



LEARN THE LESSON OF L'HAVDIL

VAYEISHEV is the sedra that brings us into Chanuka. VAYEISHEV is read either within a few days of Chanuka, on Erev Chanuka, or the first or second day of Chanuka.

Therefore, we cannot separate the content of Vayeishev from the Chanuka story. And we must learn an important lesson from the match up of the sedra and the holiday.

To be sure, there are other lessons than the one we are presenting in this Lead Tidbit, but this one is important. Maybe even vital for Jewish Life.

Eisav wanted to kill Yaakov. Things didn't work out the way Eisav might have hoped and planned. Eisav's guardian angel attacked Yaakov and tried to vanquish him. That too didn't work out the way it was planned. Yaakov walked away limping, but recovered nicely. Eisav's grandson's nation namesake - Amalek - attacked Israel and did not succeed at vanquishing us. We are not finished with them yet.

Yosef's brothers grew to hate him. Their first thought was to kill him. They changed their minds and threw him into a dangerous and deep pit. Maybe they didn't really change their minds; maybe they expected the scorpions and snakes to do their job. But then they decided to get rid of him in a less drastic way. And we know the next parts of that story.

But here's the point. Or at least, the beginning of the point. Eisav and

Amalek hate Israel. Yosef's brothers hated him. But it's not the same.

Fast forward 1400 years or so. Chanuka story. Who were the Torah-true Jews fighting? The Y'vanim. And? That's it. No it wasn't. They were fighting the Mityavanim too. The enemy? The Syrian-Greeks. The other enemy? No, must use that word. Because there is a difference. The other antagonists? The Hellenize Jews. The ones who were okay with not learning Torah. With not keeping mitzvot. The ones who probably didn't object too strongly to the ban on Brit Mila.

In Al HaNisim we thank G-d for "Delivering the strong into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the impure into the hands of the pure, the wicked into the hands of the righteous" -- we can say that all of the above is talking about G-d's handing the Greeks into the hands of the Jews. One more: "The arrogant into the hands of those who were engaged in the study of Your Torah. That's talking about the Mityavanim. They are not wicked. They are arrogant. They are misguided. True, they oppose Torah and Mitzvot. But they are Jewish. And that demands that we see them as fellow Jews. They are not to be destroyed. They are to be humbled. They are to be won over to the Torah way of life.

Fast forward another 2150 years or so. Welcome to TODAY. We have plenty of enemies who seek our demise. And we have many antagonists.



Some Jews view the far left camp as a destructive force against the State of Israel. Against Torah values. And they demand our efforts to try to bring them around. But they are not like those who seek our destruction out of pure, irrational hatred. Our fight against our fellow Jewish ZEIDIM might demand more out of us than defending ourselves from the anti-Semites and anti-Israel nations and peoples. But the fight is not the same.

(Personal addition) I would be remiss if I didn't use another example of today's ZEIDIM - today's arrogant Jews who are a harmful and destructive force that we must deal with. The chareidi extremists (who aren't really charedi because of the Chilul HaShem they continually perpetrate and the defiance of many leading rabbanim of the true chareidi community), whose behavior goes contrary to the Torah values and principles of most religious and traditional Jews. (Their protests aren't even anti-draft, because a yeshiva student who asks for an exemption from army service will almost assuredly be granted one.)

Back to the title: Lesson in L'HAVDIL.

Many years ago, Rabbi Zev Leff gave a series of shiurim on the weekday Amida. One of the many points he made had a profound effect on me.

He said, look at the latest bracha to enter the Amida - V'LAMALSHINIM, For the slanderers... There are different ways of understanding who were the 'target' of this bracha. It probably covers different types of antagonists.

But look at the ending of the bracha. Blessed are You, HaShem, who destroys enemies and humbles the arrogant.

That's the point. Enemies from outside - we ask G-d to help us not only protect us, but to prevail against our enemies.

Our fellow Jews - different story. Whether we are confronted on the one hand by Jews whose inner-core Jewish Soul is so buried under ignorance, bitterness, confusion, misguided zeal... or what - and on the other hand by Jews whose sense of Jewish Unity is so lost by hatred and bitterness, misguided zeal... or what...

The bottom line is that we are Yosef and his brothers, we are part of a nation that split into two kingdoms and have yet to be properly reconciled, we stand before G-d today KULCHEM, all of us. And we have to never make the mistake of lumping all who oppose us into one box.

This has to be a lesson of these sedras of B'reishit that we read around Chanuka time. And this has to be a lesson of Chanuka, as well.