

TOLDOS (GENESIS 25:19-28:9)

Helping' G-d Help You

2012 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Seplowitz

Jacob was a man who faced adversity throughout his life. And he dealt with that adversity by being proactive.

His wicked twin brother Esau sought to undermine the traditions of Abraham and Isaac. Had he received Isaac's blessings, it would have been devastating for the future Nation of Israel. Jacob therefore made sure that the blessings would not go to Esau. (See "Walking the Talk".)

Jacob's father-in-law cheated him and tried to kill him. Jacob engaged in the appropriate actions to protect himself. Esau wanted to kill him. Again, Jacob protected himself.

In every situation that Jacob faced, he didn't sit back and wait for G-d to take care of things for him. He made the appropriate efforts and prayed to G-d for success.

For example, when Esau came after him with an army of 400 men, Jacob – a) sent gifts in an effort to appease him; b) prepared for war; c) prayed to G-d for success.

And that's how it is in life.

We go to the synagogue on Rosh Hashanah and pray to G-d for a good year. Among other things, we ask Him for financial success. We ask Him to provide us with our material needs.

What we DON'T do is then sit around and wait for Mannah to fall from Heaven. True, our sustenance comes from G-d. But we're supposed to DO something about it. We educate ourselves in what we need to know to make a living. We write resumes and we network with the people we know. We make investments and we study the market. We advertise and we provide the best customer service available.

We do all that and more, and if G-d blesses our efforts we will succeed. If He doesn't, all the advertising and customer service in the world won't put bread on our table.

That is how we earn a living, and that is how we take care of our health.

And that is how we vote.

Some of my readers very much appreciated last week's Torah Talk, "A Torah Jew's Guide to 'Losing' Elections". Others objected to it strenuously. Predictably, the ones who agreed with it were the ones who voted against the President, and those who disagreed were the ones who voted for him.

And that's a shame. Because it means that my message was misunderstood.

Last week my friend Howard posted a comment on the website about that article. Normally, I would respond in the Comments section of the website, right after his comment. However, I decided instead to share our discussion with you on this page.

Howard's comments:

I certainly agree with your closing paragraphs, but I am unaware of how you voted four years or eight years ago. This President, our President did not put us in the current economic situation. He did not put us in two wars, he did not cause or create the Housing Bubble or advocate for Deregulation or the removal of the Glass Steagal Act 1999(Clinton did that), He didn't ship manufacturing jobs overseas (Bain Capital helped with that).

Ships of State do not turn on a dime or necessarily in 4 years. You feel that Obama is not a strong supporter of Israel, not true. Do you really believe that he would tolerate a nuclear Iran, I think not. You quote from the Talmud "King Solomon writes that A king's heart is like streams of water in the hand of G-d; wherever he wishes, so He directs it". I'm certainly not educated in Talmud but I do study history, economics and ethics. I have found that being open-minded and being tolerant of others beliefs and practices is following the stream of water which G-d directs. You do not have to support Gay marriage or a Gay lifestyle. You do not have to approve of a women's right to choose. What you should not do is try and impose your views on others because if it's wrong G-d will direct the flow of water in other directions.

**He did so this election and may President Obama continue to improve our economy and if not we will have a new President in 4 years. Have a good Shabbos.*