



# COVENANT & CONVERSATION

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from  
**RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ZT"L**

Former Chief Rabbi of the  
United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth

May the learning of these Divrei Torah be לעילוי נשמות  
**HaRav Ya'akov Zvi ben David Ariele zt"l**

לעילוי נשמות

פנחס בן יעקב אשר וגולדה בת ישראל דוד אייז ע"ה  
עזריאל בן אריה לייב ומעניה בת יצחק שטרט ע"ה



Dedicated by  
Dr. Robert Sreter DDS., M.S.

## Against Hate

**K**i Teitse contains more laws than any other parsha in the Torah, and it is possible to be overwhelmed by this *embarrass de richesse* of detail. One verse, however, stands out by its sheer counter-intuitiveness:

Do not despise an Edomite, because he is your brother. Do not despise the Egyptian, because you were a stranger in his land. (Deut. 23:8)

These are very unexpected commands. Examining and understanding them will teach us an important lesson about society in general, and leadership in particular.

First, a broader point. Jews have been subjected to racism more and longer than

any other nation on earth. Therefore, we should be doubly careful never to be guilty of it ourselves. We believe that God created each of us, regardless of colour, class, culture or creed, in His image. If we look down on other people because of their race, then we are demeaning God's image and failing to respect *kavod ha-briyot*, human dignity.

If we think less of a person because of the colour of their skin, we are repeating the sin of Aaron and Miriam – “Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman” (Num. 12:1). There are midrashic interpretations that read this passage differently, but the plain sense is that they looked down on Moses' wife because, like Cushite women generally, she had dark skin, making this one of the first recorded instances of colour prejudice. For this sin Miriam was struck with leprosy.

Instead we should remember the lovely line from Song of Songs: “I am black but beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. Do not stare at me because I am dark, because the sun has looked upon me” (Song of Songs 1:5).

Jews cannot complain that others have

Many thanks to  
**Ruby & Rabbi Jay Karzen**  
for their longtime distribution efforts  
on behalf of TT

racist attitudes toward them if they hold racist attitudes toward others. “First correct yourself; then [seek to] correct others,” says the Talmud. (Baba Metzia 107b) The Tanach contains negative evaluations of some other nations, but always and only because of their moral failures, never because of ethnicity or skin colour.

Now to Moses’ two commands against hate,<sup>1</sup> both of which are surprising. “Do not despise the Egyptian, because you were a stranger in his land.” This is extraordinary. The Egyptians enslaved the Israelites, planned a programme against them of slow genocide, and then refused to let them go despite the plagues that were devastating the land. Are these reasons not to hate?

True. But the Egyptians had initially provided a refuge for the Israelites at a

*1 Whenever I refer, here and elsewhere, to “Moses’ commands,” I mean, of course, to imply that these were given to Moses by Divine instruction and revelation, and thusly did he pass them onto us. This, in a deep sense, is why God chose Moses, a man who said repeatedly of himself that he was not a man of words. The words Moses spoke were those of God. That, and that alone, is what gives them timeless authority for the people of the covenant.*

Mazal Tov to  
**Rabbi Michael Plaskow MBE**  
 on receiving semicha at the age of 85

He is a former Maggid Shiur for Daf Yomi at Young Israel of North Netanya and Emeritus Chazan of Woodside Park Synagogue - London



**Eta Morris**  
 JERUSALEM REALTY

For information on magnificent stand alone homes in German Colony, Baka and Old Katamon.  
 Call today: Eta: 054-723-3863

### Old Katamon/San Simon/Kiryat Schmuel

140 sqm apt on one floor with registered balcony of 123 sqm. Great condition, underfloor heating, central air, full of light, parking in front of building. Price **5,400,000 NIS**.

Newly renovated 145 sqm apartment on one floor, shabbat elevator, registered parking and storage. Price **4,200,000 NIS. Great Deal.**

New project 4, 5, 6 rooms available. Underground parking, shabbat elevator and storage. Starting prices at **3,800,000 NIS**- larger apts -**6,000,000 NIS**.

New penthouse!! 104 sqm with 60 sqm terrace, shabbat elevator, registered parking. **4,800,000 NIS**

### Baka / Makor Haim

**EXCLUSIVE.** Gorgeous garden apt in Baka. 125 sqm on two floors, parking & 120 sqm registered garden. Private entrance. Completely renovated. Underfloor heating, upgraded air conditioning. **6,950,000 NIS**

Historic Jerusalem stone building, high ceilings, full of character, registered 225 sqm garden, 230 sqm on two floors, 2 registered parking spots/storage. **ONE of a KIND** property. **Call more info.**

Magical garden apartment, 229 sqm built space, 300 sqm registered garden in the heart of Baka. **Call for more info.**

New duplex penthouse, 140 sqm with two sukka terraces only **4,500,000 NIS!!!**

Quadra garden apartment, 107 sqm duplex with 20 sqm garden , registered parking - pool and gym for residences. **3,700,000 NIS.**

### Talbiya

Beautiful apartment in Talbiya, 150 sqm, one floor. High end finishes, underground parking. Shabbat elevator, Sukkah terrace. **7,900,000 NIS.**

### German Colony and Arnona

New luxury project German Colony. 3 & 4 room apartments, storage underground parking, starting at **3,000,000 NIS.**

Arnona Yisrael Eldad St. 5 room apt with terrace, underground parking and storage. **3,050,000 NIS.**

Eta Morris Realty, Ltd.  
 etamorrisrealestate@gmail.com  
 Eta 054-723-3863 · etamorrisrealty.co.il · Rachel: 052-546-6425

time of famine. They had honoured Joseph when he was elevated as second-in-command to Pharaoh. The evils they committed against the Hebrews under “a new King who did not know of Joseph” (Ex. 1:8) were at the instigation of Pharaoh himself, not the people as a whole. Besides which, it was the daughter of that same Pharaoh who had rescued Moses and adopted him.

The Torah makes a clear distinction between the Egyptians and the Amalekites. The latter were destined to be perennial enemies of Israel, but the former were not. In a later age, Isaiah would make a remarkable prophecy - that a day would come when the Egyptians would suffer their own oppression. They would cry out to God, who would rescue them just as He had rescued the Israelites:

When they cry out to the Lord because of their oppressors, He will send them a saviour and defender, and He will rescue them. So the Lord will make Himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the Lord. (Isaiah 19:20-21)

The wisdom of Moses' command not to despise Egyptians still shines through today. If the people had continued to hate their erstwhile oppressors, Moses would

have taken the Israelites out of Egypt but would have failed to take Egypt out of the Israelites. They would have continued to be slaves, not physically but psychologically. They would be slaves to the past, held captive by the chains of resentment, unable to build the future. *To be free, you have to let go of hate.* That is a difficult truth but a necessary one.

No less surprising is Moses' insistence: “Do not despise an Edomite, because he is your brother.” Edom was, of course, the other name of Esau. There was a time when Esau hated Jacob and vowed to kill him. Besides which, before the twins were born, Rebecca received an oracle telling her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the elder will serve the younger.” (Gen. 25:23) Whatever these words mean, they seem to imply that there will be eternal conflict between the two brothers and their descendants.

At a much later age, during the Second Temple period, the Prophet Malachi said: “Was not Esau Jacob's brother?” declares the Lord. “Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated...” (Malachi 1:2-3). Centuries later still, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said,

	 <h2 style="margin: 0;">לבינסון רז ושות'</h2> <p style="margin: 0;">משרד עורכי דין ונוטריון</p> <h2 style="margin: 0;">Lewensohn Raz &amp; Co.</h2> <p style="margin: 0;">Law Offices &amp; Notary</p>	
<p><b>Oded Lewensohn,</b> Adv. &amp; Notary</p>	<p><b>Estates, Probate, and Inheritances*</b>   <b>Real Estate Transactions</b>   <b>Tama 38 and Renovation Construction Projects</b></p>	<p><b>Moshe Raz,</b> Adv.</p>
<p>* Durable Powers of Attorney for Health and Financial Matters</p>		
<p><b>27 Keren Ha'Yesod St., Jerusalem   Tel: 02-6731000   Email: office@lawlr.co.il   www.lawlr.co.il</b></p>		

Send a gift of Jewish history  
in time for **Rosh Hashana**  
with our latest issue!



Special Offer  
~~240~~  
**150 ₪**  
for 5 issues  
(postage incl)  
VALID UNTIL AFTER THE CHAGIM - SEPTEMBER 30

Meticulously researched,  
superbly written and  
richly illustrated with rare  
photos, timelines, maps, and  
infographics

**SEGULA**  
www.segulamag.com

Clearance sale while stocks last - 20 NIS per issue plus delivery

**Call 00972-58-5416146**

**<https://lp.vp4.me/pn4x>**

“It is a *halachah* [rule, law, inescapable truth] that Esau hates Jacob.”<sup>2</sup> Why then does Moses tell us not to despise Esau’s descendants?

The answer is simple. *Esau may hate Jacob, but it does not follow that Jacob should hate Esau.* To answer hate with hate is to be dragged down to the level of your opponent. When, in the course of a television programme, I asked Judea Pearl, father of the murdered journalist Daniel Pearl, why he was working for reconciliation between Jews and Muslims, he replied with heart-breaking lucidity, “Hate killed my son. Therefore I am determined to fight hate.” As Martin Luther King Jr. wrote, “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.”<sup>3</sup> Or as Kohelet said, there is “a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace” (Eccl. 3:8).

It was none other than Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai who said that when Esau met Jacob for the last time, he kissed and embraced him “with a full heart.”<sup>4</sup> Hate,

---

2 *Sifrei, Bamidbar, Beha’alotecha*, 69.

3 *Strength to Love* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1977), 53.

4 *Sifrei ad loc.*



Religious  
**Caregiver**  
Car owner  
For details  
**050-323-1107**  
Yossi

especially between family, is not eternal and inexorable. Always be ready, Moses seems to have implied, for reconciliation between enemies.

Contemporary Games Theory – the study of decision making – suggests the same. Martin Nowak’s programme “Generous Tit-for-Tat” is a winning strategy in the scenario known as the Iterated Prisoner’s Dilemma, an example created for the study of cooperation of two individuals. Tit-for-Tat says: start by being nice to your opponent, then do to them what they do to you (in Hebrew, *middah keneged middah*). Generous Tit-for-Tat says, don’t always do to them what they do to you, for you may find yourself locked into a mutually destructive cycle of retaliation. Every so often ignore (i.e. forgive) your opponent’s last harmful move. That, roughly speaking, is what the Sages meant when they said that God originally created the world under the attribute of strict justice but saw that it could not survive through this alone. Therefore He built into it the principle of compassion.<sup>5</sup>

Moses’ two commands against hate are testimony to his greatness as a leader. It is the easiest thing in the world to become a leader by mobilising the forces of hate. That is what Radovan Karadzic and Slobodan Milosevic did in the former Yugoslavia and it led to mass murder and ethnic cleansing. It is what the state-controlled media did – describing Tutsis as *inyenzi*, (“cockroaches”) – before the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. It is what dozens of preachers

---

5 See Rashi to Genesis 1:1, s.v. *bara*.

of hate are doing today, often using the Internet to communicate paranoia and incite acts of terror. Finally, this was the technique mastered by Hitler as a prelude to the worst-ever crime of humans against humanity.

The language of hate is capable of creating enmity between people of different faiths and ethnicities who have lived peaceably together for centuries. It has consistently been the most destructive force in history, and even knowledge of the Holocaust has not put an end to it, even in Europe. It is the unmistakable mark of toxic leadership.

In his classic work, *Leadership*, James MacGregor Burns distinguishes between transactional and transformational leaders. The former address people's interests. The latter attempt to raise their sights. "Transforming leadership is elevating. It is moral but not moralistic. Leaders engage with followers, but from higher levels of morality; in the enmeshing of goals and values both leaders and followers are raised to more principled levels of judgement."<sup>6</sup>

Leadership at its highest level transforms those who exercise it and those who are influenced by it. The great leaders make people better, kinder, nobler than they would otherwise be. That was the achievement of Washington, Lincoln, Churchill, Gandhi and Mandela. The paradigm case was Moses, the man who had more lasting influence than any other leader in history.

<sup>6</sup> James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership*, Harper Perennial, 2010, 455.



**גולן ריאליטי**  
יעוץ ושיווק נדל"ן

**077-2050015**  
**052-2678749**

[www.golan-realestate.net](http://www.golan-realestate.net)



**Meir Golan**

---

**Old Katamon:** 4-room apartment, 95 sqm, sukkah balcony, overwhelming panoramic view, Shabbat elevator, private parking, 3,290,000 NIS

**Rechavia:** 5-room apartment, 130 sqm, Sukkah balconies, 4 exposures, elevator, small and quiet building 5,000,000 NIS

**Arnona:** Beautiful 5 rooms penthouse, new building, 132 sqm + nice terrace, panoramic biblical view, architecturally renovated, 2 parking, storage, Shabbat elevator, 4,500,000 NIS

**The Greek Colony:** 3.5 room apartment - possibility to turn into 4, high ceilings, 15 sqm sukkah balcony, small building, 3,250,000 NIS

**Baka:** 4-room apartment, 95 sqm, balcony, elevator, 3 air exposures, central and quiet street, 3,000,000 NIS

**Ramat Denya:** Half two-family, 6 room 158 sqm+attic, garden, terrace, balconies, 2 covered parking, very bright, view, potential for significant expansion, 5,200,000 NIS

**Rasko:** 3-room apartment, 63 sqm, bright, 1st floor, elevator, 1,890,000 NIS

He did it by teaching the Israelites not to hate. A good leader knows: **Hate the sin but not the sinner. Do not forget the past but do not be held captive by it. Be willing to fight your enemies but never allow yourself to be defined by them or become like them. Learn to love and forgive. Acknowledge the evil men do, but stay focused on the good that is in our power to do. Only thus do we raise the moral sights of humankind and help redeem the world we share.** ■

*Covenant and Conversation 5781 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l. These weekly teachings from Rabbi Sacks zt"l are part of the 'Covenant & Conversation' series on the weekly Torah reading. Read more on [www.rabbisacks.org](http://www.rabbisacks.org).*

OU ISRAEL CENTER 21