



# Ohr Yerushalayim News

6th December 2014 - Volume 7 - Issue 21 פרשת וישלח - י"ד כסלו תשע"ה

## T NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

### מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Judge & Mrs Elliot Knopf on the birth of a grandson to Rabbi & Mrs Anthony Knopf in Cape Town.

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Lenny Horwitz on the birth of a grandson to Mr & Mrs Nachum Kabalkin. The Sholom Zochor takes place at 76 Cavendish Road.

### חיים ארוכים

We wish **חיים ארוכים** to Mr Charles Bursk on the Petira of his mother, Mrs Rhona Bursk ע"ה.

### Annual Melava Malka

A reminder that the Shul Melava Malka takes place this Motzei Shabbos. We are delighted to welcome our guest of honour, Dayan Y Y Lichtenstein, Rosh Beis Din of the Federation of Synagogues.

### Shul Text Alerts

If you want to get the free weekly Shul texts please send a text to 86444 with the message 'follow @oj\_textalerts'. If you're phone is on Vodafone or 3 please text 07813326423 requesting to be added to the text list.

### Girl's Rosh Chodesh Group

Great fun was had by all at our recent Rosh Chodesh group last Sunday. Thank you to Mrs Dena Stern for teaching us all those fabulous dances and to top it off we had an unexpected dancing party with lots of great nash.

Look out for our next Rosh Chodesh Group which will be a Bas Mitzvah special.

## T NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

### Hold Your Breath For Something Completely Different

Dani Epstein

Sometime one comes across something that is utterly counter-intuitive yet essentially very simple.

Sam Amps was at one point the captain of the UK freediving team, which requires a range of impressive skills, chief among is the ability to hold one's breath for a long time. Really long. Most people should manage a minute without any problem, perhaps even a minute and a half. Sam Amps can manage a staggering five minutes without the benefit of a pure-oxygen pre-breathe!

How on earth does she do this? Loads of deep breathing? A diet of nothing but seaweed? Funnily enough, the trick that lies at the heart of this incredible ability is learning to control the diaphragm. By training oneself to control the diaphragm, one can extend breath-holding by a huge margin.

It's a simple-sounding trick, but who would have thought of it? It's simply counter-intuitive, and turns on it's head whatever I previously thought of with regards to holding one's breath.

This week's sedrah feels very much like this in the sense that whatever one might have thought Yaakov was trying to achieve is turned on his head by Don Yitzchak Abravanel.

We all know that Yaakov took a three-pronged approach to dealing with Eisov – he davenned, split his camp into two parts and sent messengers to Eisov with a major gift. Now this seems all quite straightforward, until

Don Yitzchak Abravanel comes along and raises a question or two on our conventional understanding of the story – 20 of them in fact.

Don't panic – I'm not doing all of them.

Last week finished with Yaakov's encounter of the camp of angels – or more precisely "malochim", since in Loshon Hakodesh a malach can be mean either "angel" or "messenger". Were they actual angels (as Rashi apparently states) or were they human messengers? If they were angels, how come they never said anything to him? What is the point of sending a group of angels if all they do is hang around?

If they were angels, why does the Torah say that he happened to come across them (vayifgeu)? Surely the Torah should have said that they were sent to greet him?

If these angels were sent to protect him from Eisov, why was Yaakov worried about Eisov then? Why didn't angels appear to protect him from Lovon, something he could have really done with?

If these malochim were in fact neviim – prophets – as the Ralbag says, then what exactly did they turn up for? What did they say to him? It's worth noting that there were no other known neviim at that time other than Yitzchok and Yaakov. So, it's a bit of a stretch arguing that these malochim were neviim.

The posuk states that the reason for Yaakov sending his messengers (of whatever variety they were) was to gain favour in Eisov's eyes.

Now, why on earth would Eisov be swayed to forgive Yaakov simply because the latter had lived with Lovon for 20 years? It's not like Yaakov had said something along the lines of "I had to live with my mother-in-law for twenty years, be nice to me". Who cares where he lived for the past 20 years? There's a war on!

Here is another interesting observation of Yaakov's diplomatic technique. If you have emptied someone's till and turn up to their shack some twenty years later in a Lamborghini, surely you would have the decency to park it round the corner? Yet Yaakov flaunts his wealth to Eisov. He lists his possessions in the singular, which in Loshon Hakodesh implies vast numbers thereof as opposed to simply "lots".

## The Week Ahead

פרשת וישלח	
Candle Lighting	3.36pm
Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	3.41pm
Seder HaLimud	8.40am
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	10.04am
1st Mincha	1.30pm
Rov's Hilchos Shabbos Shiur	2.59pm
2nd Mincha	3.29pm
Seuda Shlishis	following
Motzei Shabbos	4.39pm
Ovos uBonim	6.04pm
Sunday	7.15am / 8.20am
Monday / Thursday	6.45am / 7.10am
Tuesday / Wednesday / Friday	6.45am / 7.20am
Mincha & Maariv	3.35pm
Late Maariv	8.00pm

Rashi does state that the purpose of all these delegations was to appease Eisov. It begs the question though, why not do that in person? Surely one stands a better chance of pulling it off by appeasing the offended party oneself?

If, as the Ibn Ezra writes, that Yaakov had no choice but to go through Eisov's territory, then surely it would make more sense to send a couple of seasoned scouts to spy out the least problematic route that would stand the best chance of avoiding Eisov, rather than actively seek him out? Who knows if the diplomatic mission would succeed? Let sleeping dogs lie!

Don Yitzchak argues with Rashi's contention that Yaakov wanted to demonstrate that the brochos he had, well, let's just say "appropriated" had not been fulfilled. That's not much of an argument, since there was plenty more time for them to come about. Furthermore, arguing that the vast flocks of sheep and goats and herds of cattle that Yaakov was coming home with were not a fulfilment of the brochos is a little specious, since they surely came as a result of the brochos, after all they represent the "fat of the land" and require the "dew of the heavens". Surely this is exactly what their father had blessed him with? This makes his overtures to Eisov even more mysterious.

There is also quite a gap in what went on with the messengers, be they human or divine. We do not have a report of what they actually said to Eisov, nor do we know what Eisov answered to them. In fact the Ramban is of the opinion that Eisov rebuffed them, which if this was the case should have been recorded since this would have been a major item of intelligence for Yaakov.

The report we do read is that the messengers say: "We came to your brother Eisov, and also (we would say today 'oh, by the way') he is coming towards you with four hundred men." This does not tell us if they gave over the message or if he accepted or even acknowledged the gifts. And why the "by the way" regarding the four hundred men? This is a pretty critical piece of news! How did they know that Eisov was travelling towards Yaakov anyway? Maybe he was headed off elsewhere? Who said Eisov even knew Yaakov was coming his way?

As if all these questions were not enough, here is an even tougher one. Why was Yaakov afraid of Eisov all of a sudden? OK, his brother was probably in a rotten mood, and he was packing four hundred henchmen to boot. Not a very good portent. On the other hand, in the dream of the ladder, didn't Hashem Himself tell Yaakov that "I am with you and will guard you"? Surely that would be sufficient reassurance that Eisov would not be able to harm him in any way?

Rashi does point out that Yaakov was concerned that perhaps he had sinned in some way and was no longer worthy of Hashem's promise, or perhaps he was worried that these children might be killed in battle, and he would build Klal Yisroel from other children, as per the Ibn Ezra.

Don Yitzchak Abravanel dismisses these arguments out of hand for several reasons. Hashem had spoken to him when he was still living with Lovon, and that was a short while prior to this incident. The Torah does not record anything in the intervening time that might have suggested something untoward on Yaakov's part. Furthermore he had just encountered the "camp of Hashem". Surely if he was guilty of a grievous sin he would not have merited that meeting. Furthermore, according to the "baalei daas" these angels or people were there to accompany Yaakov, which again implies he was free from sin. Had he sinned, when he prayed to Hashem he should have recalled his sin in the tefilah and asked forgiveness for it, and yet we do not see this.

This covers so far roughly four and half questions of the twenty Don Yitzchak Abravanel raises on this episode.

Given the breathtaking scope of his questions, it's hardly surprising that the answers take a fair bit of space to cover, but it's worth making a start at the very least even if we don't get all that far.

Yaakov's encounter with the group of angels or people set him thinking. They had no message or prophecy for him, other than surrounding him. Why were they there? What was their mission? Since they were not being terribly communicative, Yaakov realised that they were there to represent the protection he was privileged to.

Don Yitzchak offers another probability, that the group were in fact travelling merchants, the purveyors of information in ancient times. They warned Yaakov of Eisov's impending approach (perhaps Eisov was coming to the area for some other reason, and Yaakov's camp was to

big to simply turn around and hotfoot it to somewhere else). Although this caravan was not angelic in any way, but unwitting messengers from above, they are still referred to as "malochim".

Obviously once Yaakov discovered Eisov was on the way armed for bear, he decided to make some tactical and diplomatic moves.

The first thing he wanted to know was Eisov's intentions. Short of phoning him up and asking (coverage was pretty poor in the area), he decided to send his diplomatic overtures to the land of Seir, where Eisov was the local dictator, but not directly to the palace courtyard, but to the Fields of Edom, a locality in the land of Seir. His thinking was as follows: if Eisov still had it in for him, he will divert himself and charge after the cattle, sheep and camels and make a grab for them. If he had chilled in the intervening years, then his diplomatic mission will not get attacked and Yaakov will know all is well.

There was another important reason for this. Eisov was very shallow, and very self-conscious. The last thing Yaakov wanted to do was embarrass him in front of his fellow Edomites. So he decided to send a diplomatic delegation with a lavish gift in order to show Eisov that he was not some shnorrrer shlepping around the neighbourhood because he had nowhere in particular to go, but that he was a man of means, someone to be proud of, someone of which it would be worth saying: "Yo, he's my bro" (ed. this is how Edomites talk, apparently). Yaakov mentioned Lovon in this respect, that Eisov should know that his brother had not been hanging around the local dives for the past twenty years, but that he had been living with his uncle, building up his business empire (all three Ovovs were major businessmen with large agricultural empires).

It would also serve to present a careful image of a determined and uncowed individual. Yes, he might not have an army, but he certainly outnumbered Eisov and would be willing to put up a fight.

So now the whole picture we have of this mission is quite different. Yaakov was not throwing himself to the mercies of Eisov – far from it. He was carefully manoeuvring every which way in order to prepare himself for every possible eventuality. He also signalled his willingness and capabilities to put up a fight if needed.

The messengers did not quite make it to the Fields of Edom, since Eisov encountered them before they got there. Through this they perceived that he was heading towards Yaakov and so turned around without talking to Eisov, since that's what their instructions were. Hence no report of their conversation with Eisov, since there wasn't one. And this explains quite handily why they said that "he is also coming towards you 400 men". This was not a by-the-way, but they were saying that not only is he heading towards you, he is also packing small army.

It's equally plausible that the purpose of sending messengers to Seir was to make overtures to Eisov and present him with some free labour in the form of servants, and that Yaakov instructed them to say that they were servants of Eisov; in that way they would not be harmed by the locals who were clearly a rough bunch.

Then he mentioned Lovon in order to explain his absence in a reasonable manner, and that it should not appear as if he had been on the run for the past twenty years.

Now why mention his wealth if he is trying to appease Eisov? With this Yaakov was trying to appease Eisov by saying: "Look, all my wealth did not come from the brochos, I had to sweat and work long hours and many years to amass my fortune. It's not like I won it in the lottery".

Now Yaakov had also instructed them to show a little humility on his part, to explain that he could not leave his encampment because he had wives and children to look after, otherwise he would have certainly come himself to humble himself in front of Eisov as would befit an older brother.

When the messengers came back they said: "We came to your brother, Eisov. There was no need to present yourself as a servant to him, he is coming as your brother, and will greet you with an honour guard of four hundred men."

Well, Yaakov was smarter than than these guys, he knew that this honour guard was nothing but trouble, and there was a good chance that a battle would ensue. Hence his fear.

Unfortunately, due to a lack of space, I am forced to end here. I hope this encourages you to open the Abravanel on the Torah to look for some further answers.