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Shaarei Ezra

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Parshat Vayegash

Zmanim for New York:

Candle Lighting: 4:14pm

Shabbat ends: 5:19pm

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FROM SHLOMO TO YOSEF: UNVEILING FOUR CHARACTERS IN CONTEMPORARY CONFLICTS

WRITTEN BY **RABBI SHAY TAHAN**

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The story about the dispute over the prospective son-in-law unfolds as follows: There was a young man in the matchmaking process, and two candidates expressed interest in him. A mistake by the matchmaker led to the simultaneous suggestion of the young man to both girls. When the mothers of the girls learned of the error, a heated argument ensued over whose daughter should meet the young man for potential marriage. As the dispute intensified, they decided to seek the judgment of a rabbi.



Upon presenting their case to the local rabbi, he suggested an unconventional resolution: the boy should be cut and split in half resulting in each girl receiving a portion. Hearing this, the first mother immediately withdrew, stating that such an inhumane action should not be carried out. However, the second prospective mother-in-law surprisingly agreed, saying, "Cut the boy in half." At that moment, the rabbi declared her as the true mother-in-law, allowing her daughter to marry the young man.

Certainly, this story draws inspiration from the wisdom of Shlomo Hamelech, who once encountered two mothers quarreling over a living baby. When Shlomo Hamelech proposed to split the baby in half, the genuine mother immediately relinquished her claim, choosing to save the child's life. In contrast, the other woman, revealed to be the impostor, agreed to the proposed division, thereby exposing her true identity.

When analyzing these two stories, we find four different characters revealing four distinct feelings. In the story of Shlomo, there is the loving mother who is willing to give up her son to save him. The jealous mother who desires the death of the other child because she lacks a child. In the story of the mothers-in-law, we encounter a mother-in-law who exhibits hatred towards the boy, while the other engages in humane activities and cares about the well-being of the boy.

Yosef and his brothers

When Yosef encounters his brothers, he behaves

towards them in different ways, completely confusing them. Typically, when dealing with someone, one expects consistency in their behavior. However, Yosef intentionally acts in a manner that creates confusion among his brothers.

Initially, when the brothers first meet Yosef, he shows them much animosity. Despite their honesty, he baselessly accuses them of being spies and threatens to kill them if they don't bring their brother Binyamin to him. Shimon is also arrested during this encounter.

However, when they return the second time, suspicion arises as they prepare to greet him. They suspect him of deception, thinking he might falsely accuse them of wrongdoing as he did before. Voicing their concern, they say to each other, "The money that we found in our sacks the first time, we brought back in our sacks so that he may seek an occasion against us, fall upon us, and take us for slaves, along with our donkeys" (43:18 בראשית).

Despite this apprehension, they find Yosef to be a caring person during this encounter. He reassures them not to worry about the money and treats them very kindly. Yosef exhibits love and care by inquiring about their father, bringing them to his house, allowing them to wash their feet, and preparing a royal meal for them.

On their third visit, when they return with the stolen goblet and Yehudah offers himself as a slave, Yosef behaves as a righteous person. He asserts that, being not guilty, he may not stay, but Binyamin must remain as the goblet was found in his possession. The altercation left them frightened and bewildered until he finally revealed his true identity, bringing clarity to the distinct roles he had been playing. This intentional mixed behavior is meant to evoke within them a sense of the turmoil he endured as a consequence of their actions when they sold him. The aim is to remind them of the conflicting emotions they displayed during the sale—emotions that ranged from jealousy and animosity to sporadic feigned expressions of brotherly love.

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The Global Perspective on the Israeli Conflict

As we examine the global perspective on the Israeli war, we identify parallels with the same four characters found in the above stories. Israel personifies the loving character, demonstrating a willingness to sacrifice part of their land to ensure everyone can live in peace, akin to the loving mother in King Shlomo's story. Conversely, the Palestinians manifest jealousy towards the Jewish land. They are prepared to sacrifice everything— their lives, the buildings they have constructed for years, their children, and more— solely to ensure the destruction of Israel, echoing the actions of the jealous mother. In other words, it reflects the dilemma of cutting the baby so that no one will have it.

The third character represents the Arab world at large, which appears indifferent to their Palestinian brethren. This is evident in the reluctance of any nation to accept Palestinian refugees. The lack of concern extends beyond Palestine, as endless Arabs are killed in

the Middle East by their own hands, with minimal international attention or reporting. The outrage expressed by many is rooted in a different motive—deep-seated Jewish hatred, akin to the mother-in-law who despises her son-in-law and wishes him dead. This sentiment provides an outlet for expressing long-standing anti-Semitic feelings.

Finally, the fourth character, resembling the mother-in-law who doesn't genuinely care about her son-in-law but still deems it wrong for him to die for such a reason, is analogous to Western countries. Often considered advocates of human rights, these nations find themselves grappling with challenges within their own Muslim populations. Despite their internal struggles, these countries are quick to offer opinions on how Israel should handle its complex situation.

Esav Hates Yaakov: Exploring the Evolution of Esav's Sentiments towards Yaakov

In recent months, we have witnessed a clear division in the world into two opposing sides: those who harbor intense hatred and disdain for the Jewish nation and those who seem to support it. There has been significant support for Israel within the American public, government, Senate, and House of Representatives on a bipartisan basis. Surprisingly, even much of the American media has shown significant support. Additionally, European countries, which traditionally may not have been known for their strong affinity towards the Jewish people, have become noteworthy supporters.

The stark contrast in sentiments towards the Jewish people was vividly illustrated during the Senate hearing on major universities. The university presidents publicly appeared to almost endorse the call for the genocide of Jews, whereas the senators went out of their way, expressing authentic concern and care, to defend the Jewish people.

As Jewish people, we are often surprised when we encounter gentiles who express support, as we are not accustomed to it. We may initially attempt to explain their support by attributing it to a political agenda or similar motives, when in reality, it stems from genuine support. This sentiment is deeply rooted in us, echoing the renowned teachings of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who expounded on the concept of *עשו שונא ליעקב* - Esav hates Yaakov. These teachings have paved the path for centuries of ongoing persecutions against the Jews worldwide. Throughout history, Jews have carried this concept as an explanation for anti-Semitism, which often lacked a logical rationale.

Rashi referenced the teachings of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in connection to the concept of altercation between Yaakov and Esav. As Esav encounters Yaakov, he kisses him! Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai explicates the presence of dots atop the word *"וישקהו"* (and he kissed him) in the Sefer Torah. He emphasizes that, despite Esav generally harboring animosity towards Yaakov, at this specific moment, there was a remarkable occurrence: Esav felt a sense of mercy and demonstrated affection by kissing Yaakov. Building upon these words, we can pose the question: Does Esav consistently hold animosity towards Yaakov in every scenario, or are there instances where he does not?

While there is a general consensus that Esav always harbors animosity towards Yaakov, there are instances, as seen when they met, where Esav demonstrated mercy and kissed Yaakov. Historical evidence supporting Esav's animosity exists; however,

it's plausible that during periods of Jewish persecution, Esav may display moments of compassion. For example, after the Holocaust, nations supported the establishment of the State of Israel. Similarly, following the Simchat Torah massacre, there was backing for a mission against the enemy. It's crucial to distinguish this response from that of Yishmael, who doesn't exhibit remorse but rather appears to become more emboldened with an increased appetite for violence against Jews.



Rabbi Eliyahu Enkin (בספר תשובות איברא סימן (קט"ז) expressed strong criticism against those who interpret the concept of 'Esav hates Yaakov' as an unchanging destiny for the relationship between Jews and gentiles, with perpetual hatred. Instead, he articulates that establishing the right atmosphere and mitigating factors that provoke such animosity will contribute to reducing and alleviating such tensions.

"ועוון פלילי מצד אותם המטיפים הפטפטנים שדורשים תמיד 'הלכה הוא שעשו שונא ליעקב', והשנאה עולמית. זה נגד האמת ונגד חז"ל והמקרא, שעשו גופא לא ה' ישע תמיד ושנאתו פסקה על ידי הנהגה מתאמת וכמו עשו הראשון כן גם כ' דורותיו שהכנעה מביאה לשלום, וזהו שאמר בן זומא (אבות פ"ד מ"א) 'איזהו מכובד המכבד את הבריות', כוננו גם נגד האומות, כשמכבדים אותם ואומרים להם אוהבי אתה הם נעשים לאוהבים על ידי זה ולהפך כשאומרים שונא אתה נעשים בשונא זהו מעשים בכל יום."

Translation: "The offensive deliberate wrongdoing on the part of those babblers who incessantly claim, 'It is a halacha that Esav hates Yaakov, and the hatred is eternal' goes against the truth and contradicts our Sages and the Scriptures. Esav himself was not inherently wicked at all times, and his hatred ceased through appropriate behavior. Just as with the first Esav, so too with subsequent generations – yielding and persuasion lead to peace. This aligns with what Ben Zoma asserted in Pirkei Avot (4:1): 'Who is honored? One who honors others.' His intention also extends to the nations, as when they are respected and told they are loved, they become loving as a result. Conversely, when they are told they are hated, they become hateful. This is a practice observed every day."

Rabbi Enkin writes that there are a few triggers for this hatred, and he provides examples. For instance, he notes that the widely recognized intelligence of Jews can lead to jealousy. Similarly, he points out that the financial success of Jews can provoke envy. Rabbi Enkin suggests that Jews should consider concealing their

ESAV HATES YAAKOV: EXPLORING THE EVOLUTION OF ESAV'S SENTIMENTS TOWARDS YAAKOV

success.

This behavior is supported by Yaakov's command to his children, stating, "Don't show yourselves." Rashi explains that this means not to appear as if you have food when others do not—in other words, to hide your wealth and avoid showing off.

The Kli Yakar comments on the Pasuk (דברים ב,ג): פנו לכם צפונה: אדרשו בזה: אם הגיע שעתו של עשו, הצפינו עצמכם... אם ימצא האיש הישראלי איזו הצלחה, זעיר שם, אזי יטמינו ויצפינו הכל בפני עשו, כי אין לך אומה שמתקנאת בישראל כמו עשו, כי לדעתם הכל גזולים בידם מהם מן ברכת יעקב אבינו שלקח ברכותיו של עשו במרמה, וכן יעקב ציווה לבניו (בראשית מב) למה תתראו, פירש רש"י: בפני בני ישמעאל ועשו, כאילו אתם שבעים, כי שניהם סוברים שיצחק גדל הצלחת ישמעאל ויעקב גדל הצלחת עשו ע"י השתדלות, על-כן ציווה דווקא על עשו פנו לכם צפונה, שלא יתקנא בכם. וזה היפך ממה שישראל עושין בדורות הללו בארצות אויביהם, כי מי שיש לו מנה הוא מראה את עצמו במלבושי כבוד ובתים ספונים וחשובים, כאילו היו לו כמה אלפים, ומגרים האומות בעצמם, ועוברים על מה שנאמר פנו לכם צפונה, ומנהג זה הוא ברבת בני עמינו, והוא המסבב את כל התלאה אשר מצאתנו, והמשכילים יבינו ליקח מוסר"

Translation: "If the time of Esav has come, conceal yourselves... If the Jewish man finds any success, even a small one, then hide and conceal everything from Esav, for there is no nation that envies Israel like Esav. In their view, everything is stolen from them, starting from the blessings of our forefather Yaakov, who supposedly took the blessings of Esav deceitfully. Similarly, Yaakov commanded his sons (42:1 בראשית), "Why do you make yourselves conspicuous?" Rashi explains: 'In the presence of the sons of Yishmael and Esav, as if you are seventy, for both of them believe that Yitschak took the prosperity of Yishmael and Yaakov took the prosperity of Esav through diligence. Therefore, he specifically commanded regarding Esav, 'Turn for yourselves, conceal yourselves,' so that he would not

envy you. This is contrary to what Am Yisrael does in these generations in the lands of their enemies. For one who possesses wealth, presents themselves in garments of honor and impressive, hidden houses, as if they have thousands; and they provoke the nations themselves, violating what is said, 'Turn for yourselves, conceal yourselves.' This practice is common among many of our enemies, and it exacerbates all the suffering that we encounter. Those who are wise will understand to take heed."

The Chief Rabbi of England, Harav Jonathan Sacks, in his commentary (on Parshat Balak 5775), also emphasizes that anti-Semitism is not an inexplicable or inevitable force. It is a multifaceted phenomenon with identifiable causes, including social, economic, political, cultural, and theological factors. Rabbi Sacks contends that anti-Semitism can be combated and overcome. However, he underscores the importance of rejecting the notion that it is Yaakov's destiny to be hated by Esav or to remain isolated as "the people that dwells alone." He warns against accepting a narrative that portrays the Jewish people as a pariah or outcast, emphasizing the need to actively confront and counteract anti-Semitism.

It is crucial for us to recognize and appreciate the support we receive during such times, even as we carry the weight of thousands of years of persecution. The Netziv (העמק דבר בראשית לג,ד) writes that when Esav kissed Yaakov, they both cried, signifying that whenever in history Esav extends an embrace to Yaakov, we should not reject him but rather embrace the moment. This echoes the example of Rebbi and Antoninus, emphasizing the importance of fostering alliances in such circumstances.

PRESENTING THE COMPONENTS OF TEFILLIN: GET TO KNOW THE BATIM:

Tefillin, an integral part of Jewish tradition, consist of three main components that contribute to their sacred and meaningful nature. In this upcoming series, we aim to acquaint ourselves with the components of the Tefillin and explore potential issues that one should be mindful of. Join us as we delve into the intricate details of each element and unravel the nuances associated with the construction and maintenance of these sacred artifacts. Together, we'll gain a deeper understanding of the Tefillin and navigate the potential challenges that may arise in their kashrut.

These essential elements include:

1. Batim (Boxes): The batim serve as the containers for the parchments. They are typically made from thick, durable leather, often sourced from the hides of domestic cattle. The quality of the batim plays a crucial role in the overall integrity of the Tefillin.
2. Parshiot (Parchments): Inside the batim, there are four distinct parshiot, handwritten scrolls containing specific passages from the Torah. These passages include the Shema and V'ahavta, emphasizing the unity of Hashem the commandment to love and serve Him with all one's heart.
3. Retzuot (Straps): The Tefillin are secured to the arm and head with leather straps known as retzuot. There are two sets of retzuot – one for the arm (shel yad) and one for the head (shel rosh). These straps are meticulously crafted and are an integral part of the Tefillin, symbolizing the binding of the divine commandments upon the wearer.

Batim

Batim made from the hides of thin-skinned animals have been used throughout history, and until a few decades ago, the entire Jewish community utilized Tefillin with batim made from the hides of thin-skinned animals. Since the hides are relatively thin, the quality of these batim was not high. Proper processing required a substantial amount of "flesh" in the hide to seal it securely, and thin hides lacked the necessary thickness of flesh.



The distinction between low-quality Tefillin made from thin-skinned animals, known as "Dakot," and those of higher quality made from thick-skinned animals, known as "Gasot," centers around the type of hide utilized.

Tefillin crafted from the hides of thin-skinned animals utilize materials sourced from sheep or goats. The thickness of the partitions of the batim for Tefillin from thin-skinned animals is thinner compared to those of thick-skinned animals, making the Tefillin generally less durable over time than Tefillin from thick-skinned animals. One can find Tefillin made from the hide of thin-skinned animals, but their level of kashrut is very low. As mentioned, their durability over time is compromised, and these Tefillin can easily deteriorate, making the money spent on them regrettable.

For instance, if batim fall onto the floor and one of the corners takes a blow, causing the corner to deform, the Tefillin need to be rewound. Similarly, if an individual sweats heavily on their forehead, creating a significant indentation at the bottom of the batim they would require a repair. In such cases, if the Tefillin were made

Exploring the Distinctions between Thin and Thick Tefillin

**PRESENTING THE COMPONENTS OF TEFILLIN:
GET TO KNOW THE BATIM:**

from the hide of thick skin, the issues could be rectified. A rounded corner could be reshaped, and the bottom of the batim, which has become uneven, could be straightened, restoring the Tefillin to their previous state or even improving them. However, with Tefillin made from the hide of thin-skinned animals, it is nearly impossible to repair damages, as their hides are exceedingly thin and lack the necessary thickness of flesh. Consequently, one is forced to replace them with a new set.

Furthermore, the probability of the batim sustaining damage, whether from falling, hitting a wall, exposure to sweat, or contact with wet hair after a shower, is significantly higher in thin-skin batim compared to their thick-skin counterparts. The same holds true for individuals who might inadvertently leave the Tefillin in extreme temperature conditions, such as in a hot car during a summer day or in a cold environment.

European Hides vs. American Hides: A Comparative Exploration:

The most common type of hide is European. In recent years, mer-

chants have started importing American hides, which are much stronger than European hides. Although they are more expensive, it is highly recommended to purchase them because Tefillin made from such hides are much stronger, more beautiful, and durable over many years.

Salted Hides vs. Sweetened:

As these hides come from outside the country, there is another halachic issue. As they must be transported, a method for storing them is essential to prevent spoilage and rotting. Consequently, salting becomes a crucial step, yet it raises concerns. Some poskim maintain that salting marks the initiation of a process known as "עיבוד" (tanning), and as this salting is done by a non-Jew, it is considered disqualifying.

The resolution to this issue would be to replace the salting process with the use of sugar, as it is not considered part of the processing.

עשרה בטבת שחל בערב שבת

והרוצה לאכול לפני זמן עלות השחר יתנה לפני שינתו ויאמר שרצונו לאכול כשיקום לפנות בוקר (שלחן ערוך סימן תקסד ס"א).
ותפילת מנחה יתפללו מבעוד יום ויקראו בספר תורה פרשת ויחל (רמ"א סימן תקנ ס"ג).
כל הכנות השבת מותרות וכן רחיצה בחמין, גילוח הזקן ותספורת השיער וכו'.
ויהי רצון שהצום החמישי יהפך לנו לששון ולשמחה.

שלום. אשמח לקבל הדרכה איך לנהוג בצום עשרה בטבת שחל בערב שבת.

שלום וברכה.

כידוע צום עשרה בטבת הוא הצום היחיד שיכול לחול בערב שבת, וזאת מכיון שצום זה חמור משאר צומות, עד כדי כך שאפילו אם הוא היה חל בשבת היינו צמים בו, כדרכב האבודרהם (סדר התעניות): "וחילוק יש ביניהם, שארבעת הצומות הם נדחין לפעמים כשחלו בשבת חוץ מעשרה בטבת שאינו חל לעולם בשבת, אבל הוא חל לפעמים ביום ששי, ומתעניין בו ביום. ואפילו היה חל בשבת לא היו יכולים לדחותו ליום אחר, מפני שנאמר בו (יחזקאל כ"ד ב') 'בעצם היום הזה' כמו ביום הכפורים, ושאר הצומות אינן חלין לעולם ביום ששי".
וכנתו ששאר הצומות לא נכתבו במקרא בפירוש, אלא רק הוזכרו ברמז על פי החודש שהם חלים בו (זכריה ח, ט) - צום יז בתמוז נקרא בפסוק 'הצום הרביעי', וצום תשעה באב נקרא 'החמישי', וצום גדליה נקרא 'והשביעי'. ואילו צום עשרה בטבת אף שגם הוא נרמז באותו פסוק בצום העשירי, אולם הוא גם נכתב בפירוש: "כתוב לך את עצם היום הזה - סמך מלך בבל על ירושלים בעצם היום הזה" (יחזקאל כד, ב).

וצריכים להתענות בו מזמן עלות השחר ולהשלימו עד צאת הכוכבים (חזו"ע תעניות עמוד טו). ולכן מן הראוי שיתפללו ערבית מוקדם כדי שיתחילו את סעודת השבת מיד בצאת הכוכבים ולא יגרמו לאחרים להאריך את הצום שלא לצורך (ילקוט יוסף ארבע תעניות עמוד סז). כמו כן נראה שאין לחזן להאריך הרבה בנגינות השבת כדי שהעם יוכלו מיד לצאת לביתם.

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MAY HASHEM SEND SPECIAL STRENGTH IN TORAH AND ALL THE BERACHOT TO DAVID AKIVA AND RACHEL LEON.

Thanking Harav Yochanan Pilchick Morah De'asra of Stolin Kehilla for spreading our newsletter in their Kehal Kadosh

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