



## History & Generations

Henry Ford had no time for history; he called it "just bunk". A better view came from the school inspector who told my class that the word "history" derives from "his story".

But the inspector was wrong. In his view, all history was biography - who people (apparently males, not females) were and what they did. He seemed to ignore political events, economic, scientific or cultural developments, even educational movements, and certainly not moral progress.

Ibn Ezra and S'forno interpret today's sidra with a far better approach when they say that TOL'DOT ("generations") used in relation to Yitzchak indicates "Yitzchak in the context of his times". A similar view comes in Parashat No'ach where the Torah gives us a picture of No'ach in the context of his generations (6:9).

YL Peretz, the Yiddish writer, says that history is not merely about what was but what ought to have been. It is not only a people's memory and identity but its stimulus to moral purpose and task.

## Wait Till Father Dies

"Wait till father dies and then I will kill my brother", says Eisav, who is eaten up by a burning hatred for Yaakov (27:41). It seems that only whilst Yitzchak is still alive will Eisav be held back from attacking his brother.

The air of animosity has poisoned the family for years and things are getting worse. Yitzchak has been losing his sight and his strength for a considerable time, but Eisav still has enough respect for the old man to know that this is not yet the time to implement his feelings of vengeance.

The killing of Yaakov is only one (the worst) example of what is likely to happen once Yitzchak is dead. It is also likely that Eisav will give up any pretence at piety. When Yitzchak is gone, Eisav will no longer make a show of prayer, kashrut, Shabbat, yom-tov and everything else.

The Eisav syndrome recurs throughout the ages. Much could be achieved if a family used the death of a parent to restore peace and to establish harmony as a memorial to the parent.

**OZ**