



**ALEPH
INSTITUTE**
No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

TORAH WEEKLY

ת"ע

12 - 18 November, 2017

23 - 29 Cheshvan, 5778

Torah:

Genesis 12:1 - 17:27

Haftarah:

Samuel I 20:18 - 42

■ CALENDARS

We have Jewish Calendars, if you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask your Rabbi / Chaplain to contact us.

■ CHANUKAH GELT

Please ask the chaplain for the 'Chanukah Gelt Form'.

Your children will receive Chanukah Gelt from you.

Happy Chanukah!

■ FAST OF TEVET-

The fast of 10th Tevet (12/28/2017) is coming up soon, please send in the necessary paperwork to the chaplain and food service so you receive the bag lunch.

The Abarbanel writes, if the 10th of Tevet would be a Shabbat, we would be required to fast!

ALEPH INSTITUTE

Hyman & Martha Rogal
Center

5804 Beacon Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15217

412-421-0111

Fax: 412-521-5948

www.alephne.org

info@alephne.org

THE BOOK OR THE BLADE?

Who are we? Who were we? Who will we be?

The Jewish people are called the "Children of Israel" and the name derives from the original Israel, third of our patriarchs, our father Jacob. In this week's parshah, we read how Jacob impersonated his brother Esau in order to be blessed by his father Isaac. He wore the goatskin garments of Esau, prompting the blind Isaac to exclaim in wonderment, The voice is the voice of Jacob but the hands are the hands of Esau!

Our tradition has always understood these immortal words to have meaning far beyond the literal story of Jacob's charade. The voice of Jacob means the voice of Torah study, the sound of prayer and, generally, refers to the gentle, spiritual sound of the peace-loving People of the Book. The hands of Esau, on the other hand, represent the fist, the sword-wielding arm -- physical might and brute force, violence and war.

And the question today is: to which of these are we raising our children? Are we perhaps not forgetting who we are and what we are meant to symbolize as a nation?

Let's face it. Our society is an Esau society. Our children are constantly bombarded by the box, by television, movies, video

games and a media madness that glorifies the physical and, yes, even the violent. Never mind the news which is bad enough. How many thousands upon thousands of murders will the average child witness in all their gore before his Bar Mitzvah? Parents need to think twice and three times before allowing themselves the luxury of this electronic babysitter.

Today we see the results. Just watch how kids play, even in nursery school. To tell you the truth, I myself am lucky to be alive. I remember going to pay a house visit on a family in my congregation and being attacked by their young son who had an AK-47 and, as I walked through the door, peppered me with bullets. Thank G-d, it was only a toy. How I cringed when his mom said, "Stop it, Ryan, you mustn't shoot the Rabbi!" Once upon a time kids played Cowboys and Indians. If you were a good shot, one Indian would get knocked off his horse. Today, one victim is nothing. Thanks to modern technology we can decimate entire armies. Battleships, space ships, whole planets are being smashed into smithereens by a seven-year-old on his play station.

A few years ago, I was on a plane aboard which the in-flight program offered the following enlightening choices of entertainment: "Terminator 3," "Planet of the Apes," "Return of the

Parshat Toldot

Mummies," and a martial arts film in a foreign language. So much for our cerebral society.

The same people who decry shechitah, the traditional Jewish method of slaughtering animals for food, say nothing about hunting for sport. In England it might even be the sport of kings. Esau is described in the Bible as one who knows hunting, a man of the field, but Jacob is the sincere man and dweller of tents -- a reference to the tents of Torah. Jacob was the quiet scholar while Esau was the wild hunter.

How about boxing? Whoever beats the other guy to a pulp gets the coveted prize and is crowned world champion. Listen to this logic. If someone pinches your parking space and you kill him in an act of road rage, you are a murderer. But if you kill him inside a ring with 25,000 witnesses cheering you on, you are a hero and the millions come pouring in... I won't even mention the bizarre and barbaric world of "entertainment" wrestling!

This is the sad reality of our world. When it comes to making a buck there is no conscience and no morality. If your child wants to buy a gun, guaranteed there will be someone to manufacture it. There might be some form of quality control to make sure it won't hurt his hand but, unfortunately, it will still harm his soul. All the above social phenomena are deadening our sensitivities and threatening

to wipe out our refined Jacob character, spawning a generation of crude and coarse Esaus.

The Talmud says: When there is a book there is no sword, but when there is a sword there is no book. We cannot be a nation of noble scholars if we are playing with the sword. We have always been the People of the Book. Jews should want their children to pick up the book and drop the sword.

Do you know who made the following statement? “A violently active, dominating, brutal youth -- that is what I am after.” It was a fellow named Adolf Hitler (may his name be obliterated). That is what he wanted for his children. We want our children to be like Moses (or at least Einstein). When Moses saw two Jews quarreling he said, “Rasha, wicked one, why would you strike your fellow?” (Exodus 2:13). At that point, the man had only raised his hand. He hadn’t yet physically struck the other guy but, as Moses saw it, he was behaving like a rasha, a wicked person.

If young Jews are being threatened by anti-Semites or if Israel is in mortal danger from murderous neighbors, then obviously we need to be able to defend ourselves. Self-defense classes are a necessity in today’s world and the Israel Defense Force protects us from another Holocaust, G-d forbid. But let us not turn brute force into a new value or ideal to aspire to. We must teach our children Torah and the pursuit of Jewish wisdom. When the voice is the voice of Jacob, then no hands of Esau will harm us.

Please G-d, we will continue to be a wise and sensitive nation of character, secure in our inner strength and proud of who we were and will, hopefully, always be.

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

GETTING HEALTHY

It has been said that the difference between a healthy person and an unhealthy person is that the former is working on his issues, while the latter is resigned to them.

How did Jacob and Esau end up so different? Same parents, same upbringing, same mother’s milk, and yet so drastically different from each other that they become the paradigm of all of literature’s accounts of “the evil twin.”

In fact, they provide a metaphor for the endless struggle within each of us: the G-dly Jacob and his desire for transcendence vs. the instinctual Esau, with his insatiable drive for self-satisfaction.

A look at their lives. Esau is born red and as hairy as an adult, and so he remains: Edom—red, intense, driven, violent. From the day of his birth, he sees himself as a static creation; that’s who he is, and that is who he will be until he dies. He sees no reason to work things out with his brother, to address the “other side.” He is simply Esau.

Jacob is born with his issues as well. Timid, a bookworm, Mama’s boy. Yet he is willing to acknowledge and confront Esau. He dresses up in Esau’s garb and tells his father he will hunt meat. Jacob stares Esau in the eye.

It’s scary. Can one dress up like Esau and not become Esau?

Jacob succeeds, impressing his father enough to secure the blessing, and then is left alone to deal with his newfound self, to bring it into the rough world outside the tent, where Esau is comfortable. He spends years as a shepherd in Laban’s house. He thrives, despite the bumps along the way. Eventually, he is sufficiently empowered to meet the brother he once feared.

We all have our issues, our places we’d rather not go. The easiest way is to let sleeping dogs lie, to just let them be. Uncovering wounds only seems to evoke painful feelings. Yet if we don’t address our issues, we simply drift along. If we don’t tackle Esau, we become Esau.

That was the difference between them. Jacob and Esau each had their “other side”; Jacob was willing to acknowledge his and deal with it, while Esau chose to ignore it.

We are given the choice. As Shem told Rebecca when she was pregnant with the twins, “Two ruling forces are within you; when one rises the other falls” (Rashi’s commentary, Genesis 25:23). If we choose to rock the boat, we can mature through our struggles, emerge stronger. If we sweep the opposing forces within us under the rug, they will pile up until we trip over them.

We’ve all been there—something is said, and there is an awkward silence. We have a choice: We can address it, like Jacob, or we can resign ourselves to it, like Esau.

When we go where we fear most to tread, we come out the other side as “Israel”—we have struggled and we have succeeded. As the defeated angel tells Jacob (ibid., 32:29): “Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have commanding power with [an angel of] G-d and with men, and you have prevailed.”

Let’s be Jacob, not Esau.

By Rabbi Baruch Epstein

In Jewish History

***Shabbat, 29 Cheshvan, 5778 - November 18, 2017
Mumbai Terror Attacks (2008)***

The city of Mumbai, India, was hit with a series of coordinated terror attacks, starting on Wednesday evening, the 29th of Cheshvan 5769, which left close to 200 dead and scores more injured.

One of the terrorists’ chosen targets was the local Chabad House, known as the “Nariman House,” operated by Chabad-Lubavitch emissaries Rabbi Gavriel Noach (Gabi) and Rivkah (Rivki) Holtzberg.

In the subsequent standoff, which continued until Friday afternoon, Gabi and Rivki and several other Jews in the Chabad House – Rabbis Bentzion Chroman and Leibish Teitelbaum, Norma Schwartzblatt-Rabinowitz and Yocheved Orpaz – were killed in cold blood. May G-d avenge their murders. Miraculously, the Holtzbergs’ two-year-old child, Moshe, was saved by his nanny.