

CHABAD
DED
RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday night* קדש

Friday 19 November 2009 - 12 Kislev 5771
Sedra Vayishlach



JACOB AND ISRAEL

WHO ARE WE? ONE PERSON OR TWO? PERHAPS WE ARE EACH A combination of multiple forces, all joined in the shape of one individual. At different times, one or other of these spiritual components may come to the fore. The blend of all of them together, in the context of the challenges and cycles of daily life, creates the person and enables him or her to fulfil their purpose in existence.

This point is brought out in the Sedra¹, which describes the way our great ancestor Jacob, father of the Jewish people, was given a second name: Israel (Yisrael).

We find the idea of changing someone's name earlier in the Torah. Abraham was originally called Abram; his wife Sarah was called Sarai. G-d changed their names as one aspect of the Divine Covenant with them, which would lead to the miraculous birth of Isaac. Now our Sedra tells us that in the next generation, Isaac's son Jacob was also given a new name.

In the case of Abraham and Sarah, after G-d changed their names their old names are never again mentioned in the Torah and completely ceased to be relevant. Jacob is different. He is given the



In Memory of ARYEH (LOUIS) LITTMAN ז"ל, who passed away on 16 Kislev 5748 (1987). Dedicated by his Wife and Family י"ש in Loving Memory

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new name Israel, yet his old name Jacob continues to be used in the Torah itself. This is because both names continue to be relevant, to him and to all his descendants through the generations - including us.

Each of us combines both 'Jacob' and 'Israel'. Let us see how. Jacob was given this name - which relates to the Hebrew word for 'heel' - because when he was born his hand was grasping the heel of his older twin Esau. The two brothers had struggled together even in the womb, causing a very difficult pregnancy for their mother.

As grown men they continued to compete: Esau was the hunter, a man of violence, while Jacob was a spiritual person, a thinker and scholar. The fact that he was born grasping the heel of Esau expresses the way Jacob is repeatedly thrown into confrontation with Esau and with other aspects of the violence and negativity of the world.

When, later, Jacob lived in the home of his uncle Laban, he had to contend with Laban's trickery. Jacob had to struggle to build a home and to provide for his children. The name Jacob therefore represents struggle with worldly matters and with problematic people and situations. We all have a Jacob in us.

By contrast the name Israel signifies going beyond struggle, being successful to the point that one no longer has to worry. Everything is good, at least at the moment, and even the difficult people have made peace. The name Israel was given to our ancestor when he successfully battled against an angel². The Sages tell us this angel was the spiritual force of Esau. The angel gave him the name Israel, signifying 'conquest'. The name Israel means he had won.

The Israel within us is particularly dominant on Shabbat, when we reach a mood of spiritual inspiration. At that point we have gone beyond struggle. We have worked hard during the week, when we manifested Jacob, and now we can rest, enjoy and be rejuvenated. When Shabbat ends, again the quality of Jacob will be seen, battling on. We need both aspects, and we get them both from our great ancestor, father of the Jewish people³.

1. Genesis 32:4-36:43. 2. Gen. 32:25-32. 3. Based on the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Likkutei Sichot*, vol. 3, pp.795-9.

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SEDRA VAYISHLACH

DO WHAT YOU'VE GOT TO DO

“So, what did you get?” Shira came prancing over to Leah. It was the same as usual – every time they got back a test, Shira and Leah would exchange marks and sit there comparing answers. It wasn’t a competition, just fun looking over the tests together.

“45%,” replied Leah.

“WHAT??” Shira couldn’t hide her surprise. However, as soon as it slipped out of her mouth, she felt bad. Leah was the kind of girl who put in loads of effort and usually did well in return. So it was no wonder that Shira was surprised.

“So, did you spend a long time studying?” Shira asked.

“Nah, not really, Leah shrugged, “maybe five minutes.” She then proceeded to stuff her test paper into her file.

Shira couldn’t help as her jaw dropped open even wider. This was soooo unlike Leah. Personally, she thought that Leah sometimes took life a little too seriously, but this was just strange. Why was she all of a sudden acting so nonchalant about everything? But then she thought, she should just let the thing drop. If Leah didn’t want to study for a test then, well, who was she to question?

Later on, while walking home from school together, things really got strange.

They were waiting by the main road for the light to go green when suddenly; Leah just stepped into the road, seemingly oblivious to all the cars speeding along.

“LEAH!!” Shira shrieked as she frantically stretched out to pull Leah back. A red car screeched to a halt, and then drove off.

“Leah, are you crazy?” Shira asked once she’d caught her breath. “Do you realize how dangerous that was? All I can say is thank G-d you’re alive and nothing happened there.”

“Yup, well I guess G-d wanted me to survive.” Leah shrugged casually. She looked at her friend’s horrified face and laughed. “Listen, Shira” she said, her eyebrows creased together with concentration “Do you remember what our teacher taught us yesterday? In the end, it’s all up to G-d. So if G-d wants me to stay alive, then I’ll be okay however I cross the road. And for that matter, if He wanted me to get a good mark on science, then I would have. Obviously, He didn’t.”

“So you’re saying do what you want because in the end G-d decides everything?” said Shira, raising her left eyebrow. Leah nodded.

“Well then, you’ve got it all wrong. Because another thing we learnt yesterday was how our forefather Jacob prepared to meet Esau. Jacob was afraid of what Esau might do to him and his family, so before going he made some preparations. Of course, he prayed to G-d to help him. But he also sent Esau presents, to appease him, and he prepared his camp for war. This shows that we need to trust in G-d, but we also have to do our part. If we do what we’ve got to do, then G-d will help us with the rest. But, we can’t just sit back and say it’s all in G-d’s hands. He gave us the ability to make our own effort, then He responds.”

“Hmmm,” Leah said thoughtfully, “so I guess tonight I should study for my retest – doing my part; and what I have no control of, I’ll leave to G-d. And I also should look carefully before I cross the road!” The two girls linked arms, looking carefully both ways along the street. The light changed to green, and they went forward.

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