



Likkutei Sichos

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Suspended Hatred

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1.

HUGS AND KISSES

In his commentary on the verse,¹ “Eisav ran toward him, and he embraced him and fell upon his neck, and kissed him, and they wept,” Rashi quotes the words, “and he embraced him,” and explains:

Eisav’s mercy tumbled forth when he saw Yaakov bowing with all of these bows.

Rashi then quotes the words, “and kissed him,” וַיִּשָּׁקֵהוּ, and explains:

There are dots on this word. There is a dispute about this matter in a *beraisa* of *Sifri*:² There are those who expound this dotting to mean that Eisav did not kiss him with all his heart. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said: It is a well-known halachah that Eisav hates Yaakov, but Eisav’s mercy was aroused at that time, and Eisav kissed Yaakov with all his heart.

We need to clarify: Why does Rashi explain the words “he embraced him” in line with the second opinion that he cites in his second comment {“he kissed him with all his heart”},³ and not explain the meaning of “he embraced him” {also} according to the first opinion, “he did not kiss with all his heart”?

We could suggest, albeit with difficulty, that Rashi relied on those learning his commentary to also see his comments on the very next verse, on the words, “and kissed him.” Rashi comments: “He did not kiss Yaakov with all his heart” (and thus, “he embraced him” was also not with all his heart). But this would be a strained solution because the words “and kissed him” are expounded specially (because of the dotting) to teach us {that Eisav did not kiss him with all his heart}. In contrast, the words “and he embraced him” cannot be expounded this way {because they are not dotted}.

Rashi should also have explained “and he embraced him” according to the first opinion, just like he explains these words according to the second opinion.

¹ *Bereishis* 33:4.

² *Sifri*, “*Behaaloscha*,” on *Bamidbar* 9:10 {sec. 69}.

³ See *Beer Yitzhak* here: Rashi follows the approach of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai, as quoted in his commentary on the words “and kissed him,” and it represents the straightforward understanding of the verse.

2.

TWO EXPLANATIONS?

Additionally, we need to clarify the following regarding Rashi's explanation of the words "and kissed him." Why does Rashi need to offer two explanations?

Moreover, Rashi begins by saying, "There is a dispute about this matter." This indicates that both explanations are equally valid according to *pshat*.⁴ Meaning, in most cases, when Rashi presents two (or more) explanations (or opinions) without introducing them by mentioning that there are many explanations, he offers the first explanation (or opinion) first because it aligns better with *pshat*. In contrast, when Rashi introduces both explanations by saying (as in our case), "There is a dispute about this matter" (or the like) — which, seemingly, is redundant — this introduction indicates that both explanations are equally valid according to *pshat*.

But seemingly, this is not the case:

The explanation that "there are those who expound this dotting to mean that Eisav did not kiss him with all his heart" seems to fit better with the *pshat*. Because according to this explanation, the dots over the word moderate the meaning of the word.⁵ This is the case with the dotting in other places in Torah, as cited in *Sifri* (as it is worded in *Sifri*, "and the like"). This is also reasonable according to *pshat*.⁶ In contrast, according to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, it is difficult to understand: What do the dots above the words "and kissed him" add? We do not need the dots to teach us that "he kissed him with all his heart" — this is the simple meaning of "and kissed him."

⁴ {The plain meaning of Scripture. Rashi says in his commentary to *Bereishis* 3:8: "I have come only to explain the plain meaning of the Scripture." When the plain meaning is understood clearly, Rashi does not comment. Though there are many levels and depths of interpretation on the Torah, Rashi adopts a straightforward approach.}

⁵ See *Ralbag (Biur HaMilos)* at the beginning of *parshas Vayishlach*: The dots on the words "and kissed him," וַיִּשָּׁקֵהוּ, indicate that the kiss was not wholehearted but something in between a kiss and the absence of one. Hence, this word {by being dotted} found the middle ground between being written and being erased. This explanation is echoed by other commentaries.

⁶ See Rashi on *Bereishis* 19:33 and *Bamidbar* 3:39; 9:10.

The commentators⁷ explain that this is what Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai intended to teach us: “It is a well-known halachah that Eisav hates Yaakov.” Thus, if the verse means that Eisav did not kiss Yaakov wholeheartedly, no dots would be needed to indicate this; we would know this on our own. The dots teach us the opposite: He *did* kiss him “with all his heart.”

However, on this basis, it emerges that the dots do not moderate the meaning of the words “and kissed him.” On the contrary! The dots emphasize and strengthen the literal meaning of these words. Ostensibly, this differs from the usual meaning of such dots in other places in the Torah that Rashi quotes. In all these sources, the dots moderate the meaning of the dotted word.

Why, then, does Rashi quote the second explanation and, moreover, preface it with the words, “There is a dispute about this matter,” which indicates that this explanation is equally as valid as the first, according to *pshat*?

Although both explanations appear in the *beraisa* in *Sifri*, Rashi does not usually quote expositions of our Sages unless they are relevant to the *pshat* of verse.

3.

WHY THIS SOURCE?

Additionally, we need to clarify: These two explanations of the words “and kissed him” appear in other sources. Why does Rashi quote the version that appears in the *Sifri*? Furthermore, why does Rashi specifically mention that this dispute appears in a *beraisa* in the *Sifri*? This dispute also appears in *Bereishis Rabbah* commenting on the verse,⁸ and in *Avos DeRabbi Nassan*.⁹

We can appreciate why Rashi does not quote **both** opinions from *Bereishis Rabbah* because there, the second opinion, that of Rabbi Yanai, reads: “This

⁷ See *Sefer Hazikaron*, *Maskil LeDavid*, and *Chiddushei Aggados Maharsha al Hatorah* (“*Amar HaMelaket*”) on Rashi here.

⁸ *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 78, sec. 9

⁹ *Avos DeRabbi Nassan*, ch. 34, sec. 4.

teaches us that Eisav did not intend to kiss Yaakov, but rather to bite him. Yaakov's neck then became like marble....” Rashi does not quote this because it does not fit well with the *pshat* of the verse: “and kissed him.”¹⁰ Additionally, according to this explanation, the dots do not serve to moderate the meaning of the words. Instead, the dots completely negate the literal meaning, as if they **erase** the words.

However, Rashi could have cited, from *Bereishis Rabbah*, the first opinion, that of Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar: “This teaches us that his mercy was aroused at that time, and he kissed Yaakov with all his heart.” After all, this opinion aligns with Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's opinion in *Sifri* (in particular, considering that **Rashi**, in his Torah commentary, quoted Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar's opinion earlier regarding the dotting:¹¹ “Wherever you find in a particular word or phrase that the letters in ordinary writing are more numerous than those dotted, you should offer a special explanation to those in ordinary writing....” [Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar actually begins his comments on our verse in *Bereishis Rabbah* with this teaching.]

In *Avos DeRabbi Nassan*, both opinions appear concisely and clearly: “This teaches that Eisav did not kiss him truthfully. Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar said this kiss was truthful, but all the other times {he kissed him} were not truthful.”

Why is Rashi careful: (a) to quote the wording of the *Sifri*; (b) to reference the source — “There is a dispute about this matter in a *beraisa* of *Sifri*”; (c) to mention the name of the author of the teaching (as it appears in *Sifri*) — **Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai**;¹² and (d) to begin the teaching by quoting, “It is a well-known halachah that Eisav hates Yaakov”? How is this relevant to *pshat* here? Moreover, the concluding words (which also appear in *Bereishis Rabbah*) — “Rather (this teaches us) that his mercy was aroused **at that time** and he kissed him with all his heart” — indicate clearly that in truth, before and **after**, Eisav hated Yaakov.

¹⁰ As *Maskil LeDavid* explains.

¹¹ Rashi on *Bereishis* 18:9.

¹² This is particularly perplexing since both other sources (*Bereishis Rabbah* and *Avos DeRabbi Nassan*) attribute this opinion to Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar.

4.

THE DOTS MODERATE

Ostensibly, we can answer the questions raised above (in Sections 2 and 3) as follows:

Both opinions agree that the dotting moderates the words “and kissed him.” The difference is that according to the opinion that “Eisav did not kiss him with all his heart,” the dotting “moderates” the concept of kissing in general, whereas according to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, the dotting “moderates” the **idea** of “kissed him” in **this verse**; that is, **Eisav** kissing **Yaakov**. Since “it is a well-known halachah that Eisav hates Yaakov,” we would assume that “kissed **him**” here means the type of kiss that Eisav (an enemy) would give Yaakov (not wholehearted). Thus, the dotting moderates the presumed meaning and teaches us that “kissed **him**” **here** means that **this** kiss was wholehearted.

On this basis, we can appreciate:

a) How both explanations fit well with the meaning of the dotting according to *pshat*. (Namely, the dotting serves to moderate the presumed meaning of the word that is dotted).

b) Why Rashi also quotes the second opinion (Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai) — because according to the first opinion, the dotting “moderates” the concept of kissing in general. Thus, the dots should only have been written with the words “and kissed.” In contrast, according to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, we can understand why the dotting covers the entire phrase, “and kissed him.”

c) Why Rashi quotes specifically this discussion from *Sifri* and not the discussion from *Avos DeRabbi Nassan*.¹³ This is because the particular wording of *Sifri* — “**It is a well-known halachah** that Eisav hates Yaakov, but his mercy was aroused at that time and he kissed him with all his heart” — specifically highlights the crux of this explanation. Without the dotting, we would have

¹³ As well as why Rashi does not quote Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar’s opinion in Bereishis Rabbah.

understood the words “and kissed him” to mean the kiss of a hater, as discussed above. Thus, the dotting serves to **moderate** the meaning of the phrase, “and kissed him.”

d) Why Rashi quotes the name of the author of the teaching (specifically according to this version) — Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. Rabbi Shimon¹⁴ is known for being the one “who expounds the reason underlying a verse.”¹⁵ Meaning that he does not focus on the words (and message) **in and of themselves**. Rather, he focuses on the words (together with, and furthermore) in light of their reasons. On this basis, we can appreciate how he understands the dotting to moderate, not the translation of the **phrase** “and kissed” itself (as the first opinion maintains). Consequently, it would have been irrelevant about **whom** the verses were speaking. Instead, he focuses on the meaning of the words as a **part** of the entire **context**.

Thus, in the context of “and kissed him” — Eisav kissing Yaakov — Rabbi Shimon “expounds the reason underlying the verse,” and we understand that he kissed him as an enemy. The dotting thus moderates the connotation of the word in this context and indicates that he kissed him with all his heart.

5.

HATRED OVERTURNED

But this explanation is not smooth:

In **all other** places in the Torah, the dots serve to “moderate” the meaning of the dotted **word**. Thus, it would be a stretch to suggest that here, the dots moderate the content of the **idea** that he “kissed him” {as a hater} **in our parshah**, but the meaning of the **word** itself is actually strengthened (“with **all** his heart”).

¹⁴ When Rabbi Shimon is mentioned without specifying {which Rabbi Shimon}, it refers to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (Rashi on *Shevuos* 2b, s.v., “*mishmo*”; Introduction to Rambam’s *Commentary on Mishnah*, s.v. “*haperek hashishi*”; *Seder HaDoros*, “Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai,” and the sources listed there; et al).

¹⁵ *Gittin* 49b.

Additionally, the following questions remain unclear:

- a) What does Rashi intend by saying that this dispute is in a ***beraisa in Sifri***?
- b) What is the significance of the words, “**It is a** (well-known) **halachah**” — seemingly, only the detail, “it is a well-known” is relevant here, as discussed above?!
- c) In most of the extant editions of *Sifri*, the wording (of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai’s statement) is: “Rather, his mercy was overturned.” Why does Rashi cite the words (as they appear in *Bereishis Rabbah*), “Rather, his mercy was aroused”?

6.

STICKING WITH *PSHAT*

The explanation for all the above questions:

Rashi’s aim is not to explain the meaning of the dots above the words “and kissed him.” This is because, as discussed on numerous occasions,¹⁶ Rashi does not explain (all) the dots found in the Torah scroll.¹⁷ Thus, the issue of the dots (similar to words spelled with extra or missing letters) is not a question on the level of ***pshat***. Thus, Rashi cannot explain these textual nuances when clarifying *pshat*.

However, in circumstances when there is already a question on, or a difficulty in, understanding *pshat*, Rashi (in many places) notes and explains the dots (or the missing letters, etc.) to explain *pshat*.

In our context, Rashi seeks to answer a question that arises in learning *pshat*: Since we know that “Eisav harbored hatred toward Yaakov”¹⁸ to the extent

¹⁶ *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 8, p. 62, fn. 8; vol. 15, p. 112.

¹⁷ They are listed in *Sifri* and *Avos DeRabbi Nassan*, *ibid*.

¹⁸ *Bereishis* 27:41.

that he wanted to kill Yaakov, how did Eisav’s feelings suddenly change from one extreme to the other — to feeling such love and endearment towards Yaakov? At the time of our narrative, Eisav “is still in **his hatred**,”¹⁹ and he was **then** on his way to wage war with Yaakov — he was “heading toward you and four hundred men are with him.”²⁰

Rashi, therefore, explains that “and he embraced him” was atypical — “Eisav’s mercy **tumbled forth**”; (the reason for this:) “when he saw him bowing with all of these bows.”

There is no disagreement regarding this issue, — according to **all** opinions, this is *pshat*.

However, “and kissed him” is something entirely different. This was not just a demonstration of great love to the extent that “he embraced him”; it indicated a tremendous feeling and arousal of great love in the heart to the extent that neither speaking nor embracing sufficed — he **kissed him**. (And the novice student of Scripture²¹ sees, in his own life, the uniqueness of the love expressed by a kiss over the love expressed by a hug in his relationship with his parents.) It does not make sense to say that as a result of Eisav seeing Yaakov “bowing with all of these bows” (and “Eisav’s mercy tumbled forth”), Eisav would **completely pivot** from one extreme to the other, from hating Yaakov and wanting to kill him to having such a great love that even after he embraced him, he felt compelled to kiss him.

To address this, Rashi says, “There are dots on this word.” In this context, the dots are relevant to *pshat*. The dots come to teach us (similar to dots in all places) that “and kissed him” was “**moderated**.” It was not a true kiss (a result of true love).

¹⁹ Rashi on *Bereishis* 32:7.

²⁰ *Bereishis* 32:7.

²¹ {In the Hebrew original, “*ben chamesh lemikra*.” Meaning “a five-year-old beginning to study Scripture.” This term, borrowed from *Pirkei Avos*, teaches that the appropriate age for a child to begin studying *Chumash* is at the age of five. Rashi wrote his commentary on *Chumash* to solve problems that a 5-year-old student would encounter in understanding the simple meaning of a verse.}

In light of this, Rashi explains: “There is a dispute about this matter.” This fact that the phrase “and kissed him” was not genuine can be explained in two ways: “There are those who expound this dotting to mean that Eisav did not kiss him with all his heart” (even though “he embraced him” and “Eisav’s mercy **tumbled forth**” [which led to him kissing him], and this was genuinely true.) The second opinion is: “His mercy was **aroused at that time**, and he kissed him with all his heart.” Meaning after he embraced him (which resulted from his mercy tumbling forth) “**at that time**” — when he embraced him — his mercy **was aroused**. He felt a vigorous and strong sensation²² to the extent that he kissed him with all his heart. However, since this feeling and Eisav kissing him with **all** his heart was only “**at that time**,” it is not considered true.

7.

THE LAW OF HATE

To emphasize that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai would agree that although Eisav kissed Yaakov wholeheartedly, it was not genuine and that the dots serve to “moderate” the words “and kissed him,” Rashi is careful to include the opening words of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai: “It is a well-known **halachah**....”

“Halachah” means a law, something that can never change. Even a novice student of Scripture {a five-year-old} (who has not yet begun to study Mishnah and Gemara) understands this. He sees in his daily life that a halachah (of the Torah) cannot be changed.

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai teaches us the same idea in our context. Eisav’s hatred for Yaakov never abates. This is because “it is a well-known **halachah** that Eisav hates Yaakov.” This is similar to an **actual** halachah, which never changes.

²² See Rashi on *Bereishis* 43:30 {where Rashi explains that the word “*nichmeru*” (translated here as “aroused”) means that it had been heated}. See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 15, p. 354 ff. for a detailed exploration of the word *nichmeru* (aroused) and its contrast to the word *nisgalgelu* (tumbled forth); however, see loc. cit., p. 348, fn. 5.*

The reason Eisav kissed Yaakov in this situation was only because “his mercy was aroused **at that time** and he kissed him with all his heart.”

We find a similar concept in halachah: At times, a *horaas shaah*²³ can be enacted that runs counter to halachah, as in the case involving the prophet Eliyahu on Mount Carmel.²⁴ Even while Eliyahu was offering the sacrifice, the halachah did not change — the law forbidding offering a sacrifice on an altar outside of the Temple stood firmly **even then**. However, **during that time**, the ruling was that he should offer the sacrifice on such an altar.

As we have **already** learned, Yaakov was a **wholesome** person.²⁵ However, Eisav’s **trickery** resulted in his father Yitzchak wanting to give him the blessings because “he was under the impression (as a result of Eisav tricking him) that Eisav was meticulous in fulfilling mitzvos”²⁶ — “your brother came **with trickery**.”²⁷

However, Yaakov’s **trickery** caused “he shall also be blessed.”²⁸ This is because his trickery was executed wisely.²⁹

²³ {In the Hebrew original, “*horaas shaah*”; lit., “a directive for a time,” which permits a ruling contrary to normative halachah in extraordinary circumstances.}

²⁴ **Rashi** on *Devarim* 23:13; **Rashi** on *Shoftim* 18:22. {Eliyahu challenged the idol-worshipping priests of the time to a contest on Mount Carmel wherein they would both offer sacrifices and see who could elicit a Heavenly fire. According to conventional *halachah*, sacrifices were prohibited outside the Temple; however, he did so because the circumstance mandated it.}

²⁵ *Bereishis* 25:27.

²⁶ Rashi on *Bereishis* 25:27.

²⁷ *Bereishis* 27:35.

²⁸ *Bereishis* 27:33.

²⁹ Rashi on *Bereishis* 27:35.

8.

SOME MORE ANSWERS

On this basis, we can also understand:

a) Why Rashi does not quote the dispute as it appears in *Avos DeRabbi Nassan*, “This teaches that Eisav did not kiss him truthfully. Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar said this kiss was truthful....” This is because according to **both** opinions, even according to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, this kiss was **not** “true.” This is because the truth never changes. The question here is only how untruthful the kiss was. According to the first opinion, Eisav did not {feel for and} kiss Yaakov wholeheartedly, even briefly. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said, “at that time... he kissed him with all his heart.” However, since “It is a well-known **halachah** that Eisav hates Yaakov,” even at that time, his feelings were not genuine.³⁰

b) Why Rashi does not quote the *Sifri*’s version (in the editions of *Sifri* that are available to us): “Rather, his mercy was **overturned**.” This would indicate that Eisav’s feelings were transformed from hate to true love at that time. But in reality, it was merely that “his mercy was **aroused**³¹ at that time” — at that moment, he felt the fiery rush of a strong feeling of mercy.

c) Why Rashi introduces this discussion by mentioning that it appears, “**in a beraisa of Sifri**.” Had Rashi not mentioned this detail, we may have presumed that the wording, “it is a well-known **halachah**,” refers to a halachah that is part of the **drash**³² dimension of Torah (that is, as the **concussion** of the *drash*).³³ Therefore, Rashi says that this discussion appears “in a *beraisa* of *Sifri*,” that is, it appears in the **halachah** part of the Torah. It is not a *drash* in

³⁰ For this reason, a river that stops flowing once every seven years is called “lying waters” and is invalid for sanctification for the *mei chatas* (tractate *Parah*, ch. 8, mishnah 9).

³¹ {*Nichmeru* — literally translated as heated or wormed.}

³² {In the Hebrew original, “*doresh*”; this term refers to the *drush* method of commentary, which is more analytical than *pshat*. It is an interpretive method of commentary in which the words of a verse are used as a platform to express an ostensibly extrinsic idea.}

³³ Similar to an instance in which *aggadah* is close to the straightforward understanding of the verse (see Rashi on *Bereishis* 3:8, et al).

the Midrash; rather, it is a halachah and law of Torah that Eisav hates Yaakov, as discussed above.

9.

PSHAT GOING BOTH WAYS

But we still need to clarify:

What compelling evidence does Rashi see in the *pshat* dimension of Torah indicating that “he kissed him with all his heart”? On the contrary, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai himself says, “It is a well-known halachah that Eisav hates Yaakov.” Rashi could have (and in fact, he should have) explained that “Eisav did not kiss him with all his heart.”

The explanation is as follows:

The entire context of the *parshah* indicates that Eisav was tremendously moved during that time. As the verse immediately continues, after he kissed Yaakov, “**they cried.**” This is an overt expression of intense feelings.

We also see this from Eisav’s words later in the story — “My brother, let what you have remain yours”³⁴ — to the extent, Eisav offers:³⁵ “Let me assign to you some of the people who are with me.”

Thus, according to *pshat*, it is difficult to suggest that this whole display was merely a front and that Eisav was not completely sincere.

Therefore, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai maintains that “his mercy was aroused at that time, and he kissed him with all his heart.”

³⁴ Bereishis 33:9.

³⁵ Bereishis 33:15.

On this basis, we can appreciate how these two explanations are equally valid according to *pshat* (for this reason, Rashi **prefaces**, “There is a dispute about this matter”). This is because both explanations share a correlated difficulty: According to the first explanation, “Eisav did not kiss him with all his heart,” the continuation of the *parshah* is challenging to understand because it indicates that the kiss was wholehearted. According to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, it is difficult to understand how “he kissed him **with all his heart**” because the narrative until this juncture portrays Eisav as completely hating Yaakov.

10.

RABBI SHIMON

A seasoned student may yet ask: At the end of the day, since Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai himself **emphasizes** how much Eisav despised Yaakov — “It is a well-known halachah that Eisav hates Yaakov” — how could it be that **specifically he** understood that “his mercy was aroused at that time and he kissed him with all his heart”?

Rashi alludes to the solution of this difficulty by mentioning the name of the author of this teaching, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.³⁶

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai lived during the Roman exile — Rome is Edom (“Eisav is Edom”)³⁷ — at a time of many harsh decrees against the Jewish people as a whole and against him as an individual. Indeed, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai had to flee from the Romans and take refuge in a cave for thirteen years.³⁸

Nevertheless, when the Sages needed someone to travel to Rome to persuade the Romans to annul a decree against the Jewish people, they appointed Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai because³⁹ “he was accustomed to

³⁶ This is in addition to the reason {for mentioning Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai’s name} that is discussed earlier at the end of sec. 4.

³⁷ *Bereishis* 36:1.

³⁸ *Shabbos* 33b.

³⁹ *Meilah* 17a ff.

experiencing miracles.” Notwithstanding the great hatred that the Roman empire felt towards the Jewish people (and to him specifically), Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai succeeded (miraculously): “{After the emperor saw that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai had cured his daughter,} he {the emperor} said to them {the Sages}: Ask from me any reward that you wish to ask. And he took them up to his treasury {to take whatever they wanted},” and in this way, Rabbi Shimon had the decree annulled.

Thus, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai understood the story of Yaakov and Eisav in the same light. Yaakov, who was accustomed to miracles,⁴⁰ succeeded in causing Eisav to have “his mercy was aroused at that time and he kissed him with all his heart” (even though “it is a well-known halachah that Eisav hates Yaakov”).

11.

HEALING FROM WITHIN

This idea also corresponds to the substance and content of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai’s *avodah*, according to the inner dimension of the Torah.

We find that after coming out of the cave, “Everywhere that Rabbi Elazar would strike, Rabbi Shimon would **heal**.”⁴¹ That is, Rabbi Shimon’s healing was an act done in consideration of and according to the world’s norms. This healing was, seemingly, at odds with the behavior appropriate for those “**whose occupation is Torah**.” Based on the conduct of **Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his colleagues**⁴² (and what they had in common) as scholars whose occupation was Torah, the appropriate response should have been, “Rabbi Elazar should strike.” Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai brought healing to the world by considering and engaging the world and **its** mode of conduct.

⁴⁰ See Rashi on *Bereishis* 32:11, s.v., “*ki vemakli*.”

⁴¹ *Shabbos* 33b. {Emerging from the cave, Rabbi Shimon and Rabbi Elazar saw people working in the fields who chose to spend their time making a livelihood over full-time Torah study. Their gaze ignited fires and destroyed these people. Hashem reprimanded them, and they returned to the cave for another 12 months. After they exited the second time....}

⁴² See *Shabbos* 11a.

Similarly, and even more so, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said, “I am able to absolve the entire world from judgment.”⁴³ **Absolution** implies that he would not cause all the world's people to repent. Instead, he could absolve the world in the state in which it was — liable to be treated with strict justice due to many undesirable things — he would “carry all **their sins**, and absolve them of strict justice.”⁴⁴

In a certain respect, this is a more significant accomplishment than making a change **in the world**. Were he to change the world, that which was “lower” would be elevated, making it no longer “lower.” That is, negativity would be nullified and transformed. In contrast, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai teaches that G-dliness can reach and affect the lower realms even as they remain in place as “lower realms” with their negativity.⁴⁵

The same applies in our context:

Yaakov did not cause Eisav to repent. Instead, Eisav remained in his state — “It is a well-known halachah that Eisav hates Yaakov.” But while in that state, “his mercy was aroused at that time, and he kissed him with all his heart.”

⁴³ *Sukkah* 45b.

⁴⁴ Rashi on *Sukkah* 45b.

⁴⁵ This resembles the advantage of when G-dliness is drawn down from the higher realms into the lower realms, compared to when the lower realms are elevated from the bottom up — see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 15, p. 195 and the sources cited there.

12.

FROM THE FOREST ITSELF

Thus, we derive a lesson with two diametrically opposed dimensions germane to the Edomite exile in general and to all times within this era:

On the one hand, we learn not to place our reliance on Gentiles, the kingdom of Edom. This is because “it is a well-known halachah that Eisav hates Yaakov.”

On the other hand, we learn that a Jewish person can awaken mercy in Eisav in his present state — “and he kissed him with all his heart.” Meaning a Gentile should help a Jew and give him everything he needs. Moreover, the Gentile aids the Jew to follow the path that he must.

This relationship is fostered when the Jew is confident in his observance of Torah and mitzvos even during the era of exile, and he is unaffected by Gentiles and Gentile culture. He tells Eisav, “I sojourned with the wicked Lavan, yet I kept the 613 mitzvos.”⁴⁶

In this way, we will merit to witness the **actual** fulfillment of that which is written in the *haftorah* of this *parshah*:⁴⁷ “The vision of Ovadiah. So says Hashem the L-rd **concerning Edom....**”⁴⁸ (“Ovadiah was an Edomite convert; and this is as people say: From and within the forest comes the ax to it.”)⁴⁹ We will merit to see through to the conclusion of the *haftorah*: “Deliverers will ascend to Mount Zion to judge the mount of Eisav, and the kingship shall be Hashem’s.”⁵⁰

⁴⁶ *Rashi* on *Bereishis* 32:5.

⁴⁷ According to the Chabad custom.

⁴⁸ *Ovadiah* 1:1.

⁴⁹ *Sanhedrin* 39b; in this source, **Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai** also mentions this saying {albeit, regarding King David}.

⁵⁰ *Ovadiyah* 1:21.

This prophecy was already foretold in our *parshah*. As a result of, “**and kissed him...** and he said ‘let us travel...,’”⁵¹ Yaakov replied: “...until **I come** to my master in Se’ir”⁵² — in the times of Moshiach, as the verse says, “Deliverers will ascend....”⁵³

May the deliverers ascend very soon with the complete and true redemption through our righteous Moshiach.

— From the talk delivered on Shabbos *parshas Vayishlach*, 5740 (1979)

⁵¹ {*Bereishis* 33:12.}

⁵² *Bereishis* 33:14.

⁵³ Rashi on *Bereishis* 33:14.