

This Land is My Land

A Breslov Perspective on the Holy Land

Essay #34—Parshat Toldot 5762 (2)

In the previous essay, we left off saying, "What can we do about the situation?" Well, considering that the "Esav" of today is the bully who throws his weight around, we simply need to ask, "Do we want to be like Esav? Or like Yaakov?" If our answer is to be like Yaakov, then we have to emulate our Patriarch Yaakov. And, as is written in the beginning of the week's Torah reading, "Yaakov was the simple man of perfection," who spent his time in Torah study. Thus our first step is to study Torah, to find out about God and how we can best serve Him.

But it is very important to remember that as much as Torah study is a mitzvah, its benefits are immeasurably more than those of an "ordinary" mitzvah. The power behind Torah study is so remarkable, so awesome, that it enables one to wage battles and vanquish enemies, in the physical realm as well as in the spiritual.

Ours is a time when the world is determined to battle terrorism. We live in an era when Israel's enemies are set to murder every single civilian they get their hands upon. Yet, for all practical purposes, no one knows who this enemy is, whom they are battling and trying to protect against. So, of what avail are all the armies and aircraft, when the protection they offer is barely sufficient to protect anyone? The enemies professes to be willing to use the "ABCs," yet the Atomic, Biological and Chemical warfare units which are geared for battle haven't the faintest idea where to use the antidotes to stop the terror. So, we need a more powerful weapon, one that CAN operate against all types of enemies, human and alphabetical. We need Torah study. Let us see what Rebbe Nachman teaches about how the power of Torah can counter the forces of evil. The following are excerpts from *Likutey Moharan*, I, 20:6-10. (See text for lesson with running commentary.)

Rebbe Nachman speaks of drawing Torah teachings from Above, by praying to God, asking Him for compassion to reveal the Torah and its insights to us. The Rebbe suggests that we join together with strong unity. The reason for this is that the more souls bound together in harmony the greater the power to draw more profound and deeper Torah teachings, the effects of which are now explained.

In the merit of the Torah which we draw, we merit the Land of Israel, as in, "And He gave them the lands of the gentiles" (*Psalms* 105:44). But the Land of Israel is one of the three things which are acquired through suffering (*Berakhot* 5a). The main suffering is the detractors, the wicked people "who had given a bad report about the land" (*Numbers* 14:37).

The first thing that must be done is to subdue these wicked people, and to punish them with the sword and with death. By doing this, it is afterwards possible to go to the Land of Israel. Yet, it is impossible to acquire the power to punish the wicked except when this power is received from Edom/Esav. For this is his power, as in, "But you shall live by your sword" (*Genesis* 27:40 [this week's Torah portion]).

And know! The spiritual forces which are created from the letters of the Torah are bona fide angels. They receive the power from Edom/Esav in order to punish the wicked with the sword and with death. They are created in the concept of, "The Lord gives the word, the heralds are a mighty host" (*Psalms* 68:12). They punish the wicked, as in, "He will appoint His angels on your behalf...Upon the lion and the viper you will tread" (*ibid.* 91:11,13).

Now, these spiritual forces/angels are commensurate with the renewal of the Torah, and the renewal of the Torah is the holiness that is added Above. The greater the holiness, the more Torah that is drawn; the more the Torah, the more numerous the angels. The reverse is also true. In other words, there are times when the level of holiness is so inferior that the angels created from the Torah insights are weak. They lack the ability to receive the power needed to punish the wicked with the sword and with death. They only have strength to subdue the wicked and bring fear into their hearts, but not to punish them with the sword and eliminate them entirely.

There are times when even just subduing the wicked is not within the power of these angels; so weak are they because of the inferior level of the holiness. The only power they have is to stir the nations against the wicked who give a bad report about the land.

This is how it now is in this bitter exile. We do not have the power to punish the wicked on our own; only through gentile law, as in, "The wicked besets the righteous, therefore, the judgment goes out crooked" (*Habaquq* 1:4). For the wicked man surrounds the tzaddik, and we, on our own, do not have the power to repel him except through gentile courts - to have him judged according to their laws and to receive from them the power to oppress the wicked.

And know! Occasionally it is God's plan that the wicked besets the tzaddik and the tzaddik does not have the ability to repel him except through the gentile courts. Through the strength of the [gentile] judgment, the judgment of holiness, which had fallen between the forces of evil, emerges. And the tzaddik removes it from between the evil forces, so that the judgment's crookedness is undone. For it became crooked while between the forces of evil, as in, "Judgments - they know them not" (*Psalms* 147:20). But now, it leaves its [state of] crookedness and is straightened out. And this is the meaning of: "Therefore, the judgment goes out crooked" - i.e., from the crookedness which was there before.

And there are times when [the angels] don't have even this power. They haven't the power to punish the wicked, or to punish through the gentiles, or to bring fear into their hearts. The only power they have is to silence them, that they should not speak evil in front of us. This is so that their words should not be heard by the common people. And occasionally they don't have even this power. It all depends on the inferiority of the level of holiness.
(end of excerpt)

Rebbe Nachman thus speaks of our contemporary issues. We should be able to conquer the Land but there are evil people - the Arabs and the media - who speak against us and detract from our sovereignty. These wicked people must be subdued; they must be eradicated from the world. And, it is the power of Esav, the sword of Esav, that is being used against them. Thus we find that Esav is battling the Taliban and the forces of terror. The battle is being waged with the go ahead of the "gentile courts and laws," for the "coalition against terror" is an agreement that makes it permissible for Esav and his forces to battle

those enemies.

But the war being waged seems a bit off target, even silly. Bombs are being dropped on mountains, valleys, caves, cities - everything but the unseen enemy. This is because the forces of holiness, the angels created from those forces, are weak and seemingly insignificant. But if we examine the lesson carefully, the powers of Esav which we employ to counter our enemies are dependent upon our doing the right thing, studying Torah and drawing new and deeper insights in a spirit of unity. Through this, we attain a protective shield, to vanquish our enemies, and to reveal the sanctity of the Holy Land!

Therefore, let us renew our commitment, let us experience a program of renewal of Torah study. Let's go back to the basics and read our Bibles and Mishnah, our Talmud and Midrash, our Laws and Zohar and the teachings of our masters. This will enable us to draw Torah teachings with deeper insights and strengthen the angels with which to do battle and conquer our Land, once and for all. After all, whose Land is it?

(to be continued)

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