

KOL MEVASSER

Message from the Rabbi

Weekly Series on the Ben Ish Hai

This week we have heard disturbing news of tragedies hatched in the very lands in which Parashat Vayetse takes place. Our forefather Jacob passed through Padan Aaram to Haran, traveling across the same Fertile Crescent region in which the terrorist group Daesh (ad-Dawla al-Islamiyya fil-Iraq wash-Sham) is based. In addition to the daily reports of their atrocities in Iraq and Syria, our shock is renewed at the gruesome images of their brutal attacks in Paris and Beirut.

During Jacob's long sojourn in Haran, his primary objective was to invest the hard work that it takes to build up something meaningful. He selflessly toiled for Laban for seven years, and even when tricked with his surprise betrothal to Leah, he turned bad news into good as they deepened their relationship and had seven children together. Keeping up his spirits, he worked another seven years for his beloved Rachel, and he supported both sisters through periods of infertility while they advised him to grow the family even more with Bilhah and Zilpah. Thus, despite all of the hurdles in front of him, he finished two decades of exile as the head of a large, wealthy family that had considerable resources with which to spread his monotheistic values in the world.

The foil of Jacob's steadiness and positivity was his father-in-law, Laban, whose main goal

in life was to destroy his rivals after scheming to relieve them of anything that might be of value. He was more of a parasite than a builder, preferring to take things from others through shortcuts and double-dealing than to work on making something new himself. For a time he appeared to have the upper hand, but by the end of the Parashah his life unravels while Jacob is ascendant.

In the Biblical text, Laban is presented as no worse than a cunning adversary for Jacob to overcome, but he is promoted to the status of genocidal super-villain in Rabbinic literature. Many of us are familiar with the classic passage of the Passover Haggadah in which he is mentioned, "Tse Ulmad." This text declares that "Pharaoh only decreed against Jewish males, but Laban wished to uproot us all, as it is said 'an Aramite sought to destroy my father.'"

In the Haggadah of the Ben Ish Hai, Haham Yosef Hayyim explains that "this was said about Laban's plot to kill Eliezer the servant of Abraham. Eliezer was sent to find a wife for Isaac. When he reached the home of Laban and Betuel, they poisoned his food. If Eliezer had died, our forefather Isaac would have been forbidden to marry any woman, for no one would have known whether Eliezer had already betrothed Rebekah's mother or sister for Isaac instead, and thus, the house of Israel would not have been built." In other words, while Pharaoh was content to simply absorb the Israelite women into the Egyptian masses by exterminating

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Parashat Vayetse

Torah: Genesis 28:10–32:3, 148 Pesukim

Hertz 106–117; Stone 144–169

Haftarah: Hosea 11:7 – 12:12

Hertz 135–137; Stone 1139–1140

Tefillot: Mashib Haruah, Birkat Halebanah

KJ Schedule

Ereb Shabbat

Shabbat Eve

Friday, November 20th

Minha.....4:30 pm

Candle Lighting 4:28 pm

Arbit / Kabbalat Shabbat...5:00 pm

Yom Shabbat

Shabbat Day

Saturday, November 21st

Shaharit / Morning Prayer 8:30 am

Keri'at HaTorah..... 10:15 am

Musaf 11:30 am

Minhah 4:30 pm

Women's Tehillim 4:30 pm

Se'udah Shelisheet..... 5:00 pm

Arbit 5:20 pm

Habdallah..... 5:31 pm

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our men, Laban dreamt of a world so “sanitized” of Judaism that we might never have existed in the first place.

In this Midrashic interpretation, Laban and Daesh sound a lot alike. And when paired with the moral narratives of the Parashat Vayetsei, the core flaw in Daesh’s worldview is laid bare for us all to see. Just as Laban did, Daesh draws its strength from taking things away from other people who have worked for their whole lives, or even for multiple generations, to build themselves up. The only way that their ideology can survive is for Someone Else to have enough creativity and industriousness to create something worth destroying. Daesh’s only tangible contribution is to oppose and condemn, and they offer nothing constructive to give them a stable foundation in the “better world” that they claim to want to see so badly.

Hence, it seems that the true antidote to Daesh is to be like Jacob, to stick to our resolve and keep building in the face of evil. To articulate what our values are and go for it, and to pass this on to our children and to inspire our friends to do the same. To be producers in the face of destruction, and to frame our actions in terms of “what we are for” instead of “what we are against.” And if doing that makes us a target to bullies, it’s better to get beaten up for pursuing our dreams than to get beaten up for cowering before the hand that threatens us. As long as Daesh exists they will be a formidable adversary, but as long as we can persevere in our values and dreams, we will continue to best them in the battles of our times. Shabbat Shalom



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Refuah Shlemah

Abe Abraham • Moselle Amron
Sylvia Cohen • Mordechai Cohen
Esther Duke • Sassoon Ezra
Miriam bat Yetta • Tilda Levy
Maurice Ovadia

KJ Schedule (continued)

Weekdays

Sunday, November 22nd

Shaharit 7:30 am
Talmud Torah 10:00 am

Monday to Wednesday, Nov. 23 to 25

Shaharit 6:25 am

Thanksgiving / Thursday, November 26th

Shaharit 6:25 am

Next Week / Ereb Shabbat

Friday, November 27th

Shaharit 6:25 am
Minha 4:30 pm
Candle Lighting 4:26 pm
Arbit / Kabbalat Shabbat 5:00 pm

In Memoriam

We remember these yahrzeit anniversaries November 21 to 28, 2015. It is customary to light a memorial candle, donate tzedaka & attend Shabbat services.

9 Kislev / Shabbat, November 21st
*Avraham ben Yekezekiel Cohen
Isaac Joseph Itzhak ben Yoseph
Ezra Yitzhaki Ezra ben Reuven
Sholkat Zekharia Sholkat bat Zekharia*

10 Kislev / Sunday, November 22nd
Ruhama bat Chana

11 Kislev / Monday, November 23rd
*Ludwig Altman
Sassoon Cohen Sassoon Shimon Duek HaCohen
Rachel bat Simha*

12 Kislev / Tuesday, November 24th
Yedidyah Yehudah Yedidyah ben Yehudah

13 Kislev / Wednesday, November 25th
Eliza Maslavi Eliza bat Tifaha

14 Kislev / Thursday, November 26th
Helen Levi Habiba Havah bat Farha

15 Kislev / Friday, November 27th
*Nora Isaac Ives Naima bat Simha
Sassoon Menashe Sassoon Sasson ben Menashe*

A Sephardic Thanksgiving Reflection

By Rabbi Daniel Bouskila

In 1883, the Jewish-Sephardic-American poet Emma Lazarus was invited to write a poem for a literary auction. The proceeds of this auction would go towards building a pedestal for what came to be known as “The Statue of Liberty.” Lazarus’ entry, titled *The New Colossus*, was eventually (in 1903) inscribed on a bronze tablet inside the Statue of Liberty for all to read. Its message about America, written by a Jew, captures the essence of what it means to be an American Jew:

*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”*

Recasting the classical Greek Colossus (a representation of the pagan sun god) as “The Mother of Exiles,” Emma Lazarus turned the Statue of Liberty into an American version of a Jewish-Biblical matriarch standing at the door of her home, welcoming all those who yearn for freedom and shelter. No longer interested in the “storied pomp” of ancient empires, this matriarch seeks to house and assist the world’s “tired and poor” who “yearn to breathe free.” Replacing the Greek sun god –

the conqueror of the world – Lazarus’ “Mother of Exiles” is now the nurturing and comforting symbol that welcomes newcomers to a new and unique world: the world of American freedom and democracy.

It is not by chance that an American Jew of Sephardic background would author a poem invoking the motifs of “exile and homecoming.” Well versed in her people’s long history of exile and persecution, particularly that of her Sephardic ancestors in Spain, Emma Lazarus fully understood what a privilege it is for Jews to live in the United States, the safe haven where they enjoy the blessings of American democracy. Lazarus expressed this in another powerful poem she wrote titled “1492”:

*Thou two-faced year, Mother of Change and Fate,
Didst weep when Spain cast forth with flaming sword,
The children of the prophets of the Lord,
Prince, priest, and people, spurned by zealot hate.
Hounded from sea to sea, from state to state,
The West refused them, and the East abhorred.
No anchorage the known world could afford,
Close-locked was every port, barred every gate.
Then smiling, thou unveil’dst, O two-faced year,
Saying, “Ho, all who weary, enter here!
There falls each ancient barrier that the art
Of race or creed or rank devised, to rear
Grim bulwarked hatred between heart and heart!”*

For Emma Lazarus – an American Jew of Sephardic descent -- the “two-faced year” of 1492 held a double-edged irony. In 1492, after a long, bloody and brutal inquisition, the Spanish Jews were forcibly expelled from Spain, “when Spain cast forth with flaming sword the children of the prophets of the Lord.” In that same year – 1492 -- Christopher Columbus discovered America (and later, in 1654, the first Jews to come to America were

mostly Spanish & Portugese Sephardic Jews, Emma Lazarus’s own direct ancestors). In this poem, Lazarus also evokes the motif of America as a safe place of refuge – “Ho, all who weary, enter here.” This theme resonated deeply with Emma Lazarus, a descendant of a weary and persecuted Jewish people who found a safe haven of freedom and protection in America.

Taking inspiration from Emma Lazarus’ poems, on Thanksgiving – a classic “American” holiday – all Jews should take the opportunity to pause, reflect and give thanks for the great privilege of living in this great and blessed country, the United States of America.

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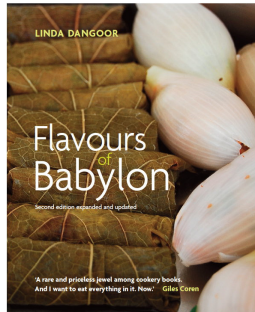
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Linda Dangoor was born in Baghdad and settled in the UK in the 1960s. Although she left Iraq when only ten years old, the link to her roots through food has always been very strong. She started cooking at a young age with her mother and grandmother. Linda Dangoor has always been interested in cooking.

Her Middle Eastern background and travels enhanced the discovery of dishes and inspired the creation of new ones. As an accomplished and experienced cook, recognizing a need in the market, she resolved to put down her favorite recipes from her native Iraq in modern book form.



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Hag Sameah! ♥ Happy Hanukkah!

