



PhiloTorah D'var Torah

BROTHERS!

Not so simple.

(Interesting how the first sentence of the previous PTDT fits so well for this one too.)

Nimrod, Lavan, Yishmael, Eisav - put them all aside, for the moment.

Let's focus on us, on ourselves, on Klal Yisrael, the Jewish People...

Parshat Vayeishev begins calmly enough, with Yaakov finally back B'ERETZ M'GUREI AVIV - the land where his father and grandfather lived, B'ERETZ K'NAAN, in the Land to become ERETZ YISRAEL.

But that's it. One pasuk of calm. Yaakov is out of Lavan's house. He's had his encounter with Eisav's guardian angel. He met up with his brother Eisav, and survived that.

All he wants is the peace and tranquility of his hometown. But that is not to be.

And we see it in the second pasuk of the sedra. It is even hinted at in the first part of the pasuk: These are the TO-L'DOT of Yaakov, the offspring of Yaakov, the chronicles of Yaakov...

The next words should have been

Reuven or Yaakov had twelve sons or something like that. But the next word is Yosef. That's the beginning of the problem. The BIG problem.

And the pasuk not only tells us that Yosef was 17 years old. That he was a NA'AR, favored his brothers of Bilha and Zilpa (and, assumedly not his brothers from Leah). And in the same pasuk, the one that should have been about the children of Yaakov - we read about Yosef bringing negative reports about the brothers to Yaakov.

There goes the dream of a calm life for Yaakov. And not just Yaakov, but his children, and his children's children... AD HAYOM HAZEH, until this very day.

The favoring of Yosef, the gift of the K'TONET PASIM, Yosef's telling his brothers about his dreams... all contributed to the hatred of brothers to brother.

And even though Parshat Vayigash will tell us of the reunion of the brothers and their reconciliation - the friction (to give it a polite and understated name) became a sad fact of Jewish life through the generations.

It is hard to call it a mere coincidence that we read Vayeishev, Mikeitz, and Vayigash at Chanuka time.

Because the story behind the story of the victory and miracles of Chanuka is of an internal battle of Jew vs Jew

- the Torah-true Jews vs the MIT-YAVNIM, the Hellenized Jews, who preferred assimilating into Greek culture rather than remain faithful to G-d and His Torah.

Fast-forward to today. How many different splits plague us -

Religious, non-religious, anti-

Charedi, Dati Leumi

Zionist, non-Zionist, anti-Zionist

Ashkenazim, S'faradim

Mitnagdim, Chassidim

Strife within the same Chassidic sect

Strife within the same Yeshiva

Did I leave any off the list? Sadly, probably yes.

Solutions?

Starting points: V'AHAVTA L'REI-ACHA KAMOCHA, love your neighbor... LO TISN'CHA ET ACHICHA BIL-VAVECHA, don't hate your brother in your heart.

Let me interject at this point that some people will challenge who is R'EI-ACHA, who is ACHICHA, who is AMCHA... It's complicated; but let's simplify it for a starting point:

We are all part of the same Jewish People. We are all part of the Chosen Nation. We are all part of KLAL YISRAEL.

ATEM NITZAVIM HAYOM KULCHEM

We are all standing before G-d...

Yes, there are differences. Some serious and some very serious. But at least our starting point should be that we are all standing before G-d together.

Some like that idea; some would rather not think of themselves as standing before G-d. But our starting point - and that which we should always keep in mind, is that we are all part of B'nei Yisrael.

This does not mean we should homogenize ourselves. But our differences have to take second place to our commonality. Our enemies from outside don't seem to distinguish between Jew and Jew.

Bottom line (maybe, the bottom line) is that our actions and feelings vis a vis the differences within us, should have LOVE as the overriding emotion, and not hatred.

It is possible to adamantly disagree with a fellow Jew without hating him.

Looking over the list of splits, above, it (almost) goes without saying, that some of them will be easier to deal with and others will be a lot harder.

They hated him. The hated him more. They hated him even more. Not at all a good start. So let's do something about that, for starters... **PTDT**