

VERY PUNNY

I know a scientist who will only knock on doors, but won't ring.

He wants to win the no bell prize.

Ouch. Have a better pun?

Send it in to dlocker@nageelawest.org

SEASON 2
EPISODE 15

December 30th 2017

Candle Lighting:

Las Vegas 4:17
Lake Tahoe 4:26
San Diego 4:33
Los Angeles 4:35
Phoenix 5:11

have a

Nageela Shabbos

Parshas
Vayechi

5778

A Kid Friendly Weekly Publication of Nageela West Coast Joyfully Jewish Experiences

Bless You! Kinda.

by Rabbi Dani Locker

The blessings of Jacob.

Caleb the Courageous was nearly there! The fabled treasure of Purplebeard was within his grasp. After more than four years traveling the high seas, the low seas, and several places in between, he had reached the island and secured the treasure map. He was exhausted but there would be time for rest later, when he was rich!

Seven hours of intense digging later, he unearthed an old rusted chest. Caleb could almost feel the smooth gold in his fingers. He pictured jeweled rings and crowns. Prying open the cover, he was shocked to see...

Pokemon cards? What? It was supposed to be a treasure!

That would be pretty disappointing, right?

The "Blessings of Jacob" are the main feature in this week's Torah portion. You'd expect then, that they would be blessings. Positive, happy, helpful, well... blessings. Let me quote to you from the "blessings" Jacob gave to his three eldest sons, Reuven, Shimon and Levi:

"Reuven, you make rash decisions, so you can't be

the leader." "Shimon and Levi are brothers who use tools of crime. I don't want to have anything to do with them, because they killed people. Curse their strong anger!" Those don't sound like blessings at all! It's kind of like finding Pokemon in the treasure chest!

Why would Jacob do that? And why are they even called blessings?

To understand this, we need to discover what the word "bracha" or blessing actually means. According to the 13th century sage called "Rashba," the word means to increase something. To make it more or better.

If the point of a blessing was to make you feel all happy, warm and fuzzy, epic fail. If blessing means to help you become bigger, better, stronger, kinder, holier, more Godly... well then Jacob for the win! You

Continued on back page

I WILL SAY "BLESS YOU"
FOR TWO SNEEZES...



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ON YOUR OWN

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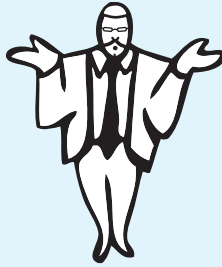
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Stump The Rabbi

The Dark Side



Dear Rabbi,

I learned about Jacob's evil twin brother, Esav. The stories in the Torah about the two of them are very dramatic, and I've heard Rabbis talk about the fact that the fight between Jacob and Esav goes on even today. How does that work? I know Esav wasn't American, and I'm fairly certain he did not come from France, Great Britain or Spain. So what happened to the family of Esav? Are they still around? Do we know who they are? Do they know who they are? Is there like some big secret conference every year for Esavians?

Thank you so much for your time in answering this question.

Terence Wynn

Dear Twynn,

Esav and Jacob were the archetypical opposing twins. From the moment of their birth, Jacob and Esav were working against each other. Throughout the early days of the Jewish nation as well, Esav was always an opponent. The Torah calls the nation of Esav by the name

Edom, which basically means, "red," either because he was a Boston baseball fan (which explains the evil part) or because his skin and hair seemed red. Where did Edom go? What happened to this nation which Isaac promised, "You shall live by your sword... and when your brother (Jacob) falters you shall throw his leadership off of your shoulders?" Where are they now?

Jewish tradition has it that Rome was descended from Edom, and since most of the modern world has its roots in Roman science, philosophy and culture (take Christianity, for example, which was adopted by the Roman empire), the modern, Western world is, in a way, descended from Edom.

The great Spanish Rabbi Don Isaac Abarbanel, in a long piece of history and philosophy, makes the question stronger. Noah (you know, the one who built the ark) had three sons, Shem, Cham and Yafet. Esav, just like the Jews, comes from Shem. Italy (where Rome is) was settled by Kittim, one of the descendants of Yafet. They're not the same people! There are a few interesting approaches to why we consider Rome to be Edom. The historic compilation called Yossipon tells a pretty cool story of what happened to the descendants of Esav, and believe it or not it all begins with this week's Torah reading!

Yosef and his brothers traveled to Israel to bury their father Jacob, Yaakov, in the city of Chevron (like the gas station).

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Nervous that Esav and his family might not like it that Jacob was being buried in the holy cave where their parents and grandparents are buried (why are people always fighting with us over that place?), Yosef brought along an army. Indeed there was a flight, and Yosef's Egyptian forces captured Zepho, the grandson of Esav!

Zepho spent some years in an Egyptian prison, and eventually got out, after Yosef passed away. He began to fight for various armies, and eventually switched sides to fight for people from Italy. He became, according to Yossipon, the very first king of Rome, well before Remus and Romulus came along. He was respected by the Romans, who changed his name to Janus and also called him Saturn. His grandson Lotan became king after him, and was known as Latinus, the founder of the Latin language! In this way, the rulers of Rome were actually, literally the descendants of Esav!

There are some other explanations given by Abarbanel, Ibn Ezra and Ramban. Just under two thousand years ago, the early Christians (which started as a Jewish group) started to find followers outside of Judaism. Many of their earliest followers were Edomites (which means they came from Esav). When the Roman emperor Constantine changed Rome's

official religion to Christianity in the year 325, lots of Edomite Christians decided to move to Rome. Other authorities claim that there's no genetic link between Esav and Rome, but the enemies of the Jewish people (I think in Rome's case, the destruction of our Holy Temple and forced exile of all our people makes them eligible for this title) are always referred to as Edom, who is our ultimate enemy.

So what happened to Esav? His line lives on. Whether the current members of "Edom" are actually descendants, or people who follow Esav's ideals, is basically the difference between the actual Sith, and the First Order. Our job is to avoid the influence of Edom, Esav, and all other members of the dark side and remain true descendants of Jacob.

Have - a- Nageela Shabbat,

the Rabbi

Stump the Rabbi is a forum where kids can ask ANY Jewish question.

Have a question? Please send it in to stump@nageelawest.org

Questions here are real. Names and some wording have been changed

Mitzvah Minute

Graven Images

a short weekly column introducing one of Judaism's 613 commandments

Source:

You shall not make an engraved image.

(Book of Shemos- chapter 20 verse 4).

Details:

- This mitzvah forbids Jews from building a statue or image to be used for worship
- This is included in the Ten Commandments
- Along with Vayikra 19:4, "Don't make metal gods," these two mitzvot prohibit us from making ANY sort of item that would

promote idol worship. This includes engraving, carving, sewing, knitting, Photoshop and carrot sculpting

- This applies even if you don't plan on worshipping this item
- Many authorities interpret this to include any human statue, even if it's not meant for worship, unless the statue is deformed

Lessons:

- We must distance ourselves from the ability to do things

wrong

- Our love for God should be so great, that we are unable to create, view or possess images of "other gods."
- You should probably throw out that Poseidon statue in your back yard

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ALL NIGHTER

@ GRAVADY

8 HOURS
OF
EXTREME
FUN!

MARCH 25TH
10:30P-
MARCH 26TH
7:30A

SPRING BREAK!

FOR AGE 12 AND UP!

Happy
Birthday!

to Nageela family
members celebrating their
birthdays this week!

Ahron Levy
Shmuel Jacobs
Yossi Koppel
Nadav Weiss

Continued from page 1

see, Jacob was the kind of Dad who knew each of his kids extremely well. He knew what made them great and what their challenges were. The blessings he gave to each one of his sons was custom built for him. For the three oldest, he knew that the best blessing he could give them was to correct their wrong behaviors and traits. He knew that a final message from their dying father could help them improve their lives and the lives of their descendants.

Now that's a blessing.

Nageela West breaks the mold of old school Jewish outreach by providing out-of-the-box social and educational programs for Jewish children across the west coast. Our "questions encouraged" mindset makes Nageela a comfortable learning and growing environment for Jewish children of all backgrounds.

