



WHEN YOUR ENEMY FALLS, DO NOT REJOICE - PARSHAS VAYISHLACH – JEFFEREY BLUMENFELD

Only two weeks ago we are warned by Eisov that he is waiting for the death of his father Yitschok to avenge the loss of this blessing and his birthright. Today's Parshah tells us of the preparations for the first encounter between Eisov and Yaacov in over twenty five years. What possible outcome could there be except disaster?

Let us however pause for a moment and consider a pivotal comment on the Possuk (Bereishis 35:29) וַיִּקְבְּרוּ אֹתוֹ עַשָּׂו וַיַּעֲקֹב בְּנֵי by Radak on the Torah which we do not regularly find in the Mikraos Gedolos: "Yaacov gave him his respect and put his name first from the time he made peace with him".

Are we supposed to believe that the years of bitterness felt by Eisov suddenly melted away as Yitschok grew older. In fact the opposite should have been the case as Eisov had waited for this moment to avenge his loss.

The answer lies in my humble opinion in rolling back the chronology of this Parsha, Vayishlach. There are two other stages to the remarkable journey of reconciliation between Eisov and Yaacov. The second stage is the actual meeting; the first is Yaacov's preparations. At the second stage Yaacov is in fear of meeting Eisov but he runs and hugs him. Their exchanges are punctuated by words of kindness. Eisov says (Bereishis 33:9) וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו יְשׁ לִי רַב אָחִי יְהִי לְךָ אֲשֶׁר לָךְ. "My brother whatever belongs to you is yours." The Midrash tells us this is his acceptance that Yaacov will keep the berachos he received from his father. Yaacov is now no longer in fear so they travel a little together. They agree to separate as the land was not sufficient to take both their wealth. Eisov offers help to stay with Yaacov but Yaacov is now reconciled with his brother, so he can say without fear thank you but no thank you see Rashi (Bereishis 33:15) "וַיֹּאמֶר לָמָּה זֶה תַּעֲשֶׂה לִּי טוֹבָה זֶה שְׂאִינִי צָרִיךְ לָהּ".

Eisov and Yaacov have shown they can now give respect to one another's greatness and own their individual property. They have reached an understanding which leads them to the level to meet their father in Hebron.

Stage one was the prelude in which Yaacov prepares a three-fold approach for his meeting with Eisov. See Rashi (Bereishis 32:9) "He prepared himself for three approaches For appeasement for Prayer and for War". His fear was only based on a report that Eisov had four hundred men with him. It is surprising that Yaacov was so frightened when later on, in the event at Shechem, Shimon and Levy were able to decimate a town on their own! Yaacov prepares for defence but actions appeasement and sends a "staggered" gift to his brother. With hindsight we should not be surprised that Esau went around with four hundred men for he was was "Ish Sadeh" whereas Yaacov was "Yoshev Ohalim". He stayed in the encampment with his flocks and cattle. Yaacov realised this, so he sent to Eisov his gift from the animals of his wealth. What would be Eisov's response war or friendship? When Eisov saw Yaacov's family, his heart melted, as he ran towards his brother. The past seemed meaningless to both so (Ber' 39:4) "Vayechabkehu" they locked together in embrace as twin brothers not as they were before they were born- they wrestled with one another (Ber' 25:22) וַיִּתְרַצְצוּ הַבָּנִים בְּקֶרְבָּהּ.

These three stages were the process of rebirth of the brotherly love of Yaacov and Eisov to be ready and fit for the Mitzva of Kibud Av. The Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezar makes the following comment on the possuk (Ber' 33:18) "Vayovo Yaacov". Eisov does not disappear but is waiting for Yaacov at his father's encampment.

We live in a world where Sinas Chinom can destroy the fabric of our kehilloh. We know from our history that the antidote for this is Ahavas Yisrael which turns your enemy into your friend and your murderous thoughts into kindness. So Eisov and Yaacov as they came nearer in their travels were preparing themselves spiritually for their reunion to meet their father and show him Kibud Av. They were also changing from hatred and fear to Ahavah. When they reached the highest level of Love they could now reunite with their father Yitschok and together show him the final respect. The Torah tells us that Yitzchok died (Ber' 35:29) וַיָּשָׁבַע יִצְחָק. Perhaps the word שָׁבַע is a sign of his peace and satisfaction at the reunification of his two sons whom he blessed so long before. The Ramban alludes to this when he says "That is to say that he died in ripe old age advanced in years and his blessed son returned to him."

We need more of the antidote shown to us by the behaviour of Yaacov and Eisov to bring the Geulah speedily in our days.

Leilu Nishmas my dear brother-in-law **Avraham Tzvi Ben Mordechai Yaacov** Klinger, on my barmitzvah shabbos