

*Shiur L'Yom Revi'i*¹

[Wednesday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Vayishlach:*** **Genesis 33:1-17**
 Haftarah: **Obadiah 8-14**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Matthew 26:39**

Please, take my blessing

[Genesis 33:11a]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 59:9-13;

This Week's Featured Amidah prayer is Petition #5, *Rofei* [Healing].

Vayisa Ya'akov eynav vayar – Then Ya'akov lifted his eyes and looked ... *v'hineh Esav ba* – and behold, Esav was coming ... *v'imo arba-me'ot ish* – and he had 400 men with him. Genesis 33:1(a).

No matter what provocation one may experience, offense is always a horrible choice. Choosing offense does no good whatever, and it opens the door to severe consequences – for everyone concerned, each member of their families, all their friends and neighbors, and even bystanders and passersby. Moreover, a person offended is like the famous ‘Pigpen’ character in Schulz’ ‘Peanuts’ comic strip – followed around by a swirling cloud of darkness. At least with Pigpen the substance of the cloud is just dust. With an offended person, the substance of the cloud is far more toxic. Such a cloud is full of every form of dark energy, deviance, and destruction. Offense breeds vain imaginations, spreading lashon hara, propaganda, accusation, blame-casting, name-calling, profane ranting, dehumanizing, demonizing, stirring up division, incitement to fear, outrage, assault, and vengeance, malice, bloodlust, and ... well, do I really need to go on any further than that? You know what I am talking about - don't you, Beloved? You see it – are bombarded by it – every minute of every day. Alas, ‘offense syndrome’ is an antisocial disorder that dates back to the serpent's first conversation with Chava. So, now, anytime there are two brothers (or sisters), and one (or both) choose offense, outrage, and/or retribution instead of Biblical conflict resolution protocol, the *ra*, *shachat*, and *chamas* [KJV ‘evil’, ‘corruption’, and ‘violence’] river of death overflows its banks and wreaks havoc. Ah, but it doesn't have to be that way! As Yeshua our Rabbi taught: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth; blessed are the merciful, for they will obtain mercy; and blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God; and blessed is he who is not offended” **Matthew 5:5, 7, & 9, and Matthew 11:6.**

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Blessed are the Peacemakers

The stage is set. Estranged brothers are going out to meet in a field. Entering the field of combat from the south is the warrior of Se'ir – Esav, accompanied by an impressive 400-man army of trained mercenaries. Entering the field of destiny from the North, looking like sheep assigned for slaughter, is Ya'akov, fresh from Mesopotamia, accompanied only by a few women (one of whom is pregnant), twelve children of tender age, and a few servants. Are we about to witness the Kayin/Hevel debacle all over again – this time with an insane amount of collateral damage/bystander victimization? Esav's men have each drawn their swords and selected a human target; they await only their commander's order to charge. They know that there is nowhere that Ya'akov or any member of his little band of pilgrims can run or hide. They know this little skirmish will all be over in a moment. At Esav's signal the snarling hounds of Hades – *i.e.* the screaming minions of offense, hyper-emotionalism, vengeance, and bloodlust that march together as strange bedfellows - will be unleashed. Swords will slash and maim. Rage will have its day. Innocent blood will flow. Unfathomable atrocities will be committed – mostly against innocents. This is the way of *ra*, *shachat*, and *chamas*. It was the way of men in the days of Noach. It was the way of men in Sodom and Gomorrah. And it is the way of Yish'mael, Esav, and all who reject the Holy One and Torah.

***Pay Close Attention! This is Not Merely Your Past We are Studying!
It is Also Your Future!***

Alas, a scene similar to the one we will read about in Torah today seems to unfold at least once in every generation. The arising of a remnant of Covenant People seeking to return to the Ancient Paths of Divine Calling always incenses the 'enlightened' and 'progressive' people – especially those who sit in the 'seat of the scornful' and oversee this world's political entities, economic conglomerates, ideological propaganda outlets, educational systems, information/disinformation networks, entertainment channels, sports dynasties, pseudo-science institutions, and religious assemblies. Our being different – not valuing that which they value, not hating that which they hate, not fearing that which they fear, and not coveting or lusting after that which they think it normal, indeed admirable, to covet and lust after – lead to us being misunderstood. Misunderstandings lead to distrust. Distrust leads to vain imaginations. Vain imaginations lead to scandalous accusations. Scandalous accusations lead to inflammatory rhetoric. Inflammatory rhetoric incites acts of violence. Tempers flare – and suddenly angry men with mayhem on their minds throw stones, shatter glass, rob, loot, rape, pillage, maim, kill, and gleefully wreak havoc. It is just a part of life that all people of the Covenant are called to face, overcome, and transcend. Do not be afraid, Dear ones! All we need

is *emunah*². May the force - of *Emunah*, *that is* - be with you!

May the Force - of Emunah, That Is - Be With You!

Today, for the first time since the infamous father's-blessing-hijacking escapade, Ya'akov and Esav are going to come face-to-face. The prototypical antagonists will finally meet again. Twenty long years have elapsed since the dark night of intrigue and deception that led to the blessing of Yitzchak regarding the material things of this world being pronounced over the younger brother Ya'akov instead of the firstborn, Esav. A lot has happened in the intervening years – to both men. But both men still bear open wounds concerning what happened on that dark night long ago. At least some minimum level of closure relative to these old wounds must occur for both of these men to move into the next stage of their respective destinies. They do not have to become best friends; but they do have to find a way – and a reason – to get on with life, and find another, much more meaningful, hill on which to die.

That Moment ... When The Darkest Event of Your Past Finally Catches Up With You

Destinies – on both sides of the controversy – hang in the balance. The stage is set for an epic confrontation. Esav has made league with the sons of Yishma'el as well as the sons of Chet, and has brought an army hell-bent on mayhem with him to the fray. Consider that Avram only took 318 men with him to rescue Lot and his family from the armies of the kingdoms of the North. **Genesis 14:14.**

Who – and what - did Ya'akov have on his side to counter Esav's impressive army? To the natural eye, *not much of anything*. All the natural eye could see on his side was his eleven young sons - all under 20 years of age; two wives; two concubines; a nursemaid; a very young daughter; a few herdsmen; and a bunch of domesticated animals, ripe for the picking. The odds most definitely *do not look good* for Ya'akov and his household. On paper Esav has the overwhelming advantage – in numbers, in armaments, in combat skills, and in emotional momentum. By all rights we should expect this to be a very *tough day* for Ya'akov. But for those in Covenant with the Creator of Heaven and Earth things are not always as they seem to the naked eye and the unenlightened mind. The Holy One

² The Hebrew word *emunah*, which is often inartfully translated into English as 'faith', connotes a broad, all-encompassing level of God-consciousness, together with constant communion with and faithful service to the Holy One according to His express directions in the Torah. *Emunah* is not primarily about 'belief' – especially in relation to religious doctrine or dogma; *emunah* is primarily about something else altogether – i.e. commitment to one's Supreme Covenant Partner, His Will, His Plan, His Protocols, His Priorities, His Works, and His Ways.. A shorthand way of speaking of expressing this is '*active, overcoming, transcending trust in a very real, very alive, and very present Covenant Partner with whom one is committed to co-labor.*'

has always gone before us and hewn a Romans 8:28 pathway through every maze of emotions, offenses, prejudices, over-reactions, and paranoias – if we will just humble ourselves, get off our high horses, and ask Him to show us the way forward.

Sometimes the Seas Divide; Sometimes Our Enemies Get Misty-Eyed

Of course, the reality of the situation is nowhere near as dire as it looks. Esav is about to find out that the man he has come all this way to confront is not the *Ya'akov* he swore to kill. The one about to meet Esav and his 400-man band of brothers is instead, as we learned yesterday, a new creation. Unbeknownst to Esav the man with whom he is about to come face-to-face is not *Ya'akov* but *Yisrael* – a man who *carries the weight of the Holy One's glory*. The man Esav is about to confront is not a trickster in a disguise – he is a man who wrestles with angels, with men, and even with the Creator of the Universe – and *prevails*. The man with whom Esav is about to come face to face is a transcender and overcomer. The man Esav is about to confront is a man on whom is the mark of the Master – a man who *walks with a limp* from a recent Divine encounter. The man Esav is about to meet is therefore not a man with whom Esav – nor a puny little 400-man army – is prepared to *tangle*. Esav and his army *do not have a chance* against such a man. Oh they could *kill* the man if they wanted to. They could *torture* him. They could *inflict horrible pain* on him. But they could never, never *defeat* him – no, not in a million years. And if they touched so much as a hair on this man's head, they will discover, the Creator of the Universe would avenge it upon them in ways that they cannot even imagine.

What occurs when this man and Esav meet face-to-face is therefore not going to be what *anyone* on earth – *Ya'akov* and Esav included – expected or planned for. But Heaven will nod with knowing approval. Here is how Torah tells us the confrontation unfolded:

V'hu avar lifneihem

[Ya'akov] then went ahead of them,

vayish'tachu ar'tzah sheva pe'amim ad-gishto ad-achiv

and he prostrated himself seven times as he approached his brother

[Genesis 33:3]

One unarmed man, walking with a limp, stepped out from behind all barriers of protection and approached 400 armed warriors with spears raised and swords at the ready. Seven times in the course of his approach the man stopped, and bowed to the ground to worship – and draw strength from - the Creator of Heaven and Earth. Seven times the man stood up, dusted himself off, and started walking again right toward his stunned adversary.

The strange truth – for those with eyes to see – is that with the odds totally in Esav’s favor, *Ya'akov finally had Esav right where he wanted him*. Esav is a hunter, you see, not a murderer. He lives for the chase – and he only kills for two reasons: *meat* or *sport*. For Esav to kill Ya’akov’s helpless wives and children – or even unarmed, defenseless Ya’akov himself – would provide him and his army neither meat nor sport. It would be cold-blooded, senseless murder – holocaust, even. If he were to do that in front of all this great cloud of witnesses he would have to live the rest of his life in shame. Besides that, Esav’s vow had been to kill Ya’akov *after the death of his father Yitzchak*. *Two decades later*, Yitzchak is still very much alive; hence, the condition precedent for his promise to ‘kill Ya’akov’ had not yet occurred. Killing Ya’akov and his puny little household at this point would make him guilty of everything he had accused Ya’akov of being – or thought him to be - and worse. How would he ever explain that to his father? All the air went out of Esav’s lungs. What an anti-climax! What a let down!

The order to attack was right on the tip of Esav’s tongue – but the words never came. One minute the prospect of a triumphant end to a long hunt had Esav’s heart racing – and the next minute all his bloodlust dissipated into a pile of sentimental mush.

Vayaratz Esav likrato v'yechabekeihu

And Esau ran to welcome him. And he embraced him [Ya’akov],

vayipol al-tzavarav vayishakeihu vayivku

And threw himself on his shoulders and, kissed him. And they [both] wept.

[Genesis 33:3-4]

When Esav finally laid eyes upon the one he had hated since their wars in Rivkah’s womb and whom he had so long ago sworn he would kill; when he saw the one he had considered his mortal enemy limping toward him in submission totally incapable of defending himself; well, instead of rushing forward with drawn sword to take his long-awaited vengeance, Esav was undone. Instead of experiencing the powerful negative emotions we might have expected from him – he was overcome by a flood of human *compassion*. He ran to *embrace* [Hebrew *chabaq* – as Laban had done in Genesis 29:13] Ya’akov/Yisrael. He “*fell upon his neck*”. And he ... *kissed him*³. Imagine that.

Ah, but Beloved, don’t change that channel. There will be many, many more tense

³ In the Hebrew scrolls that have been found, the phrase *vayishakeihu* [and he kissed him] is written in a strange way, with dots over it, as if to suggest that something about this is not as it seems. Some commentators interpret the dots over the phrase to mean that Esav did not kiss him with wholehearted affection. Others suggest that his kiss was wholehearted in the passion of the moment, but did not effectuate or represent any change in the hatred and resentment he carried inside. Still others suggest that he did not kiss Ya’akov, but bit him.

confrontations between the seed of these two men before this particular clash of worldviews is laid to rest!

Fast Forward to the Time of the Master

Do these actions of Esav sound like the actions of the most famous father in the world, from the Master's parable of the prodigal son, to anyone but me? Luke 15:20 says that the father of the prodigal: ***... saw him and was moved with pity. He ran and threw his arms around him and kissed him warmly.*** This is of course only one half of the story of Yeshua's prodigal son parable. The other half of the story, as you will recall, is the attitude of the "older" brother - who bristles at the return of the prodigal and the father's excitement at seeing him again. Esav - a worldly man who has chosen life outside the covenant - puts this parabolic 'older' brother - a man who claims to be child of the covenant - to shame⁴. And that was precisely Yeshua's point in the parable. His opening words ***"A man had two sons ..."*** spoken in the audience of Torah scholars (see Luke 15:1) would immediately have been recognized as a reference to the most famous "man with two sons" in Torah - the patriarch Yitzchak. The story of the younger son (representing Ya'akov) leaving home to live in pagan surroundings [*i.e.* Laban's world], and the elder (representing Esav) staying to care for his aged and almost blind father and mother and watch over the family estate would immediately cause the listeners to identify with Ya'akov/Israel - the prodigal of the story.

When Yeshua described the loving reaction of the Father in the prodigal story *in the exact same words as Torah described Esav's reaction to the return of Ya'akov/Israel*, He was sending a message to these Torah-teachers that rang loud and clear. When He went further, and described the elder brother of the parable story (whom they could but recognize as themselves, who had brought on this story by objecting to Yeshua's eating with sinners and tax-collectors) unfavorably with Esav (who, to Jewish people of that day meant Rome, the occupying empire), He "cut them to the quick".

Esav/Rome more righteous and God-like than God's own people? Absurd! Unthinkable! But alas sometimes - at least for a moment here or there in a vast sea of time - *painfully true ... on a very limited, very, very temporary basis, that is.* When it happens, acknowledge it, marvel at it, and celebrate it. And let it provoke you to even higher levels of zealousness - zealousness that lasts!

The Heart in the Hand of the Holy One

But please understand, the point of today's aliyah is really not to praise Esav or to

⁴ Note that just as Ya'akov became Yisrael, Esav was in a transition process as well. He was in the process of becoming *Edom*. See *infra*, at the section of this *shiur* under the heading 'The Esav/Edom Dual Personality'.

judge between him and Ya'akov/Yisrael regarding who was "more righteous". Do you want to know why Esav behaved as he did in today's aliyah? Because at the critical moment the Holy One supernaturally *turned Esav's heart within him* and imparted to him, for a fleeting instant, when it mattered most, *the overwhelming love of the Father*.

The message of the story is thus not that Esav is a great man, *but that the Holy One is a great God* - a doer of great deeds consistent with His covenant. Long ago, you see, the Holy One had promised Ya'akov that He would always be with him and would watch over and protect him wherever he went, *and would bring him back safely into the land which He had promised him and his children as an inheritance*. The Holy One's turning of the heart of Esav was the "proof in the pudding". That is why when Ya'akov/Israel looked upon the face of Esav he did not see Esav's face at all - but *the Face of God*. *Bless His Name forever*.

If the Holy One can turn the heart of even a materialistic murderer like Esav to mush, filling it with tenderness and compassion Beloved, and can make the face of even such a man glow with His own Presence and Glory, then truly *nothing is impossible!* The Creator of the Universe can indeed work all things together for good for those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.

A Closer Look At What Happened – and What Did NOT Happen - When the Long-Lost Brothers Met

Let us now consider the *substance* of the encounter between Ya'akov and Esav. From the outside what do we see? We see *a hug*. We see *a kiss*. We see *some tears*. We see Ya'akov's *gifts of restitution* accepted. A superficial religious world would look at these outward signs and consider this an idyllic reconciliation. Confrontation avoided. Path of least resistance taken. Problem solved. Whew! That is the way *people who only look on the surface of things* might see this meeting. Ah, but is that an accurate assessment of what happened? Was *the problem* between Esav/Edom and Ya'akov/Yisrael really solved by a hug, a kiss, a few tears, and a gift? Did these two estranged brothers, who had warred against each other since they shared Rivkah's womb, by reason of this sentimental encounter, become *fast friends, fellow-laborers, comrades, and confidantes?*

No, Dear Reader, that simply did not - *could* not – *will* not - happen. That is not the way *real life* works. When we read further, beyond the hugs, kisses, and tears, we see that when the hugging, the crying, and the kissing was done the parties went their separate ways, still incapable of trusting one another. Esav/Edom was intent on going back *to Seir*, his chosen place of exile from his father, where he maintained his harem of Kena'ani and Yish'maeli wives and was building his own

kingdom. Ya'akov on the other hand wanted no part of Esav's rebellious world. He waited until Esav and his army got well out of sight – then took off in *the other direction*. After all, what fellowship can there really be between light and darkness? Yes, there was forgiveness. Yes, there was a laying down of arms. Yes, there was a forbearance of vengeance, rage, blame, grudge, and self-justification. That was progress. And, for now at least, that was going to have to be enough. Fire and straw can only coexist if they are content to maintain a safe distance.

Understanding the Esav/Edom Dual Personality

Just as Ya'akov has been shown to have within himself the capacity to become *Yisrael*, Esav also has within himself the capacity to become someone else. Looking upon Esav as he is presented in today's aliyah we see a *gentle giant* - a big softie - weeping, and welcoming his brother home with a hug and a kiss. But do not be fooled. The Esav we are seeing as we read today's aliyah is in a *transition process* as much as is Ya'akov/Yisrael. Esav, you see, is in the process of becoming *Edom*.

Esav, though clearly unspiritual, was both *sensual* and *sentimental*; that meant that he could, given the right incentive and set of circumstances, entertain tender feelings toward the one he perceives as 'helpless Ya'akov'. Edom, however, is the *darker side* of Esav. Edom will always obsess over, be paranoid about, and cruelly persecute the one he recognizes as 'powerful Yisrael'.

While this week's Torah presents the 'brighter' side of Esav, this week's haftarah deals with the darker aspect of Ya'akov's twin brother - Edom. The two faces of Esav/Edom have manifested themselves so frequently in history that we simply must teach our children to approach Esav cautiously - with Edom in mind. In every generation of exile it seems *Esav* has invited Yisrael to come to live in his midst [as in today's aliyah he invites Ya'akov to Seir]. Then in a few years or generations Esav morphs into *Edom* and persecutes, expels, and/or tries to annihilate Yisrael. *Esav* can initially seem so friendly – but then *Edom* comes breathing fire. Esav quickly changes from the father figure of the prodigal son parable to the elder brother figure – and far, far beyond. This is, of course, what happened in Egypt in the days of *Yosef* [Joseph], in Susa in the years prior to the events recorded in the Book of Esther. It was repeated time and time again in lands of exile like England, in France, in Spain, in Portugal in Poland and Germany and Russia. Could it be that this is what is happening *today* in Western Europe? In America? In Canada? In South Africa?

The Thing About Esavians Is ...

Just keep in mind that the Esavians of the world are the counterbalancing force that the Holy One has set in place to offset the immature and/or corrupted aspects of

Ya'akovian persona that remain active in us. The Esavians of the world are not going anywhere – any more than the Yishmaelians or the Babylonian-Labanians of the world are going anywhere. Esavian, Yishmaelian, and Babylonian-Labanian families make up a prominent portion of the '*all the families of the world*' matrix that we as Avraham's seed are called to bless. See **Genesis 12:3 and 28:14**. The Holy One uses the Yishmaelians, the Midyanim, the Mitzrayim, and the Babylonian-Labanians of this world to provide us the resistance we need to keep us alert, to train us in the essential Yisrael person attributes of humility, forbearance, patience, longsuffering, and perseverance, to cause us to stay close to Him and rely upon Him at all times, and thus to mature us in *emunah*. If we do not overreact to these peoples and the resistance they throw in our path, and see and treat each of them as an individual designed, given life, and deeply loved by our God, we can transcend the resistance, overcome the hate, and be a blessing to them and their families.

What then is unique about the Esavians? What special purpose, vis-à-vis our mission, are Esavians left here in the world to serve? Hold onto your hats, Dear Ones. Gird up the loins of your minds. Be sober. This may offend you – but here it is. The most important thing about *the Esavians* that we of the Covenant desperately need to learn is: *How Well or Poorly the Esavians Behave Toward Us in Any Given Season is Almost Always Related to How Well or Poorly We Fulfilled Our Covenant Assignments, Walked Humbly With Our God, Loved Mercy, Asah-ed Mishpat, and Blessed Their Families, in the Season Just Concluded*. Pay very close attention when the Esavians of the world – at least those who are not clearly insane or demonstrably tormented by unclean spirits - start blaming us publicly for societal ills, persecuting us, publishing blood libels against us, painting swastikas on synagogues or churches, desecrating Jewish or Christian gravestones, sponsoring pogroms, and physically attacking us. When that starts to happen, it is always a good idea to respond by conducting a self-examination of our own – and our parents' - attitudes, rhetoric, behaviors, reactions, and responsiveness *vis-a-vis* them over the past three to four decades. As the sages put it: *Mida keneged mida* – *i.e.* measure offsets measure. As the Master drove the point home: ***Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged, and with what measure you use, it will be measured back to you.*** **Matthew 7:1-2.**

Never judge, mock, accuse, take advantage of, demean, or mistreat anyone, Dear Reader – but especially not an Esavian! The Esavians of the world serve as a kind of spiritual barometer for us in the Covenant – to tell us how we have been doing at our job of blessing all the families of the earth. Never put on airs and act like you are more intelligent, more moral, or better than an Esavian is. Never throw *lashon hara*, sarcasm, or disrespect at him or her, at his/her culture, or at any of the ideas, concepts, things, or people he or she idolizes. Remember: *mida keneged mida* –

measure offsets measure. Whatever we *reap* in this world is always closely related to what we have *sown*. We are supposed to be *bearers of good news* – not critics and mockers of bad ideas. We are called to be *models of beautiful behavior* – not self-righteous *pontificators railing at evil*. Our mission is to joyfully *embrace and asah the glorious and light-emanating mitzvot of Torah* – not *scream epithets at the people of the world who are stumbling around like blind men in pagan darkness*. Sons and daughters of the Covenant should never blame – much less hate - Esavians for being Esavian, for thinking Esavian thoughts, for spouting Esavian nonsense, for living by Esavian priorities, or for engaging in Esavian behaviors. Sons and daughters of the Covenant absolutely must find a way to see through all that Esavian ‘stuff’, to the potential for goodness of the Creation of the Holy One hidden underneath the Esavian fur, the diamond hidden under all the Esavian dirt, and/or the beauty trapped deep within the heart of the Esavian beast.

So, when Esavians start ratcheting up the anti-Semitic rhetoric – or acting on it - what should sons and daughters of the Covenant do? The first thing we need to do – after getting our family to safety, of course - is not to respond in kind. Nor is it to whine, stage protests, be or act outraged, or blame secular leaders, politicians, or even the fearmongering, hate-mongering, ethnicity-pandering, gender-weaponizing, class-envy baiting, and violence-inciting talking heads of media. The first thing we need to do when systematic persecution arises from the Esavian quarter is to calmly take a step back, and check ourselves, considering where along the way we may have – indeed must have - departed from our assigned mission of humbly walking in and teaching our children and households the ‘Way of the Holy One’, *asah-ing tzedekah u’ mishpat, loving mercy, and being a blessing both to our fellow man and Creation*.

Ya’akov Makes His Excuses – And Promises to Come to Esav in Seir On A Future Day

Ya’akov politely turned down several offers from Esav. First Ya’akov turned down Esav’s offer to let him take back the droves he had sent him as an appeasement. **Genesis 33:11**. The spiritual reality was that Ya’akov needed to *give* these gifts much, much more than Esav needed to *receive* them. Esav had plenty already. But like Zacchaeus of Yeshua’s day Ya’akov needed for his own sake to make restitution in a manner behooving of a son of Avraham. **Luke 19:8-9**.

Secondly, Ya’akov turned down Esav’s offer to *travel with him and be his and his family’s protector*. Ya’akov used the reasoning that for the sake of his young children and nursing livestock he needed to travel at a pace far too slow for Esav and his men. Apparently the livestock Ya’akov had given to Esav as a gift of appeasement were all mature adults without young.

*Please let my lord go on ahead before his servant.
I will lead on slowly at a pace which the livestock that go before me,
and the children, are able to endure, until I come to my lord in Seir.*

[Genesis 33:14]

Finally, Ya'akov turned down Esav's offer of a small contingent of guides and guardians from among his retinue. Ya'akov replied simply: *Lamah zeh? Eitzah-chen b'eynei Adonai* – what is that for? I have found grace in the eyes of my Lord!

But Ya'akov does a strange thing. He hints that one day *ad asher-avo el-adoni Se'irah* – I will ultimately come to my lord in Seir. Torah does not describe any such visit during the lifetime of Ya'akov and Esav. The only reference to any further reunion between these two progenitors themselves is in connection with Yitzchak's burial – and that took place at the grave of the patriarchs near Hebron, not anywhere near Seir. Generations down the road, however, Ya'akov - in the form of the nascent nation of Yisrael - would indeed visit Esav - in the form of the established nation of Edom. The story of that visit is told in Numbers 20:14 ff, as follows:

*Then Moshe sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom.
“Your brother Israel says: ‘You know all the hardship that has befallen us,
how our fathers went down to Egypt, and we dwelt in Egypt a long time,
and the Egyptians afflicted us and our fathers.
When we cried out to the Holy One He heard our voice
and sent the Angel and brought us up out of Egypt; now here we are in Kadesh,
a city on the edge of your border. Please let us pass through your country.
We will not pass through fields or vineyards, nor will we drink water from wells;
we will go along the King’s Highway; we will not turn aside
to the right hand or to the left until we have passed through your territory.
Then Edom said to him, “You must not pass through my land,
lest I come out against you with the sword.”*

Holy Writ tells us another prophetic reunion at Seir will take place generations later, in the days of Amaziah, King of the Yehudim. See II Chronicles 25:11-12. At that time the war the King of Edom promised the sons of Ya'akov will occur – but it will not turn out well for Esav's descendants.

*The house of Ya'akov will be a fire, and the house of Yosef a flame;
but the house of Esav will be stubble;
They will kindle them and will devour them,
and no survivor will remain of the house of Esav, for the Holy One has spoken.
The Negev will take over the mountains of Esav*

*and the captives of this host of the children of Yisrael will possess the land of the Kena'ani
as far as Tzarefat. The captives of Jerusalem who are in Sefarad
will possess the cities of the South. Then moshia'im [i.e. anointed deliverers]
will come to Mount Tziyon to judge the mountains of Esav;
and the kingdom shall be the Holy One's.*

As the Holy One prophesied to Rivkah long ago: ***Two nations are in your womb; two peoples will be separated from your body; One people will be stronger than the other, and the stronger will serve the weaker.*** Genesis 25:23.

Taking Our Leave of Esav – For Now!

Politely but immediately Ya'akov excused himself from the first of the prophetic reunion encounters the Holy One has planned for these two nemeses. After Esav and his 400 men rode off toward the South, Ya'akov intentionally set out in the other direction. Instead of following Esav along the East side of the Jordan Rift Valley to go to Seir Ya'akov mustered his little band of pilgrims and made a hard right turn toward Kena'an. Ya'akov was ready to retrace the steps his grandfather Avraham had taken to enter the land. He was ready to make his way back to his *father's house*. But first, he just needed to rest, catch his breath, and worship.

*Ya'akov traveled to Sukkot, built himself a house, and made shelters for his cattle.
Therefore the name of the place is called Sukkot.*

[Genesis 33:17(b)]

One Last Stop Before Making Aliyah

After meeting Esav, Ya'akov/Yisrael headed West instead of following Esav Southward. But Ya'akov did not cross over the Jordan. Instead he took up a sojourn of unspecified duration East of the Jordan, near the Yabbok ford. Torah tells us that while at this location Ya'akov built himself a house, and made shelters for his livestock. He then filled the air with a Hebrew blessing, declaring the *shem* the place of his sojourn to be *Sukkot* – *i.e. tabernacles*. Genesis 33:17. It was probably just a wide place in the road - a place for Ya'akov and his family to rest up, contemplate what had just happened to them, put things in perspective, and perchance to heal a little bit before moving on again. But we remember it with great delight each evening before retiring. As our forefathers taught us to pray, in connection with the bedtime *kriyat sh'ma*, we remember this place and say:

Hash'kiveinu Adonai Eloheinu l'shalom

Lay us down to sleep, O Holy One our God, in peace

v'amideinu Malkeinu l'chay'im

and raise us up, our King, to life;

ufrot aleinu sukat shalomeicha

spread over us the shelter of Your shalom⁵.

⁵ The rest of the prayer, in English, is: 'Guide us with Your good counsel, and save us for the sake of Your Name. Shield us from foe, plague, sword, famine and anguish. Remove wrongdoing from before us and behind us, and shelter us in the shadow of Your wings. For it is You, O God, Who protects and rescues us; it is You, O God, Who are our gracious and compassionate King. Safeguard our coming and our going, to life and to peace from now to eternity. Blessed are You, O Holy One, Who spreads a shelter of peace over us, over all Your people Israel, and over Jerusalem.'

Aliyah at Last!

Since the Holy One has been so faithful to His prophetic words/promises thus far, it should come as no surprise to Yisrael/Ya'akov, or to us, that the Holy One will 'make good' on the final aspect of His declaration at Beit-El – and bring Yisrael/Ya'akov back into the land He promised to entrust to Avraham's seed in *shalom*. Let us at least pause a moment and consider the joy that came to Ya'akov as he crossed the Yarden, and walked again – for the first time in over 20 years – on the *sacred soil* of Eretz Yisrael. With this crossing Yisrael/Ya'akov will finally be able to begin the process of retracing not only his grandfather Avraham's steps, but also reliving *his ancestor's God-encounters*, and thereby making them his own. Today, persons on airplanes flying into Israel still shout and clap hands in glee as they catch their first glimpse of the holy soil. Many still fall on their faces on the tarmac of Ben Gurion airport and kiss the ground. There is, you see, something that elicits *simchah rav* [great joy] and a sense of imminent fulfillment of destiny about every entry into this land the Holy One has blessed. So Yisrael/Ya'akov *avinu* is entitled, upon crossing the Yarden, to kick up his heels like *a calf released from the stall*. May we all one day soon know the joy and fulfillment of making *aliyah!*

The Thin Line Between Faith And Presumptuousness

Before the Holy One had promised Yisrael Divine Accompaniment and Divine Protection He gave him one other prophetic word – He told him that the land of Kena'an, where he was born and raised, would be given to him and to his descendants forever. Now, having miraculously survived so many life- and destiny-threatening situations, and having crossed the Yarden [Jordan River] back into Kena'an once again after a 22-year absence, Yisrael/Ya'akov was – he thought – ready to 'cash in' on the Holy One's promise.

Not so fast Yisrael/Ya'akov. The Holy One has a *timetable*, and it cannot be rushed. There is a very, very thin line, sometimes, between 'faith' and 'presumptuousness'. It all boils down to this, you see: *Who is running this 'show' – is the Holy One? Or are you?* We will see.

Questions For Today's Study

1. Let's begin our study with a few basic questions:

[A] As the sun rose after his encounter with the angel, what did Ya'akov/Israel see?

[B] What was Ya'akov/Israel's physical condition - was he able to engage in a physical fight?

[C] Imagine you were one of Ya'akov/Israel's children - *Yosef* [Joseph] if you are a male, Dinah if you are a female. Write that person's imaginary "diary" entry for the day of the confrontation, including as many details as possible and

including how you felt as the events transpired.

[D] Why did Ya'akov/Yisrael and his family bow down before Esav but in the book of Esther Mordechai refused to bow down to Haman? Which was right? Why?

[E] Why did Ya'akov/Yisrael go on ahead of his children and wives?

[F] Ya'akov/Yisrael told Esav that seeing his face was like seeing the "*Face of the Holy One*". What do you think this statement meant to Ya'akov/Israel? What does it teach us about the Holy One?

2. In regard to the conversation of the two brothers upon their first meeting for 20 years, answer the following questions:

[A] Ya'akov/Yisrael told Esav in verse 14 that he would come to him in Seir (in Edom). Did Ya'akov go to Seir to resume "normal" relations with Esav? Do you think he intended to? Considering Obadiah verse 21 do you think Ya'akov/Yisrael was speaking prophetically of his descendants?

[B] What does the name "*Sukkot*" mean?

[C] Ya'akov/Yisrael built two things at the location that would later be called "*Sukkot*". What two things did he build?

[D] In Strong's and Gesenius look up the words translated as "*house*" and "*booths*" in verse 17. Write the Hebrew words and their meanings.

[E] What did Ya'akov/Yisrael do at Sukkot that was unique - what did he introduce into *Eretz Yisrael* [the land of Israel]?

[F] According to the B'rit Chadasha, in what kind of a structure was Yeshua, son of Miryam [Mary], born?

3. In today's Haftarah the prophet OvadiYah speaks of the awesome "*Day of the Holy One*" which will come, how Edom will be affected, and why.

In that day, says the Holy One, will I not destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mountain of Esav?

Your mighty men, Teman, will be dismayed, to the end that everyone may be cut off from the mountain of Esav by slaughter.

For the violence done to your brother Ya'akov, shame will cover you, and you will be cut off forever.

In the day that you stood on the other side, in the day that stranger carried away his substance, and foreigners entered into his gates and cast lots for Y'rushalayim, even you were like one of them.

But don't look down on your brother in the day of his disaster, and don't rejoice over the children of Y'hudah in the day of their destruction.

Don't speak proudly in the day of distress.

Don't enter into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity.

Don't look down on their affliction in the day of their calamity, neither seize their wealth on the day of their calamity.

***Don't stand in the crossroads to cut off those of his who escape.
Don't deliver up those of his who remain in the day of distress.***

[A] List the things the prophet foretells will happen to the Edomites in the “Day of the Holy One”?

[B] List the things the prophet says the Edomites did to deserve the judgments prophesied in verses 8-10.

[C] How did the actions of the Edomites for which they were to be judged differ from the actions of Esav, their founder, in today’s Torah?

4. In today’s reading from the apostolic eyewitness account of Matthew, Yeshua’s first Dark-Night-of-the-Soul prayer in the garden of Gethsemane is spoken.

*He went forward a little, fell on his face, and prayed, saying,
"My Father, if it is possible let this cup pass away from me;
nevertheless, not what I desire, but what You desire."*

[A] Translated into English, Yeshua’s prayer is addressed to “My Father”. How do you think Yeshua actually addressed His prayer in Hebrew?

[B] What physical position did Yeshua utilize to pray this prayer?

[C] What “cup” was Yeshua referring to?

[D] Yeshua suggests that His will could be different from the Holy One’s will. How could this be?

*May the Holy One accept you into His Presence,
And may you see His Countenance even in the face of your enemy.*

The Rabbi’s son

Meditation for Today’s Study

Psalm 59:9-13

*Oh, my Strength, I stand/keep watch for you,
For God is my high tower/stronghold/refuge/defense.*

*My God will go before me with his lovingkindness.
God will let me look at my enemies in triumph.*

*Don't kill them, or my people may forget.
Scatter them by your power, and bring them down, O Holy One our shield.
For the sin of their mouth, and the words of their lips,*

*Let them be caught in their pride,
for the curses and lies that they utter.*

*Consume them in wrath.
Consume them, and they will be no more.
Let them know that God rules in Ya`akov,
To the ends of the eretz. Selah.*