

ספר מי השילוה - חלק ראשון - פרשת וישלח

Mei Hashiloach - Vol I. - Genesis - Bereishith - Vayishlach

SUSURRATION

The first Torah this week is not from Vol. I one of the Mei Hashiloach, published in 1859, but from Vol. II published in 1922. It contains what I feel is a crucial Izbicy teaching.

What's the point of being in exile? If God's purpose is for us to enjoy, in the other world, the fruits of our labors in this world, why could we not have done all our laboring in the Land of Israel? What is it about the unholy world outside the Holy Land that is so necessary to our growth and evolution?

The prophet Hosea says: 'I am the LORD your God from the Land of Egypt.' (Hos. 13:4) Not your God who brought you out of Egypt, as Moses records it in the first of the Ten Commandments, but rather your 'God *from* Egypt'. The Zohar says the following.

R. Elazar said: It is written, 'I am the LORD your God from the Land of Egypt.' Why does it not say, 'I am the God who brought you out of Egypt'? Was God not our sovereign Lord earlier before we went down into Egypt? Had not Jacob already told us to cast off the foreign gods from among us, did he not say, 'Let us arise and go up to Beit El,' (Gen. 25:3-4)? Why say, 'I am your God from the Land of Egypt'?

From the day Israel came into being in the world, they never knew the glory of God until they descended into Egypt. There, as they cried out in pain in the hardships of labor, refusing to shed the practices they had inherited with their breeding, our ancestors passed all sorts of tests and were assayed like gold, refined of all dross. What's more, everyday they had to see acts of dark magic and sexual perversity that would have led another people astray. But our ancestors deviated neither to the right nor to the left. Although they never really knew God's great glory, they followed in the footsteps of their parents and continued to practice their own culture and mores. (Zohar Vol. III 84b)

This insight from the Zohar is emphasized, over and over, throughout the teachings of Izbicy. While the official line is that Egypt was a great place to be *from*, where God could show us His enormous power and awful strength, a location we might be extracted from like a fetus being dragged from its mother's womb in a caesarian section, the real story is somewhat different. When God is speaking to us as God, giving us the Torah on Sinai, commanding us to worship only Him, then the verse announces, 'I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the Land of Egypt.' But when God is speaking to us as a young lover seducing his young bride, then his words are much more revealing and vulnerable. Through the prophet Hosea we are introduced to another aspect of God, altogether. Listen.

'I am the LORD your God from the Land of Egypt; You will never know another god, for besides Me there is no savior. Because I knew you in the wilderness, in the land of the mound of desires... ' (Hos. 13:4-6)

It is in Egypt, that God falls in love with us, so to speak, Although we were not exactly model monotheists there, we were dragged into idolatry and other evils by our sojourn in Egypt, yet God preferred us there. It may seem inconceivable that after 2000 years God still prefers us to be in exile than at home in our own land, but the Egyptian paradigm still holds true today. There is something about the Jewish People among the *goyim* that God loves.

According to the Izbicy it is this: When we are forced to rub shoulders with Esau, with Edom, with the residual fallout from the Roman Empire, the Western World and the English Language, something happens to us. Something very powerful and profound is triggered inside us; the same thing which so endeared us to God in Egypt. An essential Jewish gene, a germ of something ancestral dating back to the Patriarchs and Matriarchs of the Bible comes alive and flourishes. Older than the Torah we received at Sinai, it is the ancient wisdom primed and charged in the struggle between Esau and Jacob in Rebecca's womb.

As was said in the previous Sidra, Esau was also a great man, and on the surface showed just as much promise as Jacob. Only God can testify to the fatal flaw ruining Esau's character, because it is too deep and hidden for any human eye to grasp it.

Just as something essentially Jewish expressed itself in Egypt and nowhere else, so something essentially Jewish expresses itself in this final exile, and nowhere else.

This week's Sidra opens with Jacob sending messengers to Esau. This blatant provocation flows naturally from his realization that Esau will provide all the ingredients of Exile in which Jacob's descendants, the Jewish People will acquire the accoutrements of their eternal salvation. Jacob simply cannot wait for it to occur, it cannot happen fast enough for him. If we might only see what Jacob saw...

The Izbicy provides a lens through which to glimpse the sparks rubbing off onto our clothing, generated by the constant abrasion of our antagonism for Esau. Esau has vast reservoirs of desire within him, profound longing and creativity. To provide a single example of how Esau has rubbed off on us during the last two thousand years, one has only to acquire a brief and cursory acquaintance with Romanticism to get a sense of how powerful, seductive and dangerous it can be. The basic aims of romanticism were: a return to nature and a (childish) belief in the goodness of humanity; the rediscovery of the artist as a supremely individual creator; the development of nationalistic pride; and the exaltation of the senses and emotions over reason and intellect. The evolution of Modern Hasidism among followers of the Ba'al Shem Tov is directly parallel to the development of Romanticism.

Arguably, the most distinguished Romantic poet of Eastern Europe was Adam Mickiewicz, who developed an idea that Poland was the Messiah of Nations, predestined to suffer just as Yeshke had suffered to save the world. How many people today are aware that Mickiewicz was in Istanbul, Turkey in 1855, with his Romanian Jewish friend Armand Levy, organizing a Jewish legion called the Hussars of Israel, comprising Russian and Palestinian Jews to be used in the war against Russia, when he caught the cholera and died?

The ultimate goyishe romantic was Hitler: he idolized the leading romantic artists and thinkers of the Germanic school, Schumann and Wagner, Schiller, and Goethe.

The holiest most shimmering sparks cost us bitterest pain and suffering. And the sparks themselves are all wrapped in longing and desire.

Izbicy allows us to see through the narrative to the underlying structure.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

(From Mei Hashiloach Vol. II) **Jacob sent messengers before him**

We learn in the Midrash, 'Esau is going about his own business and you send to him?' (Genesis Rabba 75)

This is not to suggest that the Midrash is criticizing Jacob for doing something wrong in provoking Esau's response. Jacob's response may be understood in light of something taught in the previous volume; The *Shimush* - Preparations for the Torah are greater than the learning of it.

(Vol. I Berachoth 7b) Because the longing and the desire and the prayer for God is infinite, while the actual learning is finite. That's why the preparations are greater than the learning.

(מחלק שני)

וישלה יעקב מלאכים לפניו. איתא במדרש (רבה וישלח ע"ה) לדרכו היה הולך ואתה משלח אצלו, אין הכוונה במדרש שיעקב לא עשה כראוי, רק ע"פ שמבואר בחלק ראשון (ליקוטי ברכות ז:): שגדולה שמושה של תורה יותר מלמודה, כיון שהתשוקה והתפלה להשי"ת הוא בלי גבול והלמוד הוא בגבול ולכן גדולה שמושה של תורה יותר מלמודה,

The Mei Hashiloach just quoted a fragment of his teaching from the first volume. I have translated the whole teaching and present it below.

I wish I could say with confidence that I have plumbed the depths of this Torah, but that would be untrue. As often as I study it the meaning shifts.

The original Talmudic quote from the Gemara in Berachoth appears straightforward. Elisha had been a disciple of Elijah the Prophet, but when the Biblical king of the moment needed the services of a prophet, and made inquiries, saying "Are there no prophets left in Israel?" his advisors did not inform him about a man called Elisha who had studied the prophetic arts with Elijah. Instead they told him of a man who poured water over Elijah's hands. R. Shimon Bar Yochai extrapolates from this incident that washing the hands of your rebbe is greater than studying with him. That's the Gemara.

The Izbicy sees 'pouring water over' as a metaphor. Water in Izbicy Torah is always a metaphor of longing, thirst and desire.

My understanding of the Izbicy insight can only really be illustrated using another metaphor. The difference between service and study of Torah may be compared to the difference between foreplay and sex. Sex is the act of penetration, ending for the most part, with orgasm. It is finite and predictable, because it is purposeful. Foreplay on the other hand is infinite and unpredictable. It doesn't have to stop and doesn't have to be bound by any constraints of the imagination. It will be as elaborate and creative as the couple who are playing. It is not purposeful, it is *meaningful*.

The Mei Hashiloach is telling us that Elisha's prayers for his master Elijah's success were of even greater power and influence than Elijah's act. Because while Elijah could imbue every act with the all force of his will and intention, he only had as much will power as he could muster at any given moment. But Elisha, who stood by Elijah's side in prayer, was able to imbue Elijah's acts with all the force of his desire and longing. Now desire and longing express divinity, they are God manifest in the world, and as such are infinite, hence much greater than Elijah's act.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

R. Yochanan said in the name of R. Shimon bar Yochai: The service of Torah is greater than its study, as it is written, 'Here is Elisha b. Shafat who poured water over the hands of Elijah.' (II Kings 3:11)

What this means is that the prayers a person offers for the success of the

Mitzvah - Commandment they are about to perform, is greater than the performance of the *Mitzvah* - Commandment itself. This is the meaning of the phrase, 'who poured water on the hands of Elijah', because Elisha was praying for his master Elijah's success. And it was this which made his service greater than the study, since study is only a finite endeavor, whereas the desire and prayer are to God who is without any boundaries at all. (Mei Hashiloach Vol I, Berachoth 7b)

(ואמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי שמעון בר יוחאי גדולה שימושה של תורה יותר מלמודה שנאמר (מלכים ב' ג' י"א) פה אלישע בן שפט אשר יצק מים על ידי אלי, היינו התפלה שאדם מתפלל אצל כל מעשה המצוה שיצליח, זאת היא גדול מהמעשה, וזה פי' אשר יצק מים ע"י אליהו היינו שהי' מתפלל להש"י שאלי' יצליח, ועי"ז השימוש גדול מהלמוד כי הלמוד הוא בגבול והתפלה הוא להש"י שהוא בלתי גבול.)

The 2000 years we have spent in Exile is just foreplay. Our longing pours out of us like water over God's hands. Yes, of course, the consummation of the union is to be promoted and encouraged, but the consummation will be predictable and finite compared to the infinity of creativity that this exile produces in us every minute. Tens, hundreds and thousands of millions of Jewish hearts are beating and singing for God alone.

Only Jacob could hear that song, because we were all inside him, in the collective known as Israel, the Shechinah. Only Jacob was aware of the pleasure this susurration of the Jewish soul gives unto God. It's worth thinking about.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

This explains why although Jacob was aware that by provoking Esau he would end up suffering greatly at his hands, still he saw the immeasurable benefits that would accrue as the consequences of these events. Therefore he was unable to hold himself back from sending messengers to Esau.

ולכן אף שראה יעקב שיסבול ממנו, אך ראה צמיחת הטובה בלי גבול שיהיה אח"כ מאלו הדברים, לכן לא היה יכול להתאפק מלשלוח אליו.

LONGING

The next Izbicy Torah finds Jacob and his family finally entering the Land of Canaan, after having a near-miss encounter with Esau. They make camp in front of the city of Shechem. The incident that follows - Dinah's rape and rescue - was already mentioned in the Second Mei Hashiloach Torah of Parshat Toldoth, titled 'The Meaning of A Jew'.

The city of Shechem and its environs was later inherited by the tribe of Menasseh, son of Joseph, who is buried there. It was in Shechem that the brothers sold Joseph as a slave into Egypt. It later became the location for the great split in the Jewish people, between the

kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

For some reason Jacob favors the place, and purchases a plot of land there.

The Izbicy explains what it was that moved Jacob to like Shechem. It was a latent desire, so powerful and emotive, it moved across time and space, interfering in the lives of the protagonists who experienced it and acted on it, men and women who remained completely oblivious to its devastating causes and effects. The king (Chamor) and prince (Shechem) of Shechem are currently carrying the spark of this cosmically proportioned desire, and are naturally going to act it out in Biblical fashion. Shechem is going to fall in love with Dinah. His father is going to convince the entire male population of the city to circumcise themselves in order to enable to Shechem to keep Dinah in his house. They are all going to die at the hands of Dinah's zealous brothers, Simeon and Levi.

'Shall our sister be treated as a whore?' they answered, when Jacob challenged them to explain their actions.

As he approaches the outskirts of the city, Jacob becomes aware that something in the place concerns him, some spark of divinity belonging to him resides there. As the elders of the city come out to greet him, he encounters Chamor and Shechem, and Jacob sees something in them which convinces him to make camp there.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

(Mei Hashiloach Vol. I) Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem in the Land of Canaan, when he came from Padan-Aram. He encamped in front of the city.

The words *Vayichen Et P'nei Ha'ir* - 'he encamped in front of the city' can also be read, he favored the face of the city. *P'nei Ha'ir* - the faces of a city are its most prominent citizens, and who were they but Chamor the king and his son, Shechem. The Hebrew word, ויחן *Vayichen* - usually translated as 'he camped', may be translated as 'they found *Chen* - grace' in Jacob's eyes.

(חלק ראשון) ויבא יעקב שכם ויחן את פני העיר. פני העיר היינו הנכבדים שבעיר ומי היו אז פני העיר שכם וחמור, ולשון ויחן היינו שנשאו חן בעיניו

The 'Gates of Reincarnation' is a Lurianic kabbalistic text tracing the metamorphoses of souls through time and space. Certain souls are materia primae, the stuff of greatness, creativity and apocalypse, and as such often manifest in unusually gifted and creative people, or in those whose mission is very prominent. A soul may reappear over and over, skipping generations, only to flourish at the very moment in history it may do the most good, or harm.

The souls of Shechem and Dinah are precisely such a pair. The Mei Hashiloach treats them at greater length in the discussion of Zimri and Cosbi, in the Book of Numbers, Sidras of Balak and Pinchas.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

This is what is meant when we learn in the writings of the Ariza"l (R. Isaac Luria, Book of Gilgulim) that Shechem was later reincarnated in the body of Zimri (prince of the Tribe of Simeon) son of Salu, son of Dinah; his soul is already filled with longing, even now.

והיינו דאיתא בכתבי האריז"ל [ספר הגילגולים פרק נ'] כי שכם נתגלגל אח"כ בזמרי בן סלוא בן דינה, ולכן חשקה נפשו גם עתה,

The Izbicy adds a telling detail to this narrative. Chamor explains his son Shechem's behavior using the past tense, 'My son desired your daughter.' This leads the Izbicy to add the detail that Shechem was never previously attracted to any of the girls who were available to him. Shechem had been lovesick for Dinah even before the advent of Jacob and his family, prior to his ever setting eyes on her, or knowing of her existence. This explains Jacob's sympathy for Shechem. Shechem heard the call of Dinah's soul across the void. They had business with one another.

Shechem, the city, is forever associated with Joseph, but Shechem the man is also connected to Joseph, for Joseph later marries Osnat who is the fruit of the union between Shechem and Dinah.

Dinah herself is a precursor to Joseph, as she was originally conceived with Joseph's soul inside Leah's womb. It is only natural then that all these protagonists should find themselves struggling with one another across the aeons.

Simeon and Levi are unaware of the sensitivity of the issues involved when they judge Shechem, the man and the city, so harshly. Simeon jumps into the fray and irrevocably allies himself with Dinah, thus becoming an integral part in the narrative of these two journeying souls.

I have treated this narrative at greater length in the fourth chapter of *Sefer Yetzira: Chronicles of Desire*.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

That is why, further on in the text, Chamor is quoted saying 'My son Shechem has desired your daughter.' Because Shechem did not want to marry any of the local girls, he wanted only Dinah. And this is what found favor in the eyes of Jacob because he had some connection to Jacob.

ולכן נאמר שכם בני חשקה וכו' היינו שלא רצה לישא את בנות הארץ, רק את דינה וזהו שנשא חן בעיני יעקב כי היה לו מעט שייכת ליעקב אבינו.

SOWING SEED IN SHECHEM

The second Mei Hashiloach of this Sidra follows the unfolding of events at Shechem. Although Jacob has moved on from there and is now in Beit-El, thinking himself safe from the fallout of that drama, God informs him that there are still major *Birurin* - Clarifications to be

done. The drama of Joseph and his brothers is about to unfold. Although Jacob has prepared himself for it spiritually, it will tax all his emotional and physical reserves.

As was discussed in last week's *Mei Hashiloach* concerning the ladder-dream, Jacob still had to pass through the tests of the sale of Joseph, before he could fully integrate the way of worship developed by his father, Isaac, on the path of *Gevurah* - Fear.

The essential point distinguishing Jewish worship of God from every other form is this: The Jew is always ready to let it go. No matter how invested we are in our spiritual paths, whether we serve God with our love of people, or in our awe and trembling at the divine presence, if it is with deep and heartfelt prayer or in song and dance, the Jew is always prepared, at a moment's notice, to drop it completely and either stand waiting for instruction or else take up the opposite way. And though I know that God wants me to be full of compassion for His creatures, I also know that if the moment comes when I will be expected to pick up a sword or a gun and go to war with His enemies, or mine, I am already there. No matter how charitable I am commanded to be, even if I am treasurer of the communal funds, I do not disburse money to one who comes begging on *Shabbes*,. *Shabbes* is a perfect example of how a Jew is prepared to drop everything and stop work, no matter how important the task is. Although Isaac was the paradigm of *Gevurah* - Strictness, and might have been expected to take offence at being lied to and defrauded by Jacob over the blessings, Isaac's *Gevurah* was true strength. Not for a single moment did it even occur to him to punish Jacob. Now it remained to be seen if Jacob could act with as much true *Gevurah* on *his* arrival in Egypt, when he fully comprehended the details of the treachery his sons has perpetrated on him and Joseph.

The rebbe Reb Bunim used to say there were three things he did not understand, so superhuman do they seem. One is how Jacob, who had mourned twenty-two inconsolable years for Joseph, was suddenly able to jump right back to his previous joyous state of mind on hearing the news of Joseph's good fortune - and all without missing a beat, as though nothing important and noteworthy had transpired between the two moments in time. That very night, the Torah tells us, Jacob received fresh prophecy, because Jacob himself was refreshed as though nothing untoward had happened to him.

For the Jewish People, Shechem is the darkest place in the world; the most ominous spot on the planet. Jacob had thought that by purchasing a plot for 100 *Kesita* and pitching his tent there, he could somehow tame its negativity, or at least mitigate it. He was unafraid of Shechem because he could see the good that would grow out of it in the long term. No matter how the Jewish People seemed to blunder in Shechem, Jacob saw all they were doing like a man watching a farmer sowing seed. An ignoramus looking on might exclaim, 'What a waste of good wheat. You could make loaves of bread with all those wheat berries.' The farmer knows the truth, that sowing the seed in the ground enables the promise of a huge harvest in the coming year, when the 'lost' seed may have produced many, many times its own weight in new seed. Similarly, Jacob could see prophetically that all the blundering we would do in Shechem through the ages will turn out to have been acts of seeding the future in order to harvest a bumper crop at some point.

But the forces at work in Shechem reach across time and space. Shechem is the place where *Da'at* - Knowledge is most obscured; where we begin forgetting that we have forgotten something crucial. For as long as we are aware that we have forgotten something important, we remain purposeful and wary of blundering.

If you're going somewhere but have forgotten the precise address, you can still find your way by calling out the landmarks along the way, asking people if they know the place you are aiming for, or driving around until you come upon it by accident.

But if you forget where you're going, where are you then? If you've already forgotten that you've forgotten the address you were aiming for, you're blundering aimlessly. Jacob cannot help us there, he can only maintain his faith.

There is only one of Jacob's children who doesn't ever forget the correct address, he's Joseph, and we're going to try and kill him, soon. We're on a trajectory into strife, we've been on a mission since Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Truth, they say, is always the first casualty of warfare, but *Da'at* - Knowledge is the first fatality.

There are three types of Exile, the Belzer rebbe taught. The exile of the Jew among gentiles is the first and most commonly understood. Second is the exile of an individual feeling completely alien among peers, a family member feeling isolated among brothers and sisters, a wife from her husband, a child from its parents. The third and most painful is the exile within the self, and from the self.

All of these are acted out in Shechem, again and again throughout Jewish history. By the time Joseph was dragged out of the snake-pit and sold to the gentile slave-traders for 20 pieces of silver, he was completely unrecognizable to himself or his brothers.

By the time King Solomon's son, Rehoboam and Jeroboam of the tribe of Ephraim split the country into two kingdoms at Shechem, in 930 BCE, we could no longer remember a time when we were not at war with our brothers and ourselves.

Moses brought Joseph's bones out of Egypt for burial at Shechem, in the hope that Joseph's presence might remind us not to forget the important things, but it did not work. The Tree of Knowledge would have better been named the Tree of Forgetting - the Tree of Not Knowing.

Still Jacob hung onto the promise God had made to him in the ladder-dream, that even in his sleep, even totally unconscious, Jacob never loses the thread of the narrative and is never cut off from the source of life. Jacob is always worshiping God and God is always protecting Jacob. This Jacob knows with absolutely certainty, hence Shechem holds no fears for him. Even in the Unknowingest Place on Earth, God knows what we are doing, God is in charge. He makes everything right in the end.

Jacob is desperate to teach us all this. For if we only had this information in our heads and hearts all the time we would never stray far from the right road. But Jacob can only reveal what remains revealed to him. God leaves Jacob right at that moment, in that place...

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

God went up from upon him, in the place where He had spoken to him.

Because God showed him that he had yet to be tested, i.e. Jacob still needed to withstand the challenge of Joseph's sale and all that followed. This is the meaning of the phrase, 'God went up from upon him', as though to tell Jacob he still needs to hold on tightly.

ויעל מעליו אלהים במקום אשר דבר אתו, כי הש"י הראה לו שצריך עוד לברורים [היינו הברורים ממכירת יוסף. תשלום] וזהו ויעל מעליו כאילו עדיין צריך לאחוז בו,

The Izbicy adds a detail to the text which completely subverts it. He says that God was talking to Jacob about money when He suddenly 'went up from upon him', which is to say God

up-and-left Jacob thinking about money.

Now the *Chumash* mentions not a word about money. This is the relevant text in Genesis (35:9-14):

‘God appeared again to Jacob after he had arrived from Paddan-Aram and blessed him. Then God told him, “Your name is Jacob. No longer are you to be called Jacob. Instead, your name will be Israel.”

So God called his name Israel and also told him, “I am God Almighty. You will be fruitful and multiply. You will become a nation – and an assembly of nations! Kings will come from you – they’ll emerge from your own loins!

Now as for the land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I’m giving it to you and to your descendants who come after you. I’m giving the land to you!”

After this, God went up from upon him, in the place where he had spoken to him.’

It is possible that by referring us to the subject of money the Izbicy is providing very brief clues to a much longer narrative. Previously when Jacob encountered God in this very place, it had been during the ladder-dream when Jacob was on his way to Haran. The very last sentence Jacob uttered had been a vow concerning money, as we read:

‘Then he made this solemn vow: “If God remains with me, watches over me throughout this journey that I’m taking, gives me food to eat and clothes to wear, and returns me safely to my father’s house, then the LORD will be my God, this stone that I’ve erected in the form of a pillar will be God’s house, and of everything that You give to me I’ll give a tenth to You.”(Gen. 28:20-22)

Before leaving on his journey to find a wife, Jacob had made a vow to tithe everything he earned. Now he was back in the Land of Canaan with wives and children, sheep, cattle and much wealth, and had not yet fulfilled that vow.

There is an Izbicy teaching about the verse, ‘Let me listen to what God, the LORD, says; for the LORD will promise peace to His people. (Psalm 85:8)

King David, who wrote the psalm, is telling us how he tried to pay special attention to what God says when He is speaking between Himself and Himself, so to speak. After the prophecy was over, David bent his head to listen to what God was saying to Himself, and heard God speaking about the promise of peace to his people.

Here the Izbicy is hinting that when his prophecy was over, Jacob continued listening to the voice of God and heard God talking about keeping His promises, thereby reminding Jacob to fulfill his vows.

Or perhaps the Izbicy is not introducing the subject of money, but rather explaining what Jacob still needed to clarify in order to achieve real mastery over *Gevurah*. Isaac represents the paradigm of *Gevurah*. So long as Isaac was alive in this world, God, so to speak, did not have to sit on the Throne of Judgment, Isaac led a life of such strictness with himself that he obviated the divine necessity for strictness.

One of the eternal mysteries is how all abundance flows through *Gevurah*. The word for physicality is **גשמיות** *Gashmiyut* - lit. Rainyness. Rain is synonymous with the flow of abundance into the world, and is always controlled by *Gevurah*. While the *Chesed* - Loving-kindness flowing into the world comes through the quality of Abraham, all the wealth and money flowing into the world is coming through *Gevurah* which is Isaac. The above mentioned with God, mentioned above, opened with the following: ‘God appeared again to Jacob after he had arrived from Paddan-Aram and blessed him.’ The phrase ‘and blessed him’ might appear superfluous., but if we read it as a promise of money and physical abundance,

then the final phrase now makes sense: 'After this, God went up from upon him, from the place where He had spoken to him.' The place God had spoken to him refers to the matters about which God spoke to Jacob. Top of the list of things was money.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

In the place where He had spoken to him.

That is to say within that very same area of the dialogue recorded in the Torah, i.e. concerning money. Jacob was being shown that he still required testing. Because he was not completely whole.

במקום אשר דבר אתו, היינו באותו ענין עצמו שהכתוב מדבר בו בעסק ממון בזה צריך עוד לברורין, כי עוד לא נשלם,

When God went up from upon Abraham the verse does not say 'it was in the same place', the way the verse here with Jacob remarks. There the prophecy concerned Ishmael. So when God finished speaking He left, and that was that. God had only appeared to Abraham out of His love for him, not because Ishmael warranted a separate divine revelation. Therefore the verse simply says 'God ascended from upon Abraham.' God ascended and Abraham remained, the split is clear and obvious.

Here with Jacob the verse is more equivocal, and more complex. The text without grammatical correction reads: 'And He ascended from upon him, God, in that very place He had spoken to him.' The verse suggests Jacob and God in a different sort of relationship than Abraham and God. A deeper intimacy.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

There is a similar event described in the life of Abraham, where it says, 'God ascended from upon Abraham.' (Genesis 17:22) That event was after the chapter concerning circumcision, God was telling Abraham that he needed further trials with the drama of the *Akedah* - Binding of Isaac. The difference being that there, with Abraham, the text does not say that it was in that same place. Because it was concerning a different matter that he was to be tested.

ועל זאת הכוונה ג"כ נאמר באברהם [בראשית י"ז כ"ב] ויעל אלהי"ם מעל אברהם, אחר פרשת מילה שגם עכשיו הי' צריך לברורין בנסיון העקדה אך שם לא נאמר במקום אשר דבר אתו כי לא הי' בענין אחד:

The Third Torah in the Mei Hashiloach provides suggestions for dealing with adversity

and tragedy. Soon after the revelation described in the previous Torah, Rachel died in childbirth, on the road to Efrat. Jacob buried her by the wayside and built a tomb over her gravesite, known as the Tomb of Rachel to this very day. In Biblical times it was known as a place of weeping; Rachel could be heard crying for her children taken captive and driven into exile.

Immediately after these events, the Torah informs us, Jacob moved on.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

Jacob traveled onward, pitching his tent beyond *Migdal Eder* - Herd Tower

The Midrash says; ‘Beyond all the events Jacob had to endure, the death of Rachel was by far the hardest on him.’ (Ruth Rabba 2:7)

Now, it is the way of the righteous man, and most especially of Jacob to find strength in his heart not to cast doubts upon the justice of God’s ways; to remain in the certainty that everything happens for the best. Therefore we are told immediately after Rachel’s death that he pitched his tent opposite *Migdal Eder* - the Herd Tower. Both words, Herd and Tower, hint at deep and powerful faith and confidence. The truth is that God had some profound purpose to achieve with the death of Rachel, as we learn in the Zohar (Vol I. 175a).

ויסע ישראל ויט אהלו מהלאה למגדל עדר. היינו כדאיתא במדרש [רות רבא פרשה ב',ז], אשר אחר כל הרפתקאות שעלו על יעקב אבינו ע"ה, מיתת רחל היתה קשה עליו מכלם, והנה מדרכי הצדיקים ובפרט יעקב אבינו להחזיק לבו מאד ולא להרהר אחר מדותיו של הקב"ה שבוודאי הכל היא לטובה, וזה שנאמר כאן אחר מיתת רחל ויט אהלה מהלאה למגדל עדר היינו שחזק את לבו שלא להרהר אחר מדותיו כי מגדל עדר שניהם לשון תקופות הם, ובאמת הי' להש"י עומק גדול במיתת רחל כדאיתא בזוה"ק [בראשית קע"ה].

The Zohar referred to above reads as follows;

‘Jacob erected a monument on her gravesite.’ Rabbi Yossi asked, “Why? Because her place will remain uncovered until the day that the Holy Blessed One has prepared for the resurrection of the dead. So the verse ends with the phrase, ‘to the very day,’ hinting at a very specific day.”

Rabbi Yehuda said that ‘to the very day’ refers to the day the Shechinah who is in exile with Israel will return to that spot, as it is written “And there is hope for your future, says God, your children will return to their borders.” (Jer. 31:16) This is the oath the Holy Blessed One swore to her. All Israel, when they return from exile, are destined to stand by Rachel's grave and weep, as she wept for the exile Israel, as the verse continues, “They will come weeping, and I will transport them pleading.” (Ibid. 8) It says further, “Because there is a reward for all your work.” (Ibid. 15) At that time, Rachel, who is on

the road, will rejoice with Israel and the *Shechinah*, just as she has been taught.' (Zohar Vol I. 175a)

In the Zohar the figure of Rachel stands out as a representation of the *Shechinah*, whose importance and prominence cannot be exaggerated. In the Prologue #24 to Lamentations Rabba we read;

Rachel jumped to intercede with God. She said, 'God, You know how passionately Jacob, Your servant, loved me. He paid my father with seven years of labor for me. And when those seven years of work were completed and it came time for me to be married to my husband my father conspired to swap my sister in place of me. I found that very hard to bear. I knew what was happening, so I informed my husband of the plan and gave him a sign whereby he might distinguish me from my sister, so that my father would be unable to substitute her for me.

Subsequently I regretted the plans I'd made. I swallowed my lust and had compassion for my sister who would be left standing in disgrace. In the evening when they swapped my sister in place of me to my husband, I gave her all the signs I'd given my husband so that he would think she is Rachel. And, what's more, I hid beneath the bed where he lay with my sister and when he spoke to her she remained silent; it was I who spoke and replied to everything he said.

This is how I treated my sister, with loving kindness, without jealousy toward her, so that she not be left in disgrace. And if I, of flesh and blood, of dust and ashes, can contain my jealousy of the rival, the other wife, not to cause her shame and disgrace, then You, O Living, Eternal, Merciful King, how can You be jealous of pagan worship wherein nothing is real anyway? You've exiled my children who have been put to the sword, and their enemies do as they wish with them'

Immediately God's compassion begins to metamorphose. He says, 'For your sake, Rachel I will bring Israel back to their proper place.' So, it is written, 'Thus says the LORD: A voice is heard on high, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; She refuses to be comforted for her children, Because they are no more. Thus says the LORD: Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears; For your work will be rewarded, declares the LORD, And they will return from the land of the enemy.' (Jer. 31:14-15)

Rachel argues on behalf of all Jews in exile, anywhere and across the ages. The vehemence of her reasoning forces God to concede that even were Jews caught worshipping idols in public it would still be unseemly for God to turn His back on us over such a petty thing. In the Midrash God's response to Rachel is described as an immediate change of mind and heart, an about-turn. But if we examine history and the facts of the Jewish narrative, nothing changed and we are still in exile. What then is the change of mind the Midrash seems to attribute to God?

It is God responding positively to Rachel after refusing to acknowledge the Patriarchs, Moses or any Biblical intercessor on behalf of the Jewish People. Rachel has become the voice of God's own conscience, so to speak, which is another way of describing the concept of Shechina. This Midrash is the source text for the Zohar and our modern Kabbalistic understanding of the Shechina's role and relationship to us and our journey. She is God refusing rest and redemption, sleeping rough in fields and forests, waiting for the in-gathering of her children before taking her rightful place at the side of the King.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

This is why the text further says: **And it was when Israel settled.**

The word ‘settled’ hints at a level of serenity. Jacob remained calm and did not begin doubting or questioning God. Jacob thought to himself ‘Obviously God has some profound purpose, beyond my capacity to understand.’

וזה שנאמר ויהי בשכון ישראל, שכון היינו לשון נייחא שהי' בנייחא ולא הרהר אחר
מדותיו כלום כי בטח בה' שיש עומק בזה למעלה מהשגתו,

Just because you are a person of faith it does not mean God wants you to be blind. Ignorance is not a necessary component of blind faith. God loves to enlighten those who believe in Him. If instead of resenting events, asking, ‘Why is God doing this to us?’ we accept God’s will and ask to be shown the deeper meaning of events, God is only too happy to show us.

We have to ask to be enlightened, to be shown the deepest depths of God’s purpose, which is not the same as demanding from God that He explain why He’s doing whatever it is He’s doing to me.

The death of Rachel changed Jacob’s family in ways no one could have predicted, and so, too, the evolution of the Jewish People.

Joseph becomes a dreamer - something his brothers resented, but which proved to be absolutely crucial to the next stage of our growth. Without Joseph’s gifts we would not have survived our sojourn in Egypt, nor would we have become a people with the traits we have.

The catalyst for change after the death of Rachel was the crisis Reuben precipitated. According to some commentators, it was in Jacob’s mind to have more children with Bilha, his concubine by Rachel. But whatever his plans may have been, they were frustrated by his son’s interference. Reuben went into Bilha’s tent, took his father’s bed from there, and moved it into the tent of his mother, Leah. He was only trying to promote the honor of his mother, but his actions are registered in the Torah as an act of adultery. ‘And it was when Israel settled in the land that Reuben went and lay with Bilha, his father’s concubine. Israel heard about it - and the sons of Jacob were twelve.’ (Gen. 28:22)

The remark on the end of the verse, telling us that the sons of Jacob were twelve, and the subsequent listing of the tribes in the following verse, with Reuben the first to be named, all seem proof of the rabbinic teaching, that Reuben was not excluded because of any sin he committed, which tells us he did not actually have an incestuous relationship with his step mother. Rather, that his act of interfering is described in the harshest terms, because he was acting in the most destructive way possible.

Reuben himself was forever changed by the act. He became increasingly isolated from his brothers, no longer considering himself their leader or decision maker. Later the tribe of Reuben in general took on an aspect of self sequestration and meditative solitude; it became their way of worshiping God. They took themselves very seriously, too seriously for their brother tribes, tending to judge themselves most harshly and punitively. Hosea b. Beri the most well known Biblical prophet of the tribe of Reuben, is the first to call on Israel to repent publicly, and we read his prophecy as the Haftarah on the Sabbath before Yom Kipur. His ancestor, Reuben was the first penitent to repent for sin he had not actually committed, and this is the dramatic cascade from the event of Rachel’s death.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

After this God showed him that it is entirely appropriate to pray to God to be shown the profundity of the reasoning. For even though one may not cast doubts and aspersions upon the ways of God, it is proper to ask to have their deepest purposes revealed, to be able to see what God's desire is in the matter. It is not God's way to hide anything from those who cast all their hopes of salvation upon Him. And this is what was shown to him with the story of Reuben.

ואח"כ הראה לו הש"י כי ראוי לו לבקש מאתו שיגלה לו את העומק כי זאת צריך האדם לבקש אף שאסור להרהר אחר מדותיו מ"מ צריך לבקש מהש"י שיראה לו העומק מה שחפץ בזה כי דרכי הש"י שלא להעלים שום דבר מהמיחלים לחסדו וזה הראה לו במעשה דראובן.

The Mei Hashiloach wraps up this teaching with a cryptic reference to the order in which the tribes are mentioned throughout the Five Books of Moses. It is an Izbic thesis that each of the tribes has an epoch in Jewish history when they lead the nation, because each tribe has unique gifts which only shine in particular circumstances.

There are 16 variants throughout the Chumash, each with its own special meaning. As a last word, the rebbe says that the 16 epithets with which we adorn our faith in the liturgy of *Emet V'yatziv* correspond to the 16 permutations of the 12 Tribes. They are:

- | | | | | | |
|------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| 1.) אמת | 2.) ויציב | 3.) ונכון | 4.) וקים | 5.) וישר | 6.) ונאמן |
| 7.) ואהוב | 8.) וחביב | 9.) ונחמד | 10.) ונעים | 11.) ונורא | 12.) ואדיר |
| 13.) ומתקן | 14.) ומקבל | 15.) וטוב | 16.) ויפה | | |

- 1.) *Emet* = True. 2.) *Yatziv* = Steadfast. 3.) *Nachon* = Proper. 4.) *Kayom* = Lasting.
5.) *Yashar* = Honest. 6.) *Ne'eman* = Trusted. 7.) *Ahuv* = Beloved. 8.) *Chaviv* = Adored.
9.) *Nechmad* = Desired. 10.) *Na'im* - Pleasant. 11.) *Nora* = Awesome. 12.) *Adir* = Mighty.
13.) *Metukan* = Correct 14.) *Mekubal* = Accepted. 15.) *Tov* = Good. 16.) *Yafeh* = Beautiful.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

Straight after that the text tells us that **the sons of Jacob were twelve**. God revealed to him all the different ways the tribes were counted because there are changes over time and throughout the Five Books of Moses in orders and precedent. Sometimes like this and sometimes like that. Each set has a different teaching to impart to anyone prepared to open their heart to the Torah.

ואח"ז ויהיו בני יעקב שנים עשר היינו כי הקב"ה פתח לו סדר מנין השבטים איך הוא כי נמצא בכל פעם סדר אחר למנין השבטים פעם בכה ופעם בכה, ובכל סדר יש למוד בפני

עצמו למי שפונה עצמו לד"ת ולכן עתה אחר מיתת רחל באו על הסדר הלז:
וזוהו סדר השבטים כפי השתנות מניניהם בששה עשר מקומות:

- א. סדר תולדותם בפ' ויצא – ראובן, שמעון, לוי, יהודה, דן, נפתלי, גד, ואשר, יששכר, זבולון, יוסף ובנימין:
- ב. הסדר בבואו לאביו פ' וישלח – ראובן, שמעון, לוי, יהודה, יששכר, זבולון, גד, אשר, יוסף, בנימין, דן, נפתלי, גד, אשר:
- ג. סדר ביאתם למצרים פ' ויגש – ראובן, שמעון, לוי, יהודה, יששכר, זבולון, גד, אשר, יוסף, בנימין, דן, נפתלי:
- ד. סדר שברכם אביהם בפ' ויחי – ראובן, שמעון, לוי, יהודה, זבולון, יששכר, דן, גד, אשר, נפתלי, יוסף, בנימין:
- ה. הסדר שבפ' ואלה שמות – ראובן, שמעון, לוי, יהודה, יששכר, זבולון, ובנימין, דן, נפתלי, גד, אשר, ויוסף הי' וכו':
- ו. בפרשת וארא – ראובן, שמעון, לוי:
- ז. אנשים שנקבו לספור את ישראל בפ' במדבר – ראובן, שמעון, יהודה, יששכר, זבולון, אפרים, מנשה, בנימין, דן, אשר, גד, נפתלי:
- ח. סדר מספרם למשפחותם בפ' במדבר – ראובן, שמעון, גד, יהודה, יששכר, זבולון, אפרים, מנשה, בנימין, דן, אשר, נפתלי:
- ט. סדר הדגלים – דגל יהודה יששכר זבולון, מזרח. דגל ראובן שמעון גד, דרום. דגל אפרים מנשה בנימין, מערב. דגל דן אשר נפתלי, צפון:
- י. סדר הנשיאים בקרבנותיהם בפ' נשא – יהודה, יששכר, זבולון, ראובן, שמעון, גד, אפרים, מנשה, בנימין, דן, אשר, נפתלי:
- יא. סדר מסע הדגלים בפ' בהעלותך – יהודה, יששכר, זבולון ונסעו בני כו', ראובן שמעון גד ונסעו הקהתים כו', אפרים מנשה בנימין דן אשר נפתלי:
- יב. סדר בפ' שלח אשר שלח משה – ראובן, שמעון, יהודה, יששכר, אפרים ובנימין זבולון, מנשה, דן, אשר, נפתלי, גד:
- יג. כסדר החלוקה בארץ בפ' פנחס – ראובן שמעון גד יהודה יששכר זבולון מנשה אפרים בנימין דן אשר נפתלי:
- יד. נשיא אחד למטה ינחלו הארץ בפ' מסעי – יהודה שמעון בנימין דן מנשה אפרים זבולון יששכר אשר נפתלי:
- טו. בפ' תבוא, אלה יעמדו לברך – שמעון ולוי יהודה יששכר יוסף ובנימין, ואלה כו', ראובן גד אשר זבולון דן נפתלי:
- טז. הסדר שברכם משה בפ' וזאת הברכה – ראובן יהודה לוי בנימין יוסף זבולון יששכר גד דן נפתלי אשר:

הרי ששה עשר פעמים נמנו בהשתנות במקומותם ומכל פעם נמצא למוד, וכנגד זה סדרו

אנשי כנסת הגדולה ששה עשר שבחים במאת ויציב, והמשכיל יבין:

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

These are the kings who reigned in the Land of Edom before there ever reigned a king over the Children of Israel.

This chapter is where God begins highlighting the extremely fine distinctions among Israel and the gentile nations. The husk surrounding Edom is the greatest of all of them because there is hardly any difference at all between Edom and Israel. As we see, immediately after the saga of the life of Israel begins there follows the life of Esau.

ואלה המלכים אשר מלכו בארץ אדום, לפני מלך מלך לבני ישראל, בזו הפרשה התחיל הקב"ה להראות הברורין הדקין מאוד שבין ישראל לאו"ה כי קליפת אדום היא הגדולה שבכלן כי אין רק הבדל דק מאד בינה לבין ישראל כי מיד אחר חיים של ישראל מתחיל חיים של עשו,

Because, between Israel and the nations of the world the differences are obvious, even when compared with Ishmael, although they too are descendents of Abraham, there is still a huge and obvious distinction. They are not connected to Israel through their mother in any way.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

כי בין ישראל לכל או"ה ניכר הבדל והפרש גדול ואפילו נגד ישמעאלים, אף שהם זרע אברהם יש הפרש גדול כי מצד אמם אין להם שייכת בישראל,

But in comparison to Esau there is no discernable or demonstrable difference. They (descendents of Esau) appear to be pure through their maternal lineage. It is only because it is the will of the Creator that Jacob is the chosen. This is the meaning of the verse in Malachi (1:2-3) Is Esau not a brother to Jacob, says God, I love Jacob, and Esau I hate.

Brother suggests they were both equals, which is to say that at the moment of conception when there was no visible difference between them or qualitative eminence of one over the other; there were neither commandments nor good deeds, neither sins nor mistakes. Both were from Isaac and Rebecca, nevertheless God says, I love Jacob and Esau I hate.

אבל נגד עשו לא ניכר שום הבדל והפרש לעין כי נראים כנקיים אגב אמן ורק רצון הבורא ית' הי' שיעקב הוא הנבחר, וזה שנאמר [מלאכי א', ב'] הלא אח עשו ליעקב כו' אח משמע שהיו שניהם שוים, והיינו בשעת זריעה שעדיין לא ניכר שום מעלה באחד על חברו כי אז לא נמצא מצות ומע"ט גם לא חטא ועון, ושניהם מיצחק ורבקה, ואעפ"כ ואהב את יעקב ואת עשו שנאתי,

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

One can only say it is God's desire, as it is written, 'You desired to become a concubine to them whose penis is a donkey's penis and whose issue gushes like a horse.' (Ezek. 23:20) Which is to say that at the moment of conception God assays this drop to be pure, holy and human, while this is horse issue.

והיינו רק מרצונו יתברך כמ"ש [יחזקאל כ"ג'כ'] אשר בשר חמורים בשרם וזרמת סוסים כו' והוא כי משעת זריעה מברר הש"י שזה טיפה כשרה של קדושה וזאת הוא זרמת סוסים,

Thus, even though there is nothing bad apparent in Esau he is still compared to a swine. As we learn in the Talmud the apple tree fruits in sixty days as is the gestation of the pig. The Hebrew letter corresponding to 60 is the letter *Samech*. The *Samech* is shaped like a bow and the bow is an icon signifying confidence. Esau says he trusts in God, he is sure of it. He is confident because he too is born of Isaac and Rebecca.

והנה אף כי על עשו לא הי' ניכר שום דבר רע מ"מ נמשל לחזיר [ויקרא רבא י"ג, ה'], והיינו דאיתא בגמ' [בכורות ח']. תפוח מגדל לס' יום וכנגדו חזיר מוליד לס' יום כי אות ס' הוא כעין קשת וקשת הוא מבטח עוז, והיינו שהוא אומר שיש לו מבטח עוז בהש"י מאחר שנולד מיצחק ומרבקה כמו אנו,

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

The Jewish people are compared to the apple. God, however, proves that Esau's connections are nothing but a disguise while Israel remains connected to God. Whoever penetrates the meanings hidden within the kings of Edom can see this written explicitly.

כי ישראל נמשלו לתפוח, אך הש"י הוא המברר שזה הוא רק גוון, וזה באמת דבוק בה', ומי שמשכיל בשמות המלכים יוכל לראות זאת מפורש.
