


**CHABAD**  
  
**RESEARCH UNIT**

שבת..... *for Friday night* ..... קדש

**Friday 9 December 2011 - 13 Kislev 5772**  
**Sedra Vayishlach**

**MEN OF VISION**

**T**HERE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN MEN OF VISION WHO HAVE INSPIRED THE JEWISH people and helped them move forwards to the next generation. Their spiritual insight and unique perception of the path from the present to the future have been a vital element in the survival of the Jews and of Judaism.

At the same time, these great figures have often had to veil their wisdom. They feared that their generation would not understand, or would in some way take a false path. In some instances this kind of misunderstanding did indeed take place, and there were controversies, such as those surrounding the teachings of the Rambam (Maimonides) in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and opposing the rise of Chassidism founded by the Baal Shem Tov (d.1760) in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

A hint to this danger is seen in the Sedra<sup>1</sup>. After some twenty years away from home, our Patriarch Jacob is returning. The Sages explain that during this time he has undergone a profound transformation. This regards the conflict with his brother Esau, which began in their early youth.

Esau the hunter represents the power of the Gentile nations of the world. He expresses the force of brute strength and physicality. By contrast Jacob represents the purity of spirituality. His quest is for the holy, rather than the material. Jacob is the primary Jew.



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

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Surely these two were opposite, and must have been in total conflict with each other? Indeed they were, and that is why Jacob had to run away from home, otherwise Esau would have killed him.

During the past twenty years, however, Jacob has developed spiritually to the point that he could now co-exist with and totally transform his brother Esau<sup>2</sup>. Jacob the Jew is now ready for the Redemption, when materiality and sanctity will dwell together: the wolf will lie down with the lamb. The Sedra describes how, imbued with this power, Jacob conquers the Angel of Esau, in a mysterious wrestling match<sup>3</sup>. Then he meets his brother Esau the next morning.

His brother invites him to come with him to Se'ir, the Kingdom of Esau. From Jacob's point of view this is an invitation to embark on the final challenge: the ultimate transformation of evil into good. He himself is ready for this. But are his children? Are they ready for to embark on this redemptive transformation?

No. Not yet. Jacob tells his brother: "You know that the children are weak, and the sheep are nursing... If they are driven hard even for one day, all the sheep will die. Please go ahead... I will eventually come to you in Se'ir".<sup>4</sup>

The children and the flock represent us, the descendants and followers of our great leaders, Jacob. Our leaders are men of vision: but, it could be suggested, we hold them back. So often in the past, if too much of the vision was expressed, we misinterpreted it and got confused. We took wrong turnings, we were knocked off balance. We argued with each other. Sometimes we really lost our way<sup>5</sup>.

This was what Jacob was worried about, as regards his 'sheep'. Yet today, surely, we ourselves are also ready. We have been through so much, and are now prepared to see the world in a new way. We will focus on our Torah, our Mitzvot, our Jerusalem and our Temple as the sacred centres of life. Our Jewish perception will set the tone for humanity at large, the realm of Esau, which - our Prophets and Sages promise - will indeed allow itself to be transformed. We ourselves will become men and women of vision, true followers of Jacob and the chain of his successors, and we will carry the world to the next stage of history....

1. Genesis 32:4-36:43. 2. See Midrash Bereishit Rabba 75:6, and *Likkutei Sichot* vol. 1 p.69. 3. Gen.32:25-31. 4. Gen. 32:13-14. 5. See the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Sichot Kodesh* Yud Shevat 5714, sec.9.

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SEDRA VAYISHLACH

**JACOB AND ESAU**

'I'm fed up with all this!' Yoni shouted and he walked out of the door, making a point of slamming it. Yoni thought his brother David was totally in the wrong this time and Yoni was *really* fed up with him.

A few days ago David had taken Yoni's DVD Player from his room. Not only had David not asked his permission, but he had also lent it to one of his friends, who had then gone and broken it. And what did David have to say in his defence? It wasn't a 'Sorry', but rather, 'Go ask my friend to pay for it, it wasn't my fault. It has nothing to do with me!'

So Yoni was furious. His brother always managed to take advantage of him! He stormed back into the living room and paced around angrily.

'Yoni, what's wrong?' his sister Chavi asked from the living room couch.

'Oh, nothing,' replied Yoni, 'it's David again...'

Then he sat down on the couch and told her what had happened. 'Oh. that is so unfair of him!' she exclaimed in sympathy.

'Yes,' said David, 'and I hate him so much!' He felt that he was about to cry. But of course, not in front of his sister!

'You know,' said Chavi after a moment's silence, 'hate is a big word to use... I mean, I understand how horrible he's been to you and why you are so angry, but you shouldn't say that you *hate* him'.

'Maybe I *do* hate him', Yoni said miserably.

'No, I don't think so - Yoni, he's your brother!' Chavi said compassionately. 'There is only one person I know of who really hated his brother,' she continued. 'Who?' asked Yoni. 'Esau hated Jacob - it is in this week's Torah Portion', replied Chavi.

'Yes,' said Yoni, 'I remember my teacher telling us about that. But listen. Esau was really a vicious man; he took four hundred warriors to fight against his own brother!'

Suddenly, Yoni realised how silly it was for him to say that he hated his brother. He wouldn't hurt David, even if he could. All he wanted is that his brother should be more considerate towards him.

'But do you know what?' said Chavi, 'Even *they* made peace in the end!'

'They did,' said Yoni getting up from the couch, 'I think these two brothers are about to make peace as well...'

Chavi smiled at him, and he grinned back, as he walked up the stairs to David's room...

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