778
21st-28th December 2017
To apply: www.bauk.org/machanot
For more information: hannah@bauk.org

COMMUNITY UPDATES

Our **Golders Green Sviva** have their Shabbat Halrgun this week! They have an amazing 56 chanichim participating over the weekend. We wish them much success for their Shabbat - it is great to see this Sviva growing in strength and energy!

Bogrot in London have started a **Gemara Chabura** on Thursday evenings. They are learning Mesechet Taanit and being taught by our Rabbanit Shlichah, Shira Herskovitz. We wish them luck on this new project.

Shabbat Bogrim was this past weekend. Over 40 bogrim joined together in Stoke-on-Trent for a Shabbat. We had such a lovely atmosphere that even the snow couldn't dampen our spirits!

Our Rav Shaliach visited Bogrim in LSE

for a Lunch and Learn and Cambridge for a Dinner and Discussion. **If you would like to arrange a visit please contact rav@bauk.org.**

Limmud was relaunched this past week as the **'Bnei Akiva Beit Midrash'** program. 27 Chanichim and 8 Bogrim spent time learning together in multiple chaburot. Our Beit Midrash program offers another opportunity for Chanichim to engage with Torah and the **education of Bnei Akiva**. It takes place every week on Wednesday in the London and Manchester Bayit, from 7pm to 8:30pm. Open to Year 7 to Year 13.

Drash and Drams will be taking place on the 12th December. If you would like to find out more contact joe@bauk.org.

