

This Land is My Land

A Breslov Perspective on the Holy Land

Essay # 39—Parshat Vayeishev 5762 (1)

Dateline: September 2001. The United States declares war on terrorism and forms an anti-terror coalition. Among the members of the coalition are the following nations: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Syria, Egypt, Qatar.

Dateline: The Persian Gulf, November 2001 (Source: ArabicNews.com). Arab League nations have contributed more than \$500 MILLION DOLLARS(!) to the league's "Jerusalem and Intifada funds." Saudi Arabia—\$250 million. Kuwait—\$150 million. United Arab Emirates—\$135 million. Qatar \$50 million. Algeria \$30 million. Yemen \$10 million. Syria \$7 million. Egypt \$20 million. Other nations have contributed as well. Each of the nations mentioned have pledged to support President Bush's war on terrorism.

Dateline: Thursday, November 22, 2001. Americans celebrate Thanksgiving Day. Many eating the traditional turkey dinner.

Dateline: Middle East November 28, 2001. Anthony Zinni, special envoy of President Bush (whose father failed to eradicate Saddam and thus terrorism) and Secretary of State Powell (who stopped the war against Iraq, thereby giving support to the growth of terrorism), arrives in Israel to try to broker peace between Israel and the Palestinians. In the few days since his arrival, the Palestinians, who claim to support President Bush's war against terror, and have promised him that they would counter terror and promote peace, have killed over 30 innocent people and wounded more than 200 innocent people.

One of Rebbe Nachman's most famous parables is that of the *Turkey Prince*. It's about a prince who goes insane and considers himself a turkey. He takes off his clothes, sits under the royal table and pecks at crumbs and bones. None of the doctors could cure him. Finally, a wise man came and undertook the mission of healing the prince. He, too, took off his clothes and sat naked under the table, pecking at crumbs and bones.

The prince was startled by the newcomer and asked him, "Who are you? What are you doing here?" "And what are you doing here?" asked the wise man. "I'm a turkey," said the prince proudly. "Well, so am I," said the wise man. The two of them sat together under the table and became "best of turkey friends."

After a while, the wise man gave a signal and asked that they be given shirts. When the prince saw his turkey friend donning a shirt, he asked, "What are you doing?" The wise man replied, "Do you think that a turkey cannot wear a shirt?!" The prince then also put on a shirt. A while later the wise man asked for pants which he put on. When asked by the prince what kind of turkey wears pants, the wise man replied, a turkey, too, can wear pants, and the prince put them on. Little by little, they were fully clothed.

Afterwards, the wise man asked for regular human food which was thrown their way. He said to the

prince, "Do you think that if you eat food fit for humans you are no longer a turkey?" So the prince began to eat normal food. Soon the wise man had the prince sitting at the table with the king's entourage. "Do you think you must sit naked under a table in order to qualify as a turkey? Rest assured—you can dress as a person, eat like a person, and even sit with human beings without threatening your status. As long as you think you're a turkey, don't worry! You're a turkey!" Eventually, the wise man was able to bring the prince to understand that not only was he human, but a genuine prince. Thus the prince was cured (*Maasiot U'meshalim* pp.26-27).

So we have a nation of princes, the Jewish people, who have a legacy of decency and scholarship, charitable deeds, faith and morality, including teachings about human rights and mutual respect. This we have gifted and contributed the entire world, including Islam and Christianity who have their roots in the Jewish Bible. Yet, the princes have fouled things up so badly that they've transformed themselves into a nation of turkeys.

Even though it was Benjamin Franklin and not the Jews who chose the turkey as a symbol of the United States, we nonetheless find ourselves being offered up as an annual (or rather, daily) feast for our ravenous "friends" and neighbors! It wouldn't be so bad if the turkey was an accepted bird of sacrifice, then, at least, we can excuse our ridiculous behavior as being in the interest of self-sacrifice before God. However, the Book of Leviticus rejects the turkey for a sacrifice.

Which brings us back to square one. What has happened to such a brilliant nation, that they allow themselves to be served as a meal to Yishmael or Esav? They capture us, pluck us and our wealth, scrape us clean of our possessions and then roast us—that's what they do best (check the history books). What can be expected from them? But from us, a nation of princes, God's children? Isn't there some royal blood within to say to us, "Enough!"?

In fact, it's neither Sharon nor Yasir, nor Bush nor Powell, nor Zinni nor any of the other zany characters in our geographical battleground that is the cause for the diabolic terror that the Palestinians—and their Osaman comrades-in-arms—inflict upon Israel and the rest of the world. It is the lemming-like attitude born of self-pity and self-hatred, which we often use as an excuse of "self-examination" or "reality check." As a nation of princes, there's simply no reason to go about looking dejected with self-pity. Throughout the exile, no matter where we've been and what has happened to us, we've remained a noble nation.

This was because we adhered to the Torah that kept us going, which gave us the inner pride and self-confidence to continue, despite all odds and oppression. The reason for this is that the Torah is God's will, and it was given over to us (see *Likutey Moharan* 34:4). Having God's will placed in one's hands is an awesome responsibility, as well as a tremendous honor. When used correctly, studying it for God's sake (i.e., to understand His will and to serve Him), the Torah, God's pride and joy, exudes from a person as the power of God. Thus the person commands the respect due to royalty. Furthermore, and more important, the person knows he is a child of God, a true prince, and that he can always turn to his Father for assistance.

However, if a person strays from the path of Torah or misuses the Torah for his own personal benefit, then not only is he improperly using the scepter of God, he is actually distancing himself from God's pride and joy. If he feels so positive about himself, despite his wrongful use of God's scepter, or other misdeeds, then he suffers from arrogance, a despicable trait and a major cause of the exile (see [Essay #28](#)). If a person does not feel the pride of God, if he does not experience the joy of being a Jew, then he

can only feel self-pity. He is, after all, a human like any other. He won't turn to God because he has "run away from Home" and abandoned his Parent. With only mere mortals to turn to, mortals who cannot really solve his self-made deep rooted problems, he experiences degradation and worse. For he craves the attention and acceptance of others and becomes very needy. Yet at the same time he cannot measure up to their expectations. He eventually is transformed into a turkey, who squawks and squabbles with his neighbors, pecking at crumbs and all the other minor annoyances or joys of life, but never really getting to experience life's real meaning.

This week's Torah reading tells it all. The brothers were princes, the children of Yaakov. Yet, between them, we find the squabbles of royalty and the power struggles which abound in society even today. "We are the children of Leah, the wife of Yaakov," and therefore it is unfitting for us to socialize with the children of Yaakov's concubines (those born from Bilhah and Zilpah; see Rashi on *Genesis 37:2*). Furthermore, when Yosef told his brothers of his leadership aspirations by relating his dreams, he was shunned by them. "Who are you? Will I, your mother and brothers, come to bow before you?" Instead of relating to each other in a respectful manner, despite the differences between them, the option of dispute and degradation took root. The result was that Yosef was sold into slavery and the tribes had to descend into the Egyptian exile. Instead of acting like the princes they were, they ended up as turkey meat for the Egyptians' designs of world domination.

(to be continued)

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