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Gematria on the Parshah: Why Esav Kissed Yaakov? The Secret to End Antisemitism



By: Moshe Herskovits

In Parshah Vayishlach, Yaakov Avinu faces his greatest challenges: wrestling with an angel and the long awaited confrontation with his brother Esav. Surprisingly, upon meeting, instead of Esav trying to harm Yaakov, he kisses him. According to Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, this kiss was entirely sincere. How could Esav go from deep hatred of Yaakov, to kissing him with complete sincerity?

Yaakov's victory over the angel is the key. The Midrash says this angel was Esav's guardian angel, the Satan. Gematria reveals this connection.

עשו + אדם equals 427, the same as איש עמו in the phrase ויאבק איש עמו, meaning "a man wrestled with him."

Yaakov's defeat of the Satan means he overcame his yetzer hara. Remarkably, the gematria of שטן + יעקב equals 541, the same as ישראל, the name given to him after defeating the Satan. By defeating the spiritual enemy, Yaakov defeats his physical enemy.

The Ropshitzer notes that Yaakov's defeat of the Satan will give the strength for his descendant Mashiach to do the same. The gematria of מעבר + יבוק, "the crossing of the Yabok," equals 424, the same as משיח בן דוד, hinting that Yaakov's victory alludes to Mashiach's future victory.

How will Mashiach conquer the enemies of Yisrael? The Zohar (Vayechi 238a) teaches that like Yaakov Avinu, he will conquer by subduing their spiritual forces. Rebbe Nachman teaches that each of the 70 nations has a unique yetzer hara, and Mashiach, mastering the 70 faces of Torah, will overcome them. By completely internalizing the Torah into his middot, the angels of the 70 nations will bow to him. The gematria of 70 equals גוג ומגוג, alluding to Mashiach's conquest.

Like Mashiach, whenever we have a victory over our yetzer hara, we must remember this defeats evil and antisemitism around the world.

What is the most important yetzer hara to overcome? The primary reason for the galut, sinat chinam, the evil middah of Esav. Yaakov defeats Esav's angel by having no hatred

in his heart. As a result, Esav's force is broken, and his hate of Yaakov turns into love. The Prophet Ovadia alludes to the future defeat of Esav by Mashiach Yosef. Why is Mashiach Ben Yosef the one who conquers the klipah of Esav? He will be like his ancestor Yosef. The gematria of יוסף is 156, the same as קנאה, which means both jealousy and revenge. Yet Yosef did not take revenge on his brothers. Instead, he cared for them and showed them love. It is this power that Mashiach Ben Yosef will inherit. He will be able to show unconditional love toward all humanity, conquering the klipah of Esav's hatred. This is hinted by the word וישקוהו, when Esav kisses Yaakov. The word mysteriously has dots, or נקודות, over it. The gematria of נקודות is 566, the same as משיח בן יוסף, alluding to the fact that he will conquer Esav.

The Kli Yakar notes that the Torah does not explicitly mention Yosef forgiving his brothers. Amazingly, he says if Yosef fully had, Yisrael wouldn't have needed to be in exile in Egypt. This teaches a timeless lesson: when Yisrael has unconditional love and forgiveness, this nullifies the exile and our enemies. When we remove hatred from our hearts towards each other, we break the power of the Satan and Esav. It is the love and forgiveness on the level of Yosef that will pave the way for the Messianic Era.

Let Sleeping Dogs Lie — Or Face the Challenge?

By: Rabbi Joshua Kaller



There's a well-known expression: "Let sleeping dogs lie." Sometimes the smartest thing a person can do is avoid waking up trouble that's peacefully asleep. This idea appears in Chazal as well. Rav Huna comments on the pasuk in Mishlei that "one who grabs a dog by its ears is like someone who becomes embroiled in a quarrel that is not his." In other words, not every potential conflict needs to be poked, stirred, or awakened.

And yet, in this week's Torah portion, we find Yaakov Avinu seemingly doing exactly that. The Torah tells us that Yaakov sent messengers to Esav, to "the field of Edom." The Midrash Rabbah raises the obvious question: Why? Why would Yaakov reach out to Esav at all? At this point, no one had informed Esav that Yaakov was returning. Yaakov could have potentially slipped quietly back into the land. So why poke the dog? Why awaken a danger that might have remained dormant?

One Thought Yaakov teaches us: pursue for Shabbos shalom, stay far from machlokes.

Some mefarshim explain that perhaps Yaakov was being proactive, trying to prevent a confrontation by addressing it before it grew. Maybe he assumed Esav would hear anyway — information travels, whispers spread, and Yaakov didn't want Esav's first reaction to come from rumors. Yet the Midrash seems to imply that this very outreach was questionable. It suggests that sometimes, in attempting to manage or prevent a problem, we end up creating it.

This dynamic appears again in a Midrash about the Jewish people sending an ambassador to Rome. They reached out to negotiate, hoping to secure safety or favor. But the Midrash frames this as a strategic misstep. It was this very outreach that opened the door to Roman entanglement and, ultimately, conquest. Once again we see that what begins as "diplomacy" can end as the very disaster one hoped to avoid.

So which is it? Should we face a challenge head-on, or should we let it pass quietly? Should we be Yaakov the strategist, or follow Rav Huna's dog-by-the-ears warning?

The answer is that the Torah is teaching us the wisdom of discernment. Not every situation is the same. Yehudah marched straight toward the Egyptian viceroy — who he believed to be a dangerous dictator — because the danger was already present and unavoidable. There was no slipping by, no avoiding the issue. Courage was required.

But sometimes, like the Midrash's critique of Yaakov and the cautionary tale of the Roman mission, danger only becomes danger because we call attention to it.

This tension is deeply relevant to our lives. There are times when the right move is to confront something difficult — a conversation, a fear, a responsibility — and look it straight in the face. And then there are times when the holiest, wisest move is simply to wait, to hold still, to let it slide, and to let sleeping dogs lie.

And the truth is: holding still can be harder than fighting.

The Torah invites us into a moment of reflection: The challenges I'm facing — are they ones I must face head-on, or ones I can let pass? Wisdom is knowing the difference.

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The Soul of Yaakov

By: Rabbi Adam Law



One of the momentous events in Parshas Vayishlach is Yaakov's confrontation with Esav when he returns home to Israel. Although Yaakov had long been away, he knew that the struggle with his older brother was as alive as ever.

The fraternal conflict started in childhood when Yaakov discerned that there was a problem in the family developing regarding the family legacy. The custom of the day was for the older son to inherit the first-born status (בכורה). He would have double rights to property and assumed an important role as a leader in the family.

Yaakov saw that Esav was not worthy, nor truly wanted this role. Yaakov knew that he, on the other hand, was highly befitting. So, Yaakov uprooted the custom and figured out a way to take the privilege.

Esav is humiliated by this, and turns Yaakov's name into a curse, calling him a deceiver. However when Yaakov was introduced, the Torah describes him as **איש טם**, a pure man. His essence is right. We see that his claim proved correct, as he was blessed by G-d and his parents; and ultimately was successful in creating the Jewish people, who merited to receive the Torah.

Yaakov has a deep neshama. His inner feelings are explicated in the Torah in many stories. However, what isn't explicitly mentioned is how Yaakov felt about what happened here. Did he ever doubt what he did to his brother?

If he did, then we would think he should have some hesitation later when taking Esav's blessing from his father. However, in the conversation with his mother, his hesitation is only because he may be caught and cursed by his father. We see no indication here that Yaakov feels bad about the implications of his action itself.

There's the factor of his parents involvement here, as well, of course.

אמת ליעקב

It is interesting that in the Navi, Yaakov's trait is **אמת**: truth. Yaakov's major struggles all intersect into the question of what is truth. Whether its these struggles with his brother, his first wedding, his father-in-law Lavan, Shimon and Levy in Schem, and his sons' deception in Yosef's disappearance.

A symbol of Yaakov is the rock. We see he rests his head on them in Beit El, there is the rock at the well in front of Rachel, the testimony in the agreement with Lavan, etc. The rock is a symbol of integrity and truth. As the man of truth, Yaakov's struggles to do the right thing show us a

more subtle truth, which is dictated by Hashem's will as Yaakov perceives it. The rock symbolizes Yaakov striving to unify God's name in this world.

מעשה שכם

In the events of Schem, Yaakov gives strong rebuke to his sons Shimon and Levy. Their assault and wiping out of Schem to get Dina out, and get retribution, causes Yaakov to brand them as violent. Yaakov's viewpoint is debated. Some commentators say his main consideration was worry for putting his own family at danger (they would be outlaws), above other obvious moral implications.

You could say that this is similar to his hesitation in taking the blessing from his brother. His moral consideration is the weighing of whether the benefits of the difficult but necessary actions risk possible harsh consequences, not whether the act itself is right or not.

However, looking at the full picture of Yaakov here, as well as the blessings in vayachi far after the events of Schem, Yaakov's words belie deeper feelings more than just practical considerations.

So did Yaakov then feel bad about having to employ such measures himself?

Here are a few proofs that maybe allude to this... In our parsha, before his confrontation with Esav, he first makes a prayer to G-d. He says, "I've been diminished by all the kindnesses and the truth..." Why does he add truth? Perhaps because of his personal struggles with family, and his complicated feelings, he's had to re-examine truth. His fear of this confrontation, despite God's promise to him, perhaps shows some reflection over what had happened, maybe he feared some punishment?

A stronger proof is the reunion and negotiation that happens when the brothers finally meet again here. At the most intense point of their encounter, Yaakov says: **"קח נא את ברכתי"**. "Take my blessing." Although most commentators refer to this bracha as the mincha, i.e. the bribe Yaakov offered Esav, the **פסיקתא** says Yaakov was offering the actual bracha. That is the language of the verse. Maybe he is offering the "stolen" blessing back as a guilt offering?

Yaakov does give tribute to Esav for many years, but ultimately Esav leaves the land. Yaakov kept the bracha.

Although Yaakov started out as a **איש טם ישב**, **אהלים**, (a pure man dwelling in tents) his completeness was to also engage in this world. That was the blessing he took. That means combating with real-world challenges with strength when it is the right thing to do. Nevertheless, the Jewish soul feels deeply about this.

Elevating the Physical

By: Daniel Klasner



In this weeks parsha vayishlach, we see from the verse "I have sojourned (Hebrew garty) with Lavan. Rashi points out that the word garty has the numerical equivalent (gematria) to 613. Yakov was saying i may have traveled, but Im still holding in the 613 mitzvot.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe asks the question

A) whats the simple explanation of the garty numerical equivalent) = 613 and its literal meaning. The meaning of garty is stranger or alien. B) why is he telling Esau, I have kept the 613? C) What lesson can we derive in our own lives?

When Yakov says I Have sojourned with Lavan, he is referring to all the physical aspect for example all the animals, and it is saying it is nothing more than garty alien and strange. Yakov is referring to the soul, Torah and mitzvot. That the physical aspects of this world are alien to me (garty). Yakov made booths for the cattle a temporary dwelling, which is an mashal for the souls descent into the world. Before being in the world it is basking in upper worlds with the oneness of G-d. When it comes down into the world it is to make a dwelling place in the lower worlds, but before the soul has no connection to the physical (the body)

The Fredike Rebbe, quoted the Maggid saying on a trip the furniture beauty is less important to a person and its not his true home, because it just a journey. We now understand the literal explanation and the gematria, Yakov was so connected spiritually the physical aspects that he faced with Lavan didn't phase him. Further he kept the physical in a state of alienation, that it became infused with spirituality. There is a midrash that speaks of the coming of messiah riding on a donkey, the coming of Moshiach is contingent upon biurim. When a Jew purifies his body and animal soul in this world it will hasten the time to come. Therefore Yakov was purifying the physical and fusing it with spiritual specifically having mentioned a donkey and oxen alluding to his readiness for Moshiach.

Yakov was telling esau he had completed his biurim and was expecting esau to have as well, the messengers had responded his part has not been completed, making the future redemption not possible.

The Torah and its instructions are eternal, every Jew must realize that his environment may not be ready for the redemption because it lacks purity and refinement. Nevertheless he must continue to prepare himself with biurim for the complete redemption. One good deed can tip the scales for the whole world and bring about the redemption.

Adapted from likutei sichos



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