

Toldos

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The Jewish people have had many enemies over the millennia, but most of them were descendants of either Yishmael or Eisav. The amazing thing is that Yishmael was Yitzchak Avinu's half-brother, and Eisav was Ya'akov's full brother. Talk about sibling rivalry! But then again, Kayin was Hevel's full brother, too, and he murdered him.

Brothers have been killing brothers ever since the beginning of history. It's how God made the world, and jealousy is usually at the center of it. Jealousy seems so instinctual that you see it at work at the earliest of ages. Just adding a new baby to the family can spark feelings of jealousy and inspire retribution in a child who only two years previously had the same attention.

And, jealousy is the source of earlier Palestinian, pardon me, Philistinian hatred of Jews in this week's *parsha* as well: *"And he had possessions of sheep and possessions of cattle and much production, and the Philistines envied him. . . And Yitzchak said to them, 'Why have you come to me, since you hate me, and you sent me away from you?'"* (Bereishis 26:14, 27).

I have watched documentaries on both world wars, and it is scary how primordial senses of entitlement have sparked and fueled so many major wars. No one ever starts a world war. They start wars to get what they want, hopefully without causing a bigger war than they can fight. Sometimes, the gamble pays off, and sometimes, it just leads to an escalation of hostilities until the whole world is involved. We're watching that happen again today.

War is so part and parcel of human culture that the Greeks even made up a god to rule over it, Ares. Whereas pre-2001, the world barely ever talked about World War III, it has become an increasingly more commonly discussed topic. "Gunpowder" exists in so many places in the world today, and we have to be concerned about any "matches" that might inadvertently get "thrown" in that direction.

I suppose we shouldn't be surprised by any of this if God Himself said, *"The imagi-*

nation of man's heart is evil from his youth" (*Bereishis* 8:21). One could argue, "Hey God, that may be so, but You made us this way! Who do you blame when a watch is faulty, the watch or the watchmaker?"

But imagine taking your broken watch back to the manufacturer and hearing, "There is nothing wrong with your watch. We *made* it to break after two months." Wouldn't you be angry, even if it was true and you just happened to miss that point when you bought it? What honest company would intentionally make a defective product?

But isn't that what God did when He made man? God is *perfect*, and therefore, anything He creates must be *perfect*, too. If it doesn't seem to be, it is not because of some oversight on God's part. It is because, well, we just can't *see* how it is perfect. After all, unlike man, who improves through trial and error, God knows the future and how to get it right the *first* time.

So God made Sarah barren and then made the famine in *Eretz Yisroel*. This way, Avraham would be compelled to go south to Egypt for food and pick up Hagar as a concubine while there. This would lead Sarah to encourage Hagar to have a child from Avraham on her behalf, and Yishmael would be born. The *Gemora* says that God "regretted" making Yishmael, but He not only did it, He made him the way he wanted.

Moving on to Eisav, we learn from *Sba'ar HaGilgulim* how the holiness of parents, especially during conception, affects the level of righteousness of the soul that goes into their child. In the entire history of man we can assume that Yitzchak *Avinu* and Rivkah *Imeinu* were the two of the holiest people to have been married to one another. And yet, Eisav was *still* born to them, even though less righteous people have done much better.

It's not the way we would have done things. Evil is happy to be here and grateful for all the good, naive, and weak people it can take advantage of. But though happy to be here, the good people are not happy about the creation and maintenance of evil. It seems like a lot more than just a big waste of time. World War II alone took the lives of 72 million people and caused billions of dollars of damage. If *God forbid*, there is *another* world war, and there are some serious signs these days that there will be, it has the potential to do a lot worse.

The seeming lack of logic in creating evil and letting it get away with what it has, has caused many over the millennia to question the existence of God or at least His involvement in human history. The lack of what people deem to be an appropriate Divine response to evil has made many an evil leader believe they have free rein to do what they want, so they have.

Yes, good does seem to eventually triumph over evil, but not before evil has made an incredibly black and usually deadly mark on history. The ones who remain alive to witness such triumph are the fortunate ones, but what about all those who died trying to stop evil and instead fell victim along the way?

The only answer is not a very satisfying one for many. It is the same one God gave to Iyov when he asked God such questions firsthand. God told Iyov, “*Where were you when I founded the earth*” (*Iyov 38:4*)? This was God telling Iyov, “You want to understand the movie after walking in halfway through? Good luck.”

If human logic was identical to Divine logic, we wouldn't have needed Torah. We would have figured out right and wrong for ourselves and never left *Gan Aiden*. Whatever seems illogical to us about what God has done or is doing has to do with the limitations of human logic, not Divine logic, which takes into account so much more than human logic ever can.

Not everyone who looks at abstract art knows what is going on in the painting, but that doesn't mean they can't enjoy what they are looking at until they do. Similarly, but far more profoundly, we may be looking at abstract history and still lack the keys to decipher it. But that only emphasizes the need to have faith in the Painter, that He knows what He is painting and why. It is that kind of faith that allows us to enjoy this world as we do when we can, and survive history when we have to.

As a final note, though not related to the *parsha*, the *Zohar* says that the first twenty-four days of *Kislev*, corresponding to the twenty-four letters of the *Boruch Shem*, the second verse of the *Shema*, are a build-up to the twenty-fifth of *Kislev* and the holiday of *Chanukah*. To make use of this important idea, I will be posting a short daily message, *b"H*, on each of the letters on their respective days, starting with the first of *Kislev*. You will find this at: www.shaarnunproductions.org