

Vayaitzai

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What a change of pace. Ya'akov *Avinu* was forced, due to his mother's advice to put his life in danger to save the *brochos* from going to the wrong person (if that is even possible in God's world), to leave his Torah cocoon for the world of anti-Semites, murderers, and cheats for just about the rest of his life. They certainly took their toll, as a weary and worn out Ya'akov told a wondering Pharaoh:

The days of the years of my sojournings are one hundred thirty years. The days of the years of my life have been few and miserable, and they have not reached the days of the years of the lives of my forefathers in the days of their sojournings.
(Bereishis 47:9)

Ma'aseh Avos, siman l'banim, we are told. It means that whatever happened to the forefathers will be the basis of much of what will happen to their descendants throughout the ages. Their struggles will become ours, albeit customized for the generation they occur in.

So when the Dutch Minister tells Netanyahu that he is not welcome in Holland, and then goes ahead and meets with his Iranian counterpart, we Jews should not be surprised. Just the opposite. We have to be surprised when the opposite occurs. And when the UN and its supporting tribes accuse Israel of genocide by warping the definition to suit their interests, we should have a sense of, "Been there, done that" instead of shock. It will be a new and surprising thing when they put truth before their own self-interest and be honest about the Jewish people.

But that's a Messianic thing. What about the way we have enjoyed periods of peace and success throughout exile from time to time? Also *ma'aseh avos, siman l'banim*. Did not Ya'akov have twenty years "good" years with Lavan (relative to how bad they could have been)?

I know, I know, knowing this does not make it go away or any easier to deal with. Ya'akov knew why Eisav hated him and wanted to kill him. He understood who La-

van was and how he worked. He saw firsthand what Shechem was like and what he could do. He still had to run for his life, first from Eisav, then from Lavan, and suffer the anguish of a violated daughter by some lowlife (he was literally called “Shechem *ben Chamor*,” son of a donkey).

Not every Jew suffers. Many have managed to miss black periods in Jewish history, or survive them when they have occurred. But so many haven’t and, if history continues down its dark path once again, we have to be concerned about another period of major anti-Semitism with potential devastating results, *God forbid*.

On the other hand, when it came to crunch time, God did step in and save Ya’akov at the last minute. As Lavan told Ya’akov:

I have the power to inflict harm upon you, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, “Be careful not to speak with Ya’akov either good or bad.”
(*Bereishis* 31:29)

If only the leaders of the world today would have such dreams! If only our own people would have such dreams, the ones intent on erasing Judaism from the national consciousness and becoming another gentile nation. But those were Biblical times, when God still spoke to people, even evil ones for the sake of the Jewish people. The only dreams our enemies seem to have these days is of destroying the Jewish nation.

And though once upon a time we thought this only applied to the Jews of *Eretz Yisroel*, today we can see that it can impact Jews all around the world. Palestinians and their supporters have emigrated from the Middle East to all over the Western world and have managed to destabilize local security. When an Orthodox Jew is doing what is expected of him, you never see or hear from him. When Muslims are doing what is expected of them, they are being a threat to non-Muslims.

Why, why, why? Why must the Jewish people go this route? We accepted the Torah and all of its 613 *mitzvos* when the other nations said no. We try to live by them while surviving in this world while the other nations party. Where’s that protective cocoon that we seem to expect, or at least hope for, because we *are* God’s people. Or, should we just eat, drink, and be merry in the meantime because we have no idea when they’ll come after us again?

Even after we have had a reprieve, it hasn’t lasted for very long. After the Purim miracle and celebration, we still had to deal with enemies abroad and back at home. After the miraculous victory of the *Chashmonaim* and the miracle with the oil, the battle continued until we ended up in civil war and were conquered by the Romans. A Jew is not allowed to jump ship for any reason, but it certainly becomes hard to

keep many from doing so given what we have undergone as a people.

I could tell you what everyone says when it comes to such questions. We're only passing through, this world is not where it is at, and it will all make sense in the next one. That is one hundred percent true. And if it is enough for a person to hang on and stay devoted to God and Torah, then great. But if it isn't, then *what?*

We'll deal with that question next week, *b"H*. In the meantime, the twenty-four days of *Kislev* have begun, and as mentioned last week, the *Zohar* says that they correspond to the twenty-four letters of *Boruch Shem*, the second verse of the *Shema*. This means that they are a build-up to the twenty-fifth of *Kislev* and the holiday of *Chanukah*. To make use of this important idea, I have begun posting a short daily message, *b"H*, on each of the letters on their respective days at: www.shaarnunproductions.org