

# LAMPLIGHTER

13 Kislev  
Parshas  
Vayishlach  
**1324**  
1 December  
5778/2017

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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portion, Vayishlach, describes the encounter between Jacob and his brother Esau, after Esau had sent 400 armed men announcing his arrival. Their meeting, which threatened to be confrontational, actually turned out amiable - "Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him; and they wept."

Why this change of Esau's intentions? Rashi explains: Esau's mercy was aroused when he saw Jacob prostrating himself before him so many times. Rashi continues by quoting Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai: Despite the fact that Esau hates Jacob, Esau's compassion was stirred at that time and he kissed him with his whole heart.

Rabbi Shimon used the word "halacha" to describe the fact that Esau hates Jacob. Halacha, which means religious law, emphasizes something about the nature of Esau's hatred toward Jacob: it is as immutable and timeless as are the practical laws of Torah. Rabbi Shimon wished to teach us that we should not try to rationalize Esau's hatred of Jacob by ascribing various reasons or motives to it; it is a hatred rooted in Esau's very essence. If and when we find an instance of Esau's positive behavior toward Jacob, we should realize that it is an exception to the rule - "his compassion was stirred at that time."

This saying of Rabbi Shimon also found its expression in his own personal life. Rabbi Shimon lived under the yoke of Rome, and suffered under the harsh decrees issued against the Jewish nation. He, in particular, suffered greatly because of his own staunch opposition to the Romans, and was forced to hide in a cave for 13 years, together with his son. Yet it was precisely this same Rabbi Shimon who traveled to Rome to have the anti-Jewish decrees rescinded, and was successful!

The story of Rabbi Shimon illustrates both sides of the coin: the unchangeable nature of Esau's hatred and persecution of the Jews, and the triumph of one who was particularly renowned for his opposition to Roman rule.

We learn from this a valuable lesson in how to relate to our oppressors during this long and bitter Exile:

On the one hand, a Jew must not rely on the mercy of the nations, because we know that Esau's hatred toward Jacob is a given fact. At the same time, it is within the power of every Jew to command respect from the non-Jews by maintaining his pride and adherence to the Jewish way of life.

When a Jew is unbending in his commitment to Torah and mitzvot, it positively influences the nations, so that "Esau's compassion was stirred and he kissed him with his whole heart." Not only does this command respect, but it brings about Esau's cooperation and even assistance in helping the Jew to keep his Torah.

## Wrestling With a Torch

By Menachem Feldman

The Hebrew language, also called "the Holy Tongue," has a significantly smaller vocabulary than the English language. Yet it contains deep mystical insights. Every Hebrew word has a root word of two or three letters, which can then take different forms. And so, two words that seem unrelated often have similarities at the root level. These connections between seemingly unrelated words often express deep mystical truths.

In this week's Torah portion, there is a beautiful example of a connection between two seemingly unrelated words. The Torah tells the story of Jacob returning to the land of Israel, traveling to meet his brother, Esau, after a 20-year stay in Haran. The night before he meets his brother, Jacob encounters a mysterious man, and they wrestle all night long: "Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn."

Who is this man? What is the meaning of this encounter? A closer look at the words used to describe the event allow us to see what is happening on a deeper level.

First, let's examine the meaning of the Hebrew word used for "wrestle." The Hebrew word is V-Y-A-V-K (ויאבק). The root of the word is A-V-K (אבק), which is also the root of a seemingly unrelated word, "torch" (A-V-U-K-H אבוקה).

What possible connection can there be between "wrestle" and "torch"?

There are many forms of battle. In the modern era, battles are fought from great distances. Soldiers sitting at computers in Nevada are operating drones that conduct warfare over the skies of the Middle East and Africa. Wrestling, however, is a completely different form of battle. To wrestle is to come up close to the enemy. Two people wrestling are literally hugging each other.

Let's return to the story of Jacob wrestling with the mysterious man. The sages teach that the man wrestling with Jacob was no ordinary man. He was Esau's guardian angel disguised as a man. Before Jacob could reconcile with his brother, Esau, he first had to wrestle with Esau's guardian angel. The Kabbalists elaborate, explaining that Jacob and Esau represent conflicting aspects of life: spiritual and material, body and soul. Body and soul are in constant warfare, each trying to draw the other towards what they appreciate and enjoy. The body tries to pull the soul towards materialism, while the soul tries to pull the body towards spirituality.

This struggle between body and soul is not fought via intercontinental ballistic missiles. Body and soul are not waging warfare from different continents. Body and soul are literally hugging each other; they are as close to each other as two entities can possibly be. Body and soul are wrestling.

With its use of a single root word for "wrestle" and "torch," the Holy Tongue teaches us about the goal of this wrestling match between body and soul. The goal is not to obliterate material concerns and pleasures from one's life. The goal is to create a torch. A torch is not a single candle, but many points of combustion merged together. To create spiritual light, the soul must not retreat from the world; it must embrace the material world and fuse it into a torch of light. It must use the objects and pleasures of the material world as a tool to spread spiritual light. It must use the material blessings it has and fuse them into a torch, producing light, warmth and inspiration to illuminate the world.

We wrestle with the material, we embrace it, we elevate it. We weave it into our soul's torch.

# Slice of LIFE

## Berl's Jewish Roots

By Eliyahu Schusterman

The story I am about to tell you is true. The names have not been changed to protect anybody or for any other reason.

Tuesday night, 23 Shevat 5755 (January '95), in Nizhny Novgorod, (Russia) there was a major snowstorm. My partner, Simcha Backman, was in Moscow putting together a seminar for the upcoming Shabbat. As I opened my eyes and noticed all the new snow, I told myself that after just a few more minutes of sleep, I would get up to go to the Synagogue. That is when the phone rang, and my day started. And what a day it was!

"Hi, this is Nina (the shul cook). Three Tzyiganers just walked into the shul. They said their father died and they want to give him a Jewish burial."

"Nina," I asked, still trying to perfect my Russian, and thinking that she must be talking about turtles or something, "what are Tzyiganers?" "I can't really explain it over the phone. Why don't you come to the Synagogue and you will understand it when you're here."

When I walked into the shul, I saw one very drunk Tzyiganer, with his son and his brother-in-law. This guy was very big and very drunk. He told me that the previous night, he celebrated the marriage of his son. After the wedding, his father wasn't feeling well and later that night returned his soul to its Maker. "One thing my father wanted," said the drunk guy whose name was Paska, "was that when he died he should be buried completely according to Jewish law."

I took a glance at my Russian-English dictionary, at the word "Tzyiganer." It means Gypsy!!! These guys were dark colored, and I had

figured they were from Georgia or one of the countries in that area, but GYPSIES?! I said to him, "But why did your father want a Jewish burial?"

"Well, he was Jewish! His name was Beryl, his father, Asher, and mother, Rachel. His last name was Tzyerulnik."

Well, that was enough for me. I told them that first I had to daven and eat breakfast, and then I would go with them. In the meantime, they should find a cemetery in town that would give them a plot.

In Nizhny Novgorod there are a number of Jewish cemeteries, but they are reserved for family members. This fellow was not poor and he said he would be willing to put down five lemons (Russian slang for five million rubles) if they would give him a plot.

I quickly said the morning prayers, ate breakfast and then, with them, headed over to the cemetery. Since the snow covered the streets it took us one-and-a-half hours for what should have been a half-hour ride. It turned out that even with his money they wouldn't give him a plot. I told him that I wasn't going to schlep with him to the other four Jewish cemeteries in town. I told him that we should go to his house where I would do the tahara [the ritual purification of the body], and then they could look on their own for a plot.

When a person dies, it is a Russian custom to drink until you can't drink any more. (This is also the Russian custom on many other occasions). That is exactly what this guy was doing the whole way to the cemetery and to his house. He was also doing a lot of talking. The story he told me illuminated the extent of the exile in general and the Russian exile in particular.

His father, Beryl, was born to a Jewish family named Tzyerulnik in the Ukrainian city called Charkov. His parents knew little of their Yiddishkeit and therefore handed down very little to their son. During World War II, they moved to Kazakstan where the parents died. Beryl, not knowing anything at all about being Jewish, fell

in love with a Gypsy girl and married her. They had eight children. Twenty-seven years ago he moved to Gorky (now Nizhny Novgorod) and it was here he found out that he was Jewish.

He met up with one of the few Jewish elders in the city who told him that he was Jewish and even brought him to one of the secret minyans in the city. That was the extent of his Yiddishkeit, but it was enough to spark this Jewish soul of his that lived among the Gypsies, enough that at least he should tell his son that he wants a Jewish burial.

We traveled an hour-and-a-half to his house at the other end of the city. Again, I was shocked by the sight before my eyes. Ten Gypsy women and five Gypsy men, dressed in Gypsy garb were sitting around their father's dead body and feasting on chicken, vodka and other delicacies. Another Russian custom!

I told them that according to Jewish law this was a disgrace to the dead person. Before I could blink an eye they had cleared out. I did the tahara and they drove me back to the shul.

Friday they picked me up early in the morning and we went to the cemetery. They wanted to do everything according to the law, so only Jews were going to be involved in the burial. No Gypsies. That meant myself and the Jew that was with me, would have to do everything ourselves. We carried the body and said all the proper prayers. Then we buried him.

And so a Jew, who for the first half of his life didn't even know he was Jewish, and the second half, lived among Gypsies, was laid to rest according to Jewish law. It was probably the first and last mitzva he fulfilled. If this is not exile, then what is? May the memory of Beryl Ben Asher be a blessing to us all.

May Hashem look down with mercy on His children and see the purity of a Jewish soul, and bring us to the Redemption when we will witness the fulfillment of "those who rest in dust will arise and sing."

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### WEEKLY VIDEO



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# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

## If Your Soul Is Starving...

By the Grace of G-d  
20th of Kislev, 5736  
[November 24, 1975]  
Brooklyn, N.Y.  
Greeting and Blessing:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of Rosh Chodesh Kislev [November 5, 1975]. I was pleased to note your determination to advance in matters of Yiddishkeit [Judaism], in actual commitment as well as in gaining more knowledge. There is the assurance of our Sages that "He who is determined to purify himself, receives help from On High," and "A person sanctifies himself a little here on earth, and he is sanctified a great deal from Above." If even a "little" sanctification brings forth a great deal from Above, how much more so more than a little.

I trust that you are maintaining contact with the Lubavitch people in —, who will surely be glad to help you in every way possible.

I would like to add a few words in connection with greater "awareness" which you mention in your letter - a point which my saintly father-in-law often emphasized by the following illustration: When a person is hungry or thirsty, and desires to know how food and beverages satisfies hunger and thirst, the way to go about it is to actually begin eating and drinking to still his hunger and thirst, which will also enable him to better and more quickly understand the process of digestion. If he should attempt to reverse the order, and try to understand the process of digestion first, he will not have the mind or heart to understand it, and may never understand it. At first glance, it may seem puzzling how such physical things as food and drink can nourish and cultivate the mind. But the fact is indisputable. If this is so in the physical aspect of life, it is certainly so in the spiritual aspect of life. In order to develop a greater awareness and sensitivity and appreciation of Torah and Mitzvot [its commandments], the first thing is to satisfy the hunger and thirst of the Neshama [soul] through the actual performance of the Mitzvot in the daily life. If a Jew is in such a state that he does not even feel the pangs of hunger and thirst for Yiddishkeit, this makes it even more vital for him to begin with the actual observance of the daily Mitzvot.

As usual, our Sages of blessed memory express the above in a few concise words, when they emphasized that the Torah was accepted by the Jewish people on the principle of Naaseh v'Nishma, putting Naaseh (we will do) before v'Nishma (we will understand).

At this time, before Chanukah, I send you prayerful wishes for a bright and inspiring Chanukah, and may all things go with you in a manner of "increasing the light," in accordance with the message of the Chanukah lights which are kindled in growing numbers from day to day.

With blessing,  
M. Schneerson

## QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

With Rabbi Aron Moss

### Should the Torah be Rated PG?

**Question:** I have a three-year-old who is quite bright. I try to read to her and teach her as much as I can about stories from the Torah, but recently it's become increasingly difficult. It seems like every story in the Torah needs to be edited for children. I find myself confused all the time with what I am supposed to teach her. Adam and Eve sinning and being thrown out of the Garden of Eden, G-d destroying the world with a flood, the Ten Plagues visited on the Egyptians. Should the Torah be rated PG?

**Answer:** It's funny: all these stories you mention, kids have absolutely no problem with them. It's we adults who have the issues. We have become morally queasy. But our kids need moral clarity.

Adam and Eve did what they were told not to, and they were punished. The generation of the flood was corrupt and was destroyed. The Egyptians who threw Jewish babies into the Nile were punished, after ignoring one warning after another, with the horrible plagues. The message is unmistakable: evil catches up with you. You can get away with it for a while, but not forever. A three-year-old gets that.

Now, of course, the world is not all black and white, people are not all good or all evil, and not every choice is between absolute right and wrong. Life is full of gray areas, nuances and subtleties, and in most moral dilemmas the lines are not so clearcut. But subtlety is for adults. A child needs the security of seeing things in black and white. Rules have to be plainly expressed; borders have to be sharply defined. Good is good and will be rewarded. Bad is bad and will be punished. Children struggle when things are vague and wishy-washy. They thrive on clarity.

We as parents need to be unequivocal about what is right and wrong, and the consequences of choosing the right way or the wrong way. This is the most important lesson you can teach your child. And that is the theme of the entire Torah. In a world of moral equivalence, this message needs to be communicated loud and clear.

Your child has an inner moral compass, but you need to help her cultivate it. Develop her sense of good and evil, and she will grow to be a morally healthy adult, PG (please G-d).

## A WORD

from the Director

*The first Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman, was imprisoned on trumped up charges of anti-government activities. We celebrate his release from prison on the 19th of Kislev, December 7 this year.*

*During his imprisonment, one of the Czar's officers - having heard of Rabbi Shneur Zalman's keen intellect and outstanding genius in all areas of life - engaged him in a conversation.*

*The officer had an unsolved question. "It says that Adam 'hid' after he sinned by eating fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. When G-d wanted to speak with Adam, He asked him, 'Where are you?' Didn't G-d know where Adam was?" asked the officer.*

*Rabbi Shneur Zalman replied, "The Bible is eternal and its message is for all times. G-d was inquiring of Adam, and of all his descendants for all time, 'Where are you? Where do you stand in the fulfillment of your life's mission? How much have you accomplished today and what do you intend to accomplish tomorrow that will help you fulfill the special task with which you have been entrusted?'"*

*The question "Where are you?" is asked every day of each one of us.*

*The answer has to come from a place that goes beyond names, titles, affiliations and job descriptions. To be able to properly respond, our answer has to come from our very essence. For G-d does not direct the question to Adam or Eve, to Michael or Jennifer. He directs it to you: "Where are you?"*

*Being able to answer the question requires understanding who "you" are. The Chasidic teachings of Rabbi Shneur Zalman - the dissemination of which was the true cause for his imprisonment - explain that "you" are comprised of a G-dly soul and a body chosen by G-d at Mount Sinai.*

*Torah, primarily as elucidated by Chasidic teachings, can help us understand these components of ourselves. Together with that understanding comes the ability to begin to answer the question, "Where are you."*

J. I. Gutnick

# A Story From Our Past

## The Pearl from G-d

Rabbi Chiya and Rabbi Shimon ben Chalafta were learning Torah together in the great study hall in Tiberias on the afternoon before Passover (according to some, it was the afternoon before Yom Kippur), when they heard people talking loudly. Rabbi Shimon asked Rabbi Chiya, "What are they doing?"

Rabbi Chiya said, "Those who have are buying groceries, and those who have nothing are going to their employers to demand their pay."

Rabbi Shimon said, "If that's what's going on, I'm going to go to my Employer and He'll pay me, too."

He left the city and went to pray in a cave near Tiberias. Soon he saw a hand stretch out and offer him a valuable pearl. He brought the pearl to Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi, who asked him, "Where did you get this? It looks priceless! Take these three dinars, buy all you need in honor of the holiday, and after the holiday we will spread the word and see what price it fetches."

Rabbi Shimon took the three dinars, went shopping and went home. His wife saw what he'd bought and asked, "Shimon, have you become a thief? Where did you get this?"

"It's from G-d," he said.

"If you don't tell me where you got it, I won't taste even a bite of it," his wife said.

"I prayed to G-d, and He gave it to me," he said.

"In the world to come, all the righteous ones will be sitting under canopies that are laden with jewels. Are you telling me that you won't mind if your canopy has a pearl missing?"

"What should I do?" he asked.

"Go return all the things you've bought, give the money back to whoever loaned it to you, and return the pearl to its owner."

When Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi heard that Rabbi Shimon had changed his mind about accepting the pearl, he summoned Rabbi Shimon's wife and told her, "You're causing your righteous husband a lot of anguish!"

She asked him, "Do you want his canopy to have a pearl less than yours in the world to come?"

"And if his is lacking, do you think that there's no righteous person who will be able to give him one?" countered Rabbi Yehuda.

"Rabbi, I don't know if we'll get to see you in the world to come. Doesn't each righteous person have his own abode there?" she asked.

Rabbi Yehuda admitted that she was right.

When Rabbi Shimon heard the outcome of the conversation, he returned the pearl. When he'd taken the pearl, Rabbi Shimon's palm had faced up; when he reached out to return it, his palm was down, the angel's hand was under it, as if he were giving a loan to G-d.

The rabbis said, "The second miracle was greater than the first, since it's the way of the heavens to give but not to take."

## Was That a Blessing or a Curse?

Rabbi Yonatan ben Asmai and Rabbi Yehudah ben Geirim had been studying in Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's house of study. They bid him farewell at night. The following morning, they came and said goodbye to him again.

He asked them, "Didn't you say goodbye to me last night?"

They answered, "Rabbi, you taught us that a student who says goodbye to his teacher and spends the night in the same city has to say goodbye to him again."

"These are fine men," he told his son. "Go to them and let them bless you."

His son went to them. "What do you want?" they asked him.

He said, "My father told me, 'Go to them and let them bless you.'"

They said to him, "May it be G-d's will that you will plant and won't harvest; you will bring in and won't bring out; you will bring out and won't bring in; your home will be destroyed, while your inn will be inhabited; your table will be disordered; and you won't see a new year."

He went back to his father and said, "Not only didn't they give me a blessing—they cursed me!"

"What did they say?" he asked.

His son told him.

"Everything that they told you is a blessing: 'You will plant and not harvest' means you will have children who won't die in your lifetime. 'You will bring in and won't bring out' means that you will bring daughters-in-law to your home, and your sons won't die young, leaving your daughters-in-law to return to their fathers. 'You will bring out and won't bring in' means that you will marry off your daughters to men who won't die young, so that your daughters won't have to return to your home. 'Your home will be destroyed, while your inn will survive'—this world is an inn, while the grave is your home—that means you will live a long life. 'Your surroundings will be disordered' by your children. 'You won't see a new year' means that you'll have only one year of being a newlywed—your wife won't die, leaving you to marry another woman."

## PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

Jacob returns to the Holy Land after a 20-year stay in Charan, and sends angel-emissaries to Esau in hope of a reconciliation, but his messengers report that his brother is on the warpath with 400 armed men. Jacob prepares for war, prays, and sends Esau a large gift (consisting of hundreds of heads of livestock) to appease him.

That night, Jacob ferries his family and possessions across the Jabbok River; he, however, remains behind and encounters the angel that embodies the spirit of Esau, with whom he wrestles until daybreak. Jacob suffers a dislocated hip but vanquishes the supernal creature, who bestows on him the name Israel, which means "he who prevails over the divine."

Jacob and Esau meet, embrace and kiss, but part ways. Jacob purchases a plot of land near Shechem, whose crown prince - also called Shechem - abducts and rapes Jacob's daughter Dinah. Dinah's brothers Simeon and Levi avenge the deed by killing all male inhabitants of the city, after rendering them vulnerable by convincing them to circumcise themselves.

Jacob journeys on. Rachel dies while giving birth to her second son, Benjamin, and is buried in a roadside grave near Bethlehem. Reuben loses the birthright because he interferes with his father's marital life. Jacob arrives in Hebron, to his father Isaac, who later dies at age 180. (Rebecca has passed away before Jacob's arrival.)

Our Parshah concludes with a detailed account of Esau's wives, children and grandchildren; the family histories of the people of Seir, among whom Esau settled; and a list of the eight kings who ruled Edom, the land of Esau's and Seir's descendants.

## CANDLE LIGHTING



	Shabbos 1 - 2 December	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	8:09	9:14
Adelaide	7:56	8:59
Brisbane	6:11	7:09
Darwin	6:42	7:35
Gold Coast	6:11	7:09
Perth	6:50	7:51
Sydney	7:33	8:35
Canberra	7:45	8:48
Launceston	8:11	9:20
Auckland	8:07	9:11
Wellington	8:20	9:28
Hobart	8:15	9:26
Byron Bay	7:11	8:10

## CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

### PARSHAS VAYISHLACH • 13 KISLEV • 1 DECEMBER

FRIDAY NIGHT:	MINCHA:	8.15 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	8.45 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9.28 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	8.05 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	8.10 PM
	MAARIV:	8.55 PM