

ISSUE

331



A collection of Torah thoughts produced by Kollel Menachem

אין בית המדרש בלא **חידוש** Chiddush

פרשת וישלח
כסלו תשפ"ד
י"ט כסלו

YUD TES KISLEV LEARNING

The Goldhirsch Hall was filled this Thursday night as Anash came together to learn Chassidus in preparation for Yud Tes Kislev, the Rosh Hashana of Chassidus.

Chavrusas learned from a selection of Maamarim of the Rebbe and Alter Rebbe.

19 KISLEV DOR LEDOR

In honour of Yud Tes Kislev, a special Dor Ledor program will take place on Shabbos afternoon for fathers and boys, between 6:30-7:30pm in the Mezzanine. Special Yud Tes Kislev learning material will be provided.

SHALOSH SEUDOS

The Farbrengen will continue with a Shalosh Seudos in the lunchroom following 7:40pm Mincha in the Shule.

Join us for a Seder Nigunim, Maamar and words of Torah and stories from Rabbi Leor Broh and Rabbi Bentzion Milecki.

CHALUKAS HASHAS

In keeping with the Alter Rebbe's request and the custom of Chassidim, we are making a division of the Shas for the Melbourne Anash community.

Sign-up online to select your Mesechta of Gemara or Mishnayos or individual Perakim to learn and be a part of this community effort.

www.KollelMenachem.com.au/shas



In this Edition

Understanding and Responding to the Kiss of Antisemitism

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In a private audience (Yechidus) with the Rebbe in 1964, Harvey Swados, a known novelist and social critic, asked the Rebbe whether the Holocaust could happen again. The Rebbe answered that it could happen "tomorrow morning". Presumably, what the Rebbe was saying was that the anti-Semitism that pervaded Europe in the lead-up to the Holocaust, that fostered the sentiment and the complicity to allow the Holocaust to take place, was still present.

For those who may have found such an assertion to be a stretch in today's modern world, in the free democracies of the USA, Australia and Europe, the events of the past 2 months have shown us otherwise. We have seen protests in the major cities of these countries, including our own backyard here at Sydney Harbour and North Caulfield, with rhetoric and signage displaying words and symbols of blatant anti-Semitism and Jew-hatred.

Politicians and the media have very quickly turned against Israel and bought into the narrative that we are the aggressors. And let's not forget about the halls of academia, led by the Ivy League universities, supposedly educating the brightest young minds in the world, that have become cess-pools of Jew-hatred to the extent that Jewish students literally fear for their lives and are asked to hide their Jewishness.

Many Jews are left traumatised and unsettled, struggling to make sense of how in today's world, in the countries we call home, we are still so hated, with some questioning is 2023, 1933?

Parshas Vayishlach recounts the reunion of Yaakov with his brother Esav, after 20 years separation. Yaakov had been forced to flee because Esav was planning to kill him. As he is returning to Eretz Yisroel, he receives the report that Esav does not have brotherly love towards him. He is still enraged and is coming with an army of 400 men.

But in the moment of their reunion, the Torah tells us that Esav ran towards Yaakov and embraced him. He fell on his neck and kissed him and they both cried. In the Torah scroll, there are dots on top of

the word וישקרו "and he kissed him", teaching us that there was something amiss or unexpected about this kiss.

The Midrash, as referred to in the commentary of the Baal Haturim, teaches that Esav did not kiss Yaakov at all. He planned to bite his neck and kill him. His hatred was so great that he did not wish to kill him with a sword or arrow, but with cruelty - to draw and suck his blood. Miraculously Yaakov's neck became hard like marble. Yaakov was left crying over his neck and Esav over his teeth.

Rashi does not reference this extreme approach, instead bringing the two opinions found in the Sifrei. According to one opinion, the Torah is hinting that whilst Esav did kiss Yaakov, he did not kiss him with his whole heart. As some commentators explain, it was the kiss of an enemy, with no love in it or that it was somewhere between kissing and not kissing at all. The Zohar explains that whilst there was a superficial kiss, there was no connection of spirits.

Rashi then quotes the opinion of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai: "it is a Halacha, that it is certain that Esav hates Yaakov, but at that time, he was overcome with love and kissed him with his whole heart."

The Rebbe explains that the deficiency in the kiss - as reflected by the dots - was that even though Esav kissed Yaakov with his whole heart, this was a momentary exception and that Esav had not truly changed.

Yaakov represents the Jewish people and Esav represents the nations of the world. Why does Rabbi Shimon use the term "Halacha" in describing Esav's hatred of Yaakov? Halacha is not a term used to describe interpersonal relationships and feelings. In fact, some suggest that the word Halacha is a mistake that crept into the text of the Sifrei.

The Rebbe explains that just as Halacha is unchanging, so too, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai is teaching us that the hatred of Esav and his descendants to the Jewish people, is an unchanging fact and reality. Like a Halacha that may have one-off exceptions, there

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may be moments of exception, such as Esav's kiss. But the general rule remains the default reality.

This is why the whole-hearted kiss was deficient, because it was a suspension of the truth.

This understanding is expressed by the great Posek Rabbi Moshe Feinstein in a responsa advising that the Jewish community in England should not take a step that would provoke or ire the British government. Quoting this Rashi, he explains that it is a Halacha, and hence the unchanging truth, that Esav hates Yaakov. This is true even in those lands which for the time-being are good to the Jews.

Rabbi Menachem Ziemba ז"ל, who was killed by the Nazis in Poland 1943, takes a different approach to why anti-Semitism is called a Halacha. Even though Rabbi Shimon usually interprets the Torah based on reason and understanding, here he states that this is a Halacha. Halacha is not observed based on reason. Many people try to understand and make sense of the phenomenon of anti-Semitism, blaming it on different reasons. But none of these reasons hold true.

Some say that we are hated because Jews are capitalists. But we were hated for being "communists"! Others say it is because we are too successful and wealthy. But how does this explain the historical European anti-Semitism when we were poor? Some argue that it is because we don't fit in and we stay distinct. But what about the German and Austrian Jews who had completely assimilated? And in today's anti-Semitism "it's because of Israel!" But what about pre '48?

The thinking that there is an underlying reason or cause of anti-Semitism has led to a thinking that if only we would become more assimilated or more liberal or less pro-Israel or less religious, anti-Semitism would just disappear.

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, who personally suffered persecution at the hands of the descendants of Esav, tells us that the hatred of Esav to Yaakov is a Halacha. There is no rhyme or reason, it does not make sense, so stop trying to make sense of it and trying to change yourself in order to be accepted.

By accepting this reality and stopping to try and make sense of it, we can focus on what we need to do to take care of ourselves and

to live as Jews in this environment.

Our sages teach that Yaakov prepared himself to meet Esav with three different approaches. He sent gifts to appease him, he turned to Hashem in prayer and he prepared for war with military strategies. When we face the world of Esav, we need to follow Yaakov's example.

The Torah requires us to take steps within the "natural order". This means that we need to make diplomatic efforts in the halls of Governments, to strengthen alliances with supportive nations and to ask them for aid. On the local level we need to appeal to authorities and seek condemnation of anti-Semitism and protection from it. Despite the "Halacha", there are times of exception that we should capitalise on to benefit ourselves.

And we must also be prepared to fight to protect ourselves and not just rely on our diplomatic efforts and believe that the nations will always have our backs and act in our best interests.

This is true not just militarily, but also politically. When addressing Camp David, the Madrid conference and the disastrous Oslo accords, the Rebbe was emphatic; The nations of the world, including our 'friends', will try to pressure Israel into making decisions that are based on their considerations and not always in our best security interests. Even if there are threats of withholding funding and military aid, when it comes to matters of our security, the Government and Prime Minister must be strong and be able to say No and stand up to the pressure no matter how strong.

In this category would also be Jewish pride, to stand strong and proud in our identity. We should not allow anyone to cast fear upon us. We should not be intimidated by protests and hatred. We are not meek and trembling Jews who seek to appease our neighbours. We need to stand-up proud as Jews and protect ourselves.

We see this in Yaakov's response as well. Yaakov tells his messengers to tell Esav *לֹא אִם לָבֵן גֵּרְתִּי*, "I sojourned with Yaakov". The word *גֵּרְתִּי* has the numerical value of 613. Yaakov was telling Esav that even when he was with Lavan, he kept the 613 Mitzvos. Why would the wicked Esav care about this information?

Yaakov was asserting his pride in his identity. He was a proud Jew, connected to Hashem and true to his way of life and religion. He was not ashamed and would not hide his Jewishness.

The truth is, that the way we earn the respect of our neighbours is when we respect ourselves. Compromises and succumbing to pressure only invites more pressure. Strong proud Jews is the answer to anti-Semitism and a strong, self-protecting Israel will earn the respect of the Nations.

And ultimately and most importantly, we must know, that it is Hashem who is our source of protection - the Great Shepherd who guards the sheep from the 70 wolves. And so we must turn to Him in prayer and strengthen our fulfilment of Mitzvos. This is our spiritual strength that brings us Divine protection to bless our physical efforts in the diplomatic and military fronts.

So back to anti-Semitism in the current climate and to all those who are feeling uneasy. Remember it is a Halacha.

Don't seek to understand it and certainly don't lose sleep over the question why? Accept that there is no why.

It is not something that we can change by being different and it is certainly not something that we are responsible for or could be blamed for. Anti-Semitism is not a Jewish problem. It is the Anti-Semite's problem.

As such, recognise that there is no point to try fitting in and bending backwards with appeasement to try to gain acceptance.

And don't try to hide your Jewishness, wear it proudly.

Turn to Hashem and trust in Him that He will look after us and strengthen your connection to Him through prayer and Mitzvos.

The Haftarah is a vision of Ovadiah, a descendant of Edom, about what will happen to the nation and descendants of Esav-Edom in the Messianic age. In that time Hashem will repay them for all of the suffering and persecution that they inflicted upon the Jewish people. What they did do us will be requited on their heads as the Mountain of Esav is judged.

And finally, the evil of anti-Semitism will be removed from the world. Israel will be strong and secure and Hashem alone will rule Sovereign. Then the nations of the world will be transformed to recognise Hashem and all of humanity will call His Name together.