Congregation Beth Israel
Of The Berkshires

CONGREGATION
Shir Ami

SoulSpa 3.8 • P. Vayishlah
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Blessing Before Learning

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יהו״ה	*Barukh Atah Adonai*
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם	*eloheinu melekh ha'olam*
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ	*asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu*
לַעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה׃	*la'asok b'divrei Torah.*

Blessed are You, YHVH our God, sovereign of the world, who made us holy in connecting-command, and commanded us to busy ourselves in words of Torah.

Genesis 32:25-33:11

violation of Spiritual World Wrestling Federation rules?

25-29. Ya'akov was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When [the man] saw that he could not prevail over him, he touched the hollow of [Yaakov's] thigh, disjointing it in wrestling with him. He said, "Let me go, for day breaks!" [Ya'akov] said, "I will not let you go until you bless me." [The man] said to him, "What is your name?" He said, "Ya'akov." [The man] said, "Your name will not be Ya'akov anymore, but Yisrael, for you strove with God and with men, and prevailed."...

angel, or himself, hurting *himself*; spiritual wrestle?

וַיִּוָּתֵר יַעֲקֹב לְבַדּוֹ וַיֵּאָבֵק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ
עַד עֲלוֹת הַשָּׁחַר׃ וַיַּרְא כִּי לֹא יָכֹל לוֹ
וַיִּגַּע בְּכַף־יְרֵכוֹ וַתֵּקַע כַּף־יֶרֶךְ יַעֲקֹב
בְּהֵאָבְקוֹ עִמּוֹ׃ וַיֹּאמֶר שַׁלְּחֵנִי כִּי עָלָה
הַשָּׁחַר וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֲשַׁלֵּחֲךָ כִּי אִם־
בֵּרַכְתָּנִי׃ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מַה־שְּׁמֶךָ
וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב׃ וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יַעֲקֹב
יֵאָמֵר עוֹד שִׁמְךָ כִּי אִם־ יִשְׂרָאֵל
כִּי־שָׂרִיתָ עִם־אֱלֹהִים וְעִם־אֲנָשִׁים
וַתּוּכָל׃ ...

hence midrash reasons that "the man" was an angel

again a "forced" blessing?

1-4. Ya'akov lifted his eyes and saw: behold, Eisav was coming, and with him were 400 men! [Ya'akov] divided the children of Leah, Raheil, and the two maids [Bilhah and Zilpah]. He put the maidservants and their children first, Leah and her children after, and Raheil and Yosef last. [Ya'akov] passed before them and bowed groundward seven times until he came near his brother. Eisav ran to greet [Ya'akov], embraced him, fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

as did… Avraham Yitzhak Moshe Psalmist

– spiritual transformation?
– genuine?

וַיִּשָּׂא יַעֲקֹב עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא וְהִנֵּה עֵשָׂו
בָּא וְעִמּוֹ אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת אִישׁ וַיַּחַץ
אֶת־הַיְלָדִים עַל־לֵאָה וְעַל־רָחֵל וְעַל
שְׁתֵּי הַשְּׁפָחוֹת׃ וַיָּשֶׂם אֶת־הַשְּׁפָחוֹת
וְאֶת־יַלְדֵיהֶן רִאשֹׁנָה וְאֶת־לֵאָה
וְיַלְדֶיהָ אַחֲרֹנִים׃ וְהוּא עָבַר לִפְנֵיהֶם
וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אַרְצָה שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים עַד־
גִּשְׁתּוֹ עַד־אָחִיו׃ וַיָּרָץ עֵשָׂו לִקְרָאתוֹ
וַיְחַבְּקֵהוּ וַיִּפֹּל עַל־צַוָּארָו וַיִּשָּׁקֵהוּ
וַיִּבְכּוּ׃

5-8. [Eisav] lifted his eyes, saw the women and children, and said, "Who are these with you?" [Ya'akov] said, "The children whom God graced your servant." The maids came near with their children and bowed. Leah came near with her children and bowed, then Yosef and Raheil came near and bowed. [Eisav] said, "What do you mean by all the gifts [you gave me]? [Ya'akov] said, "These are to find grace in my lord's eyes."

The order of placement?

וַיִּשָּׂא אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא אֶת־הַנָּשִׁים
וְאֶת־הַיְלָדִים וַיֹּאמֶר מִי־אֵלֶּה לָךְ
וַיֹּאמֶר הַיְלָדִים אֲשֶׁר־חָנַן אֱלֹהִים
אֶת־עַבְדֶּךָ׃ וַתִּגַּשְׁן הַשְּׁפָחוֹת הֵנָּה
וְיַלְדֵיהֶן וַתִּשְׁתַּחֲוֻיָן׃ וַתִּגַּשׁ גַּם־לֵאָה
וִילָדֶיהָ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ וְאַחַר נִגַּשׁ יוֹסֵף
וְרָחֵל וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ׃ וַיֹּאמֶר מִי לְךָ
כָּל־הַמַּחֲנֶה הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר פָּגָשְׁתִּי
וַיֹּאמֶר לִמְצֹא־חֵן בְּעֵינֵי אֲדֹנִי׃

9-11. Eisav said, "I have enough, my brother: keep what you have for yourself." Ya'akov said, "No, please: if I found grace in your eyes, receive my gift from my hand; for thereby I see your face, like seeing the face of God!... Please take my blessing that is brought to you, for God has graced me and I have enough." [Ya'akov] urged him, and [Eisav] took it.

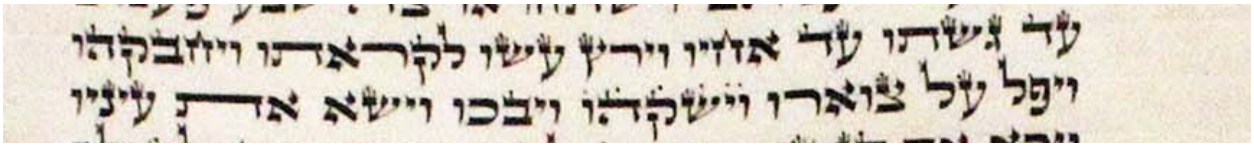
presents, and… what?

וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו יֶשׁ־לִי רָב אָחִי יְהִי לְךָ
אֲשֶׁר־לָךְ׃ וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אַל־נָא אִם־
נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וְלָקַחְתָּ
מִנְחָתִי מִיָּדִי כִּי עַל־כֵּן רָאִיתִי פָנֶיךָ
כִּרְאֹת פְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים...׃ קַח־נָא אֶת־
בִּרְכָתִי אֲשֶׁר הֻבָאת לָךְ כִּי־חַנַּנִי
אֱלֹהִים וְכִי יֶשׁ־לִי־כֹל וַיִּפְצַר־בּוֹ
וַיִּקָּח׃

BACKSTORY: Ya'akov-Eisav 'situation' about the birthright...
Is Eisav forgiving, or maintaining emotional distance by declining the gifts at first?

GRUDGE MATCH v. TESHUVAH?

THE EISAV OF RECEIVED TRADITION(S)



Bereshit Rabbah 7:9

וַיָּרָץ עֵשָׂו לִקְרָאתוֹ וַיְשָׁקֵהוּ. נָקוּד עָלָיו, אָמַר רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן אֶלְעָזָר בְּכָל מָקוֹם שֶׁאַתָּה מוֹצֵא הַכָּתָב רַבָּה עַל הַנְּקֻדָּה אַתָּה דוֹרֵשׁ אֶת הַכְּתָב, הַנְּקֻדָּה רַבָּה עַל הַכְּתָב אַתָּה דוֹרֵשׁ אֶת הַנְּקֻדָּה, כָּאן לֹא כְתָב רַבָּה עַל הַנְּקֻדָּה וְלֹא נְקֻדָּה רַבָּה עַל הַכְּתָב אֶלָּא מְלַמֵּד שֶׁנִּכְמְרוּ רַחֲמָיו בְּאוֹתָהּ הַשָּׁעָה וּנְשָׁקוֹ בְּכָל לִבּוֹ. אָמַר לוֹ רַבִּי יַנַּאי אִם כֵּן לָמָּה נָקוּד עָלָיו, אֶלָּא מְלַמֵּד שֶׁלֹּא בָּא לְנַשְּׁקוֹ אֶלָּא לְנָשְׁכוֹ, וְנַעֲשָׂה צַוָּארוֹ שֶׁל אָבִינוּ יַעֲקֹב שֶׁל שַׁיִשׁ וְקָהוּ שִׁנָּיו שֶׁל אוֹתוֹ רָשָׁע, וּמַה תַּלְמוּד לוֹמַר וַיִּבְכּוּ, אֶלָּא זֶה בּוֹכֶה עַל צַוָּארוֹ וְזֶה בּוֹכֶה עַל שִׁנָּיו....

Eisav ran to meet him…and kissed him – It is dotted above it. R. Shimon ben Elazar said: Everywhere you find the script more numerous than the dots, expound the script; for dots more numerous than the script, expound the dots. Here, the letters are not more numerous than the dots, nor are the dots more numerous than the letters. Rather, it teaches that at that moment [Eisav] was overcome with mercy and he kissed him with all his heart. R. Yannai said to [R. Shimon]: If so, then why is it dotted over it? To teach that [Eisav] did not come to kiss him but to bite him, so Ya'akov's neck was transformed into marble and the teeth of that wicked one [=Eisav] were blunted. Why does the verse continue: "And they wept"? One wept due to his neck, and one wept due to his teeth….

Shnei Luhot HaBrit, Torah Shebikhtav, Vayishlah, Torah Ohr 65

וישקהו ויבכו. הביא רש"י נקוד על וישקהו, וחולקין בדבר הזה בספרי יש שדורשין נקודה זו לומר שלא נשקו בכל לבו. ורשב"י אמר שנשקו בכל לבו. מר אמר חדא, ומר אמר חדא ולא פליגי. כי עשו למטה הוא כסמאל כחו למעלה.

He kissed him, and they wept – Of the dots over "he kissed him," Rashi cites [some] sages who held that these dots alert that Eisav's kiss was without a full heart. R. Shimon bar Yohai said that Eisav's kiss *was* with a full heart. One says this, one says that – but they are not in conflict. Eisav is like an earthly [angel of death] Samael on high.

Sforno, Gen. 33:4

וַיָּרָץ עֵשָׂו. נֶהְפַּךְ לִבּוֹ כְּמוֹ רֶגַע בְּהַכְנָעוֹתָיו שֶׁל יַעֲקֹב, כְּעִנְיָנֵנוּ בַּגָּלוּת עִם בְּנֵי עֵשָׂו... וְהוֹרָה שֶׁנִּהְיֶה נִמְלָטִים מִיַּד חֶרֶב גַּאֲוָתוֹ בְּהַכְנָעָה וּמִנְחָה, כְּאָמְרָם זִכְרוֹנָם לִבְרָכָה שֶׁאֲחִיָּהוּ הַשִּׁילוֹנִי קִלֵּל אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקָנֶה הַנִּכְנָע לְכָל הָרוּחוֹת. הֵן לוּ עָשׂוּ כֵּן בְּרִיוֹנֵי בַּיִת שֵׁנִי, לֹא הָיָה נֶחֱרַב בֵּית מִקְדָּשֵׁנוּ, כְּמוֹ שֶׁהֵעִיד רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן בֶּן זַכַּאי בְּאָמְרוֹ "בְּרִיוֹנֵי דְּבָנָן לָא שָׁבְקִינָן".

Eisav ran. His heart inverted when he saw how Ya'akov humbled himself. We too are in exile among the children of Eisav… This teaches that the only way to escape the sword of his [Eisav's] pride is through subservience and gifts. As our sages taught (B.T. Ta'anit 20a), the curses of Ahiyah Hashiloni were better for us than the blessing of Bil'am. Ahiyah cursed the Jewish people by describing us as a reed that bends in any wind (1 Kings 14:15). Had we [been more flexible], our Second Temple would not have been destroyed, as R. Yohanan ben Zakkai testified: "if not for [our rigidity, the Temple] would not have been destroyed [by Rome]."

Genesis 36:9

אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת עֵשָׂו אֲבִי אֱדוֹם

This is the line of Eisav, the father of Edom.

Bereshit Rabbah 63:7

שְׁנֵי גֵאִי גוֹיִם בְּבִטְנֵךְ, אַדְרְיָאנוֹס בְּעוֹבְדֵי כּוֹכָבִים, שְׁלֹמֹה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל. ד״א שְׁנֵי שׂוֹנְאֵי גוֹיִם בְּבִטְנֵךְ, כָּל הָע״כ שׂוֹנְאִים אֶת עֵשָׂו, וְכָל הָע״כ שׂוֹנְאִים אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל, סָנָאֵיהוֹן דְּבַנָיָא בְּמֵעַיְךְ, דִּכְתִיב: וְאֶת עֵשָׂו שָׂנֵאתִי.

"Two peoples are in your womb" (Gen. 25:23) – Hadrian among the star-worshippers, and Shlomo in Israel. Another thing: two hated by the nations are in your womb. All the star-worshippers hate Eisav and all the star-worshippers hate Yisrael. The most hated of the sons is in your womb, as in (Malakhi 1:3), " I hated Eisav."

R. Ephraim Palvanov, "Garments of Light"

[B.T. Bava Batra 3b-4a] relates how Herod slaughtered all the rabbis in his day … Herod was an Idumean. "Idumea" was the Roman name for Edom. It seems likely that the association between Edom and Rome began at that point. …When the Sages speak about the evils of Esau, they are often referring to the evils of the Roman Empire. It is therefore not surprising that Esau becomes the most reviled figure in the Torah – as the Romans were unquestionably the most reviled entity in Talmud.

Dr. Malka Zeiger Simkovich, "Esau the Ancestor of Rome"

The Rabbis' knowledge of Herod's Idumean ancestry made it natural to connect this "Roman" ruler, and by extension, Romans in general, with the people of Edom. And since Rome was the great power in the region throughout the rabbinic period, and the Romans destroyed the Temple and the polity of Judea, it was natural to apply the "us-them" narrative of Esau and Jacob to the us-them reality of Rome….

R. Boruch Clinton, So There's Actually No Connection Between Esav and Rome?

ויאמר ה' לה שני גוים בבטנך אל תקרי **גוים** אלא **גיים** וא"ר יהודה אמר רב אלו אנטונינוס ורבי שלא פסק משלחנם לא צנון ולא חזרת ולא קשואין לא בימות החמה ולא בימות הגשמים

God said to her (Rivkah): 'Two nations are in your womb.' Don't read it as *nations* but as *exalted ones*. And R. Yehudah said in the name of Rav, these are [the Roman Emperor] Antoninus and R. [Yehudah HaNasi], whose tables never lacked radish or lettuce or melons either in summer or winter (B.T. Avodah Zara 11a).

At first glance this does leave the impression that, in her prophecy, Rivkah was shown two notable descendants of the twins she was carrying. Antoninus, a Roman emperor, would thus be a scion of Edom. But… perhaps we would be better off reading it like the Maharsha [=R. Shmuel Eidels (d. 1631)]:

דבשאר מלכים הקודמים מיעקב ועשו גם המה לא היו חסרים משולחנם כל הדברים אבל נקט רבי ואנטונינוס שהיו בזמן אחד במקום אחד דהכי משמע קרא שני גוים בבטנך כמו יעקב ועשו שהיו בזמן אחד במקום אחד בבטן

Many kings who lived before Ya'akov and Eisav also lacked nothing from their tables. Rather, (Talmud) chose [Yehudah HaNasi] and Antoninus because they both lived at one time and in one place. For that fits the verse: "two nations are in your womb": like Ya'akov and Eisav lived at one time and in one place, in their [shared] womb.

According to the Maharsha, then, [Talmud] isn't suggesting that Antoninus was related to Eisav in any way… [But] many later authorities assumed a direct

connection between Eisav and Rome. …R. Shmuel Dovid Luzzato (on Gen. 27:40) suggests that, following the destruction of the Second Temple, the Jewish people began to use "Edom" as a veiled reference to their Roman tormentors.

Ibn Ezra, Gen. 33:4

הדרש על נקודות וישקהו טוב הוא לעתיקי משדים, כי על דרך הפשט לא חשב עשו לעשות רע לאחיו והעד ויבכו כאשר עשה יוסף עם אחיו׃

[Tradition's] *drash* of dots over "he kissed him" is good for those drawn to the breast [=children], but the *p'shat* is that Eisav did not think to do ill to his brother, and the proof is "they wept" – as Yosef did with his brothers.

R. Shimshon Raphael Hirsch (d. 1888) on Gen. 33:4

"[A]nd they wept" is a sure sign that we have before us pure human emotion. One may indeed kiss without his heart being in it, but we can rest on the assumption that tears bursting forth at such moments come from the depths of the heart. This kiss and these tears show us that Eisav too was a descendant of Avraham our father, not just a savage hunter: how else could he attain a ruling rank in human society? The sword alone, mere physical force, does not make a person fit for such status.

R. Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin (HaEmek Davar) on Gen. 33:4

ויבכו. שניהם בכו. בא ללמד שגם יעקב נתעורר עליו לשעה זו אהבה לעשו וכן לדורות בשעה שזרע עשו מתעוררים ברוח טהרה להכיר את זרע ישראל ומעלתם אז גם אנחנו מתעוררים להכיר את עשו כי אחינו הוא

And they wept – Both wept. This teaches that, at that time, love for Eisav was aroused in Ya'akov too. So too down the generations: when Eisav's descendants are inspired by pure spirit to recognize Yisrael's descendants and their qualities, we too are aroused to recognize Eisav, for he is our brother.

R. Abraham Isaac Kook, Letters 1:112

Noteworthy is R. Elijah Gaon's statement on the verse (Mal. 1:3), "But Eisav I hated": "This refers to Eisav's peripheral part, but his essential part, his head, was interred with the patriarchs." It is for this reason that Ya'akov, man of truth and integrity, said [on his reunion with Eisav] (Gen. 33:10), "I see your face, like seeing the face of God." His word shall not go down as a vain utterance. The fraternal love of Eisav and Ya'akov, Yitzhak and Yishmael, will assert itself above all confusion that … our bodily nature engendered. It will overcome them and transform them into eternal light and compassion.

R. Joshua Hammerman

Maybe the diamond-dots ["he kissed him"] symbolize the hope for peace. The rabbinic collection Avot of Rabbi Natan (34:5) suggests that Ezra the scribe (6th century BCE) inserted dots above ten words or phrases in the Torah that he thought may not belong there, in hopes that when Elijah returns, he could clarify whether or not they do…. These Dots of Disbelief remain there as defiant diamonds in the rough, waging peace to the end, refusing to give up on reconciliation.

BONUS MATERIALS

Jacob and Esau

Pádraig Ó Tuama

One day I repented my resentment because I realised I'd forgotten
to repeat it. For a while—no, for a long while—it was like a prayer,
rising to the skies, morning after morning, like a siren that wouldn't quiet.

And then I remembered other things: the way I walk lighter these days;
the way you never knew my story of divorce; the way I am tired of being
forced among the new; and the way I miss having someone to speak to about
things I don't need to explain; the way we shared a name.

So I decided.

I took a flight and hung around the areas where we used to meet.
I loitered with intent. I was hungry with hope but couldn't eat alone.
I missed the home your body was, even though we're grown now,
I missed your smell, your wrestle, your snoring breath.

And when I saw you, I saw you'd changed too.
So much behind us we didn't need to name.

Ellen Frankel, The Five Books of Miriam

OUR DAUGHTERS ASK: When Jacob goes to meet Esau and sees his brother approaching with four hundred men, he divides up his family so they don't make a single target. In the vanguard he puts his concubines, Bilhah and Zilpah, and their children. Next come Leah and hers. Rachel and Joseph he positions last, behind all the others. Imagine how the three other wives and the ten older sons reacted to Jacob's cheapening of their worth. No wonder Rachel's older son becomes a source of bitterness for them all!