

Parshas Vayeishev

This week's Parsha is Vayeishev, the Parsha where we are deeply introduced to Yakov's family and his sons and their relationship with Yosef. From here on out, we are not as concerned over the relationship between Yakov and Esav- the Torah is focused on the brothers, and the beginnings of the family heading to Egypt. We know that the battle (not war) was won by Yakov in last week's parsha (Vayishlach), once Yakov showed that he can conquer Esav's angel, as Rashi explains. In fact, Rashi on the first Posuk of the Parsha acknowledges the fact that at the end of last Parsha we learn of the "settlings" of Esav and his offspring (and Rashi explains it was concise to show that the length at which the Torah will delve into Yakov's family is to show His love for Bnei Yisrael.

Rashi eloquently describes the same emphasis on Noach, Avraham etc. and draws on a metaphor of a person who is searching for a pearl in sand, or the power of a spark on flax. The spark on flax is parable to Yakov conquering Esav. One may ask (Rashi says) how we can conquer all the kingdoms of Esav, yet as Ovadiah (we read last week Haftora) states, the house of Yakov is a fire and Yosef a flame, and the house of Esav is straw. Meaning the same threat, a tiny spark has on flax/straw, is how we, a fire, will ignite the destruction of the houses of Esav.

This means, that the war between Esav and Yakov remains, even though the battle in last week's parsha was temporarily won. Only when Mashiach comes will the flame destroy the straw. If Yakov truly conquered Esav, Mashiach would have come, and the world we know it would look entirely different. We needed to go down to Egypt,

receive the Torah, become Ovdei Hashem, and be mivarer nitzutzim (isolate the sparks of G-dliness) found in everything.

The ongoing war between Yakov and Esav is spiritual in nature, is a battle between Tohu and Tikkun (as I mentioned). Yakov represents the Tikkun of the chaos that is Esav's Tohu. We are to make order out of chaos as servants of Hashem. The chaos being the unorganized sparks of G-dliness that are screened by a physical shell. Only through our acts of goodness and kindness and doing Mitzvos do we expose the spirituality and holiness within, and organize it, and rectify it in the service of Hashem, in this way we slowly ignite the straw around us, to a world that is closer to accepting and being ready for Mashiach.

This parable fits nicely with the fact that we are about to celebrate Chanuka, which is the holiday of setting light to the Menorah, where a key element of the lighting is to be "mefarsem" (publicize) the mitzvah.

Whereas the parable above of fire and flame is a destructive metaphor at first, perhaps this Parsha lines up with Chanuka, because the spark, flame and light that is kindled is a divine one that will spread out into the world. Slowly but surely exposing the the world to the spirituality that is within, and bringing the world closer to Hashem, and receiving Mashiach.

As Rashi says about Yakov and his living in tranquility- which perhaps was appropriate at this time in his life due to the turmoil he finally stifled at this point in his life which included conquering Esav in some capacity, i.e. it reflects the era of tranquility we will be blessed with when Mashiach comes, and we fully conquer Esav.

Good Shabbos Happy Chanuka