

# This Land is My Land

## A Breslov Perspective on the Holy Land

### Essay #38—Parshat VaYishlach 5762

This week's Torah reading, like those preceding it, speaks openly about God's covenant with the Patriarchs and their descendents—meaning us, yes definitely us—including the gift of the Land. As is written, "And God appeared to Yaakov and blessed him...Your name shall be Yisrael (Israel)...am God, be fruitful and multiply, you will be a great nation, kings will come forth from you. And the Land that I gave to Avraham and Yitzchak I give to you, and to your seed after you will I give the Land" (*Genesis* 35:9-12). So, there we have it again. If we believe in the Bible and the One Who gave it, then the Land has been and is given to us—yes, to us—by God Himself. No one else has any right to claim the Land. Obviously, there are others who would like to see us not in the Land, to put it mildly. (Maybe not in any land, but under it or in the sea—also to put it mildly.) There are certainly those who make claims to the Land despite the biblical declarations. So we must examine the parshah to see why we're having such trouble getting and holding onto what is rightfully ours.

"And Yaakov sent messengers (read: angels; Rashi) before him, to his brother Esav." As we have seen ([essay #34](#)), these angels were created by Yaakov's Torah study. They were capable of standing up to Esav and even of overpowering him (see Rashi on *Genesis* 33:8). Yaakov was returning from his 20 year sojourn in his uncle Lavan's gulag (an experience not unlike those exiled to "Uncle Joe" Stalin's gulags in Siberia). However, instead of returning home from exile to a peaceful home, he returned to face the "brotherly love" of Esav. Anyway, to avoid any untoward incident with Esav, Yaakov sent his messengers, his Torah study, to counter and defeat Esav. So too, the first step in our return from exile, which includes reclaiming our Land, depends upon the messengers, the angels, created from our Torah and mitzvot. If we do our good deeds properly, we create healthy angels to do our bidding, to go before us and protect us. If we are lax, then the angels created from our mitzvot are not as fit; despite their intentions, they lack the strength to do all that we need done.

But why did Yaakov need protection? He was going home to his parents. As told in Scripture, Esav said he would kill his brother only after his father died. Since Yitzchak was still alive, what was Yaakov afraid of? After all, Esav was his brother, his only brother and a twin at that. However, as discussed in the essays of Parshat Toldot ([#33-35](#)), Esav was interested only in materialism. He wanted it all, so much so, that he could not bear anyone else's having something, in particular his God-fearing brother.

Yet there was Yaakov, returning laden with great wealth. Lavan, who was blessed as long as Yaakov was in his home, didn't pay much attention to Yaakov's wealth. But upon returning from chasing after Yaakov, Lavan found that thieves had broken into his property and stolen all of his possessions. Lavan was livid and sent a message to Esav who had moved to Mount Seir. He told him that Yaakov absconded with all his valuables and implied that Esav too would suffer a similar fate if he didn't keep Yaakov from moving back. Jealous of Yaakov's success, Esav came out to "greet" Yaakov with 400 men.

In several lessons Rebbe Nachman teaches that there exists an "evil eye." The evil eye is real. Sometimes

"evil eye" refers to the mystical evil eye that one casts upon others which can cause harm. In most cases, though, the evil eye referred to in Rebbe Nachman writings, as well as the one mentioned by our Sages, is the jealousy that a person experiences over another's success, the faults one finds in others and the ill-feelings that one has towards those who are doing better than he. Rebbe Nachman teaches that the numerical value of the Hebrew words **RA AYiN** ("evil eye") is 400! The four hundred men of Esav were a manifestation of the evil eye with which Esav sought to harm Yaakov ([Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom #242](#)).

Thus, Yaakov had what to worry about. Esav looked at Yaakov. Here's a man who spent 20 years in exile in Lavan's gulag. He was locked in under agreements to a cunning, clever and despotic deceiver. Yet, despite the multitude of disadvantages that Yaakov faced, he managed not only to outwit and outlast Lavan, he was even able to amass a fortune. Esav, who despised the birthright and the responsibilities that came with it, still wanted his fill of this world. If Yaakov, the God-fearing one, would have success, this would diminish his joy in this world. So he became afflicted with the evil eye. He was jealous of Yaakov's success; he found fault with Yaakov's behavior. (Don't forget that Esav was an idolator, adulterer and murderer, among his other "fine" qualities, and yet he so found fault with Yaakov's scheming to take the blessings that he would not forgive him.). In addition, Esav had ill feelings about Yaakov's family, and looked jealously at Yaakov's *nachas* (contentment and gratification).

This is how it has continued throughout the exile. We have spent nearly 2,000 years in various countries, dealing with our "brothers" (Esav's descendents) and "cousins" (Yishmael). We've faced murderers and blood libels, cunning deceivers and diabolic tyrants. Yet, we've managed to dare succeed. Wherever we went. True, we faced pogroms and Inquisitions, Crusades and Holocausts, which threatened to wipe us out completely. Yet, somehow, throughout the long exile, we managed to survive and bounce back to become a Yaakov, standing proud and tall of our Jewishness. As our exile nears its end and we, like Yaakov, attempt to return to our rightful home, our Land, we now have to face the attacks of our "uncles" (Joe and Sam).

Esav, as murderer and idolator, has manifested in our times as Adolph Hitler and as Josef Stalin, murders of millions and millions of human beings. Even worse, "Uncle Joe" uprooted religion to such a degree that one could not even imagine that God exists. Wherever he found a God-fearing person, he attacked with a vengeance, resulting in the alienation of millions of Jews from their faith in God. "Uncle Sam" (Lavan, the "White" House) isn't much better.

Esav, as the "material boy," succeeded in implanting an evil eye. Wherever there is a Jew who has attained success and began to rebuild his Jewish presence, "Uncle Sam" is there to cast the evil eye. For example, we have a Jewish nation, broken in exile from a Holocaust too ghastly to conceive, successfully rebuilding itself from amidst the ruins of Esav, who so meticulously tried to destroy Yaakov. When Yaakov finally rebuilds himself, he finds himself facing the evil eye of Esav. Both Jew and Arab found themselves in 1947 with a United Nations partition plan that wasn't much good for either. The Arabs did what they do best and lost a bloody war, a war nobody but they could want.

For many years, the Jews built. They built camps to allow their brethren to return to their Land and rebuild their lives. They gave charity and rebuilt a barren desert. The Arabs, on the other hand, were abandoned by their own brothers to wallow as refugees, with no hope. Jealous of the Jews' success, Uncle Sam now wants to share the Jews' success with others. (Wouldn't it be nice of them if they shared their own success with the Native Americans, or Palm Beach and the Hamptons, with the Palestinians?)

The media, too, has an interesting way of viewing events. It is somewhat amazing how the media always manage to find fault with how Jews respond to being murdered wantonly and indiscriminately by Arabs. Who but an Esav, the possessor of an evil eye, could be so callous and sadistic?

Yes. Yaakov has what to be afraid of. We face an evil eye, jealousy and a raging hatred which arises from that jealousy, a hatred that never abates. Therefore, if we want to reclaim our Land, we must learn to avoid Esav and his evil eye. We can counter him with our Torah study. We can hide from his evil eye by arousing the beneficial eye, the eye of finding good in others and judging them favorably. If we learn to look upon friends, family, neighbors and community with love and beneficence, rather than with fault-finding missions, we can also expect better treatment in the media. If we act charitably instead of seeking more and more material possessions, if we share our blessings with the less fortunate, we cause the beneficent eye to ascend, protecting us from the evil eye.

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