

Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Parashat Vayishlachch
December 5th, 2020 *** 19th Kislev, 5781

Kol Rina – An Independent Minyan, is a traditional egalitarian community. We are haimish (homey/folksy), friendly, participatory, warm and welcoming. We hold weekly services in South Orange as well as holiday services and celebrations which are completely lay led. We **welcome all** to our services and programs from non-Hebrew readers to Jewish communal and education professionals.

Vayishlach in a Nutshell

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/3197/jewish/Vayishlach-in-a-Nutshell.htm

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... and a list of the eight kings who ruled Edom, the land of Esau's and Seir's descendants.

Haftarah in a Nutshell: Obadiah 1:1-21.

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/596328/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm

This week's haftarah mentions the punishment of Edom, the descendents of Esau, whose conflict with Jacob is chronicled in this week's Torah reading. The prophet Obadiah, himself an Edomian convert to Judaism, describes the punishment destined for the nation of Edom. The Edomites did not come to Judea's aid when she was being destroyed by the Babylonians, and even joined in the carnage. Many years later the Edomites (the Roman Empire) themselves destroyed the Second Temple and mercilessly killed and enslaved their Jewish cousins.

Though the Roman Empire was one of the mightiest to ever inhabit the earth, the prophet forewarns: "If you go up high like an eagle, and if you place your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down, says the Lord. . . And the house of Jacob shall be fire and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau shall become stubble, and they shall ignite them and consume them, and the house of Esau shall have no survivors, for the Lord has spoken."

After describing the division of Esau's lands amongst the returning Judean exiles, the haftarah concludes with the well known phrase: "And saviors shall ascend Mt. Zion

to judge the mountain of Esau, and the Lord shall have the kingdom."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Be Thyself (Vayishlach 5781) by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l
<https://rabbisacks.org/vayishlach-5781/>

I have often argued that the episode in which the Jewish people acquired its name – when Jacob wrestled with an unnamed adversary at night and received the name Israel – is essential to an understanding of what it is to be a Jew. I argue here that this episode is equally critical to understanding what it is to lead.

There are several theories as to the identity of "the man" who wrestled with the patriarch that night. The Torah calls him a man. The prophet Hosea called him an angel (Hosea 12:4-5). The Sages said it was Samael, guardian angel of Esau and a force for evil.[1] Jacob himself was certain it was God. "Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared" (Gen. 32:31).

My suggestion is that we can only understand the passage by reviewing the entirety of Jacob's life. Jacob was born holding on to Esau's heel. He bought Esau's birthright. He stole Esau's blessing. When his blind father asked him who he was, he replied, "I am Esau, your firstborn." (Gen. 27:19) Jacob was the child who wanted to be Esau.

Why? Because Esau was the elder. Because Esau was strong, physically mature, a hunter. Above all, Esau was his father's favourite: "Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebecca loved Jacob" (Gen. 25:28). Jacob is the paradigm of what the French literary theorist and anthropologist Rene Girard called mimetic desire, meaning, we want what someone else wants, because we want to be that someone else.[2] The result is tension between Jacob and Esau. This tension rises to an unbearable intensity when Esau discovers that the blessing his father had reserved for him has been acquired by Jacob, and so Esau vows to kill his brother once Isaac is no longer alive. Jacob flees to his uncle Laban's home, where he encounters more conflict; he is on his way home when he hears that Esau is coming to meet him with a force of four hundred men. In an unusually strong description of emotion the Torah tells us that Jacob was "very frightened and distressed" (Gen. 32:7) – frightened, no doubt, that Esau was coming to kill him, and perhaps distressed that his brother's animosity was not without cause.

Jacob had indeed wronged his brother, as we saw earlier. Isaac says to Esau, "Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing." (Gen. 27:35) Centuries later, the prophet Hosea says, "The Lord has a charge to bring against Judah; he will punish Jacob according to his ways and repay him according to his deeds. In the womb he grasped his brother's heel; as a man he struggled with God." (Hos. 12:3-4) Jeremiah uses the name Jacob to mean someone who practises deception: "Beware of your friends; do not trust anyone in your clan; for every one of them is a deceiver [akov Yaakov], and every friend a slanderer" (Jer. 9:3).

As long as Jacob sought to be Esau there was tension, conflict, rivalry. Esau felt cheated; Jacob felt fear. That night, about to meet Esau again after an absence of twenty-two years, Jacob wrestles with himself; finally he throws off the image of Esau, the person he wants to be, which he has carried with him all these years. This is the critical moment in Jacob's life. From now on, he is content to be himself. And it is only when we stop wanting to be someone else (in Shakespeare's words, "desiring this man's art, and that man's scope, with what I most enjoy contented least" [3]) that we can be at peace with ourselves and with the world.

This is one of the great challenges of leadership. It is all too easy for a leader to pursue popularity by being what people want him or her to be – a liberal to liberals, a conservative to conservatives, taking decisions that win temporary acclaim rather than flowing from principle and conviction. Presidential adviser David Gergen once wrote about Bill Clinton that he "isn't exactly sure who he is yet and tries to define himself by how well others like him. That leads him into all sorts of contradictions, and the view by others that he seems a constant mixture of strengths and weaknesses." [4] Leaders sometimes try to 'hold the team together' by saying different things to different people, but eventually these contradictions become clear – especially in the total transparency that modern media impose – and the result is that the leader appears to lack integrity. People will no longer trust their remarks. There is a loss of confidence and authority that may take a long time to restore. The leader may find that their position has become untenable and may be forced to resign. Few things make a leader more unpopular than the pursuit of popularity.

Great leaders have the courage to live with unpopularity. Abraham Lincoln was reviled and ridiculed during his lifetime. In 1864 the New York Times wrote of him: "He has been denounced without end as a perjurer, a usurper, a tyrant, a subverter of the Constitution, a destroyer of the liberties of his country, a reckless desperado, a heartless trifler over the last agonies of an expiring nation." [5] Winston Churchill, until he became Prime Minister during the Second World War, had been written off as a failure. And soon after the war ended, he was defeated in the 1945 General Election. He himself said that "Success is stumbling from failure to failure with no loss of enthusiasm." When Margaret Thatcher died, some people celebrated in the streets. John F. Kennedy, Yitzchak Rabin and Martin Luther King were assassinated.

Jacob was not a leader; there was as yet no nation for him to lead. Yet the Torah goes to great lengths to give us an insight into his struggle for identity, because it was not his alone. Most of us have experienced this struggle. (The word *avot* used to describe Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, means not only "fathers, patriarchs" but also "archetypes"). It is not easy to overcome the desire to be someone else, to want what they have, to be what they are. Most of us have such feelings from time to time. Girard argues that this has been the main source of conflict throughout history. It can take a lifetime of wrestling before we know who we are and relinquish the desire to be who we are not.

More than anyone else in Genesis, Jacob is surrounded by conflict: not just between himself and Esau, but between himself and Laban, between Rachel and Leah, and between his sons, Joseph and his brothers. It is as if the Torah were telling us that so long as there is a conflict within us, there will be a conflict around us. We have to resolve the tension in ourselves before we can do so for others. We have to be at peace with ourself before we can be at peace with the world.

That is what happens in this week's parsha. After his wrestling match with the stranger, Jacob undergoes a change of personality, a transformation. He gives back to Esau the blessing he took from him. The previous day he had given him back the material blessing by sending him hundreds of goats, ewes, rams, camels, cows, bulls and donkeys. Now he gives him back the blessing that said, "Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you." (Gen. 27:29) Jacob bows down seven times to Esau. He calls Esau "my lord", (Gen. 33:8) and refers to himself as "your servant". (33:5) He actually uses the word "blessing", though this fact is often obscured in translation. He says, "Please take my blessing that has been brought to you". (33:11) The result is that the two brothers meet and part in peace.

People conflict. They have different interests, passions, desires, temperaments. Even if they did not, they would still conflict, as every parent knows. Children – and not just children – seek attention, and one cannot attend to everyone equally all the time. Managing the conflicts that affect every human group is the work of the leader – and if the leader is not sure of and confident in their identity, the conflicts will persist. Even if the leader sees themselves as a peacemaker, the conflicts will still endure.

The only answer is to "know thyself". We must wrestle with ourselves, as Jacob did on that fateful night, throwing off the person we persistently compare ourselves to, accepting that some people will like us and what we stand for while others will not, understanding that it is better to seek the respect of some than the popularity of all. This may involve a lifetime of struggle, but the outcome is an immense strength.

No one is stronger than one who knows who and what they are.[1] Bereishit Rabbah, 77; Rashi to Genesis 32:35; Zohar I, Vayishlach, 170a. [2] Rene Girard, Violence and the Sacred, Athlone Press, 1988. [3] Shakespeare, "Sonnet 29". [4] David Gergen, Eyewitness to Power (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 328. [5] John Kane, The Politics of Moral Capital, Cambridge University Press, 2001, 71.

[Having It All: Vayishlach by Matthew Berkowitz](http://www.jtsa.edu/having-it-all)

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After twenty years of estrangement, Jacob and Esau encounter one another yet again. Time has somewhat softened the bitterness and pain of the injustice done to Esau in Jacob's theft of the blessing. And Esau has come to his senses, realizing that the murder of his brother will not right the wrong committed under the aegis of his scheming mother. Still, at the beginning of our parashah, Jacob is so uncertain and fearful of the encounter between him and his brother that he plans for the worst—

dividing his family into two camps (lest one be destroyed, the other half will survive) and wrestling with the mysterious assailant (which portends his coming to terms with the misstep he committed so many years prior). Clearly, given what Jacob experienced in Laban's home, the blessing received from Isaac has yet to come to fruition. The moment of reconciliation between the two brothers is destined to be a liminal milestone that allows each of them to move forward with a full heart. Jacob seeks to repair the breach by bestowing gifts on Esau and his family. Ultimately, Esau, after gently refusing, will accept Jacob's gift. What does this material exchange teach us about these characters? And to what extent does this moving encounter give us a window into the journey that Jacob has been on over the last twenty years?

Regarding the encounter, the Torah relates:

And he [Esau] asked, "What do you mean by all this company which I have met?" Jacob answered, "To gain my Lord's favor." Esau said, "I have much (rav) my brother; let what you have remain yours." But Jacob said, "No, I pray you; if you would do me this favor, accept from me this gift; for to see your face is like seeing the face of God, and you have received me favorably. Please accept my present which has been brought to you, for God has favored me and I have everything (kol)." And when he urged him, Esau accepted. (Gen. 33:8–11)

Note well Esau's reply to Jacob's attempt at paying reparations for the damage from twenty years before: Esau acknowledges that he has *much*. Jacob on the other hand makes a similar statement, but rather than the Hebrew *rav* employs the Hebrew *kol*—as in Jacob has everything.

Rabbi Yehuda Leib Alter, author of the *Sefat Emet*, shares a beautiful commentary on this difference in language:

*The meaning of "all" seems to indicate more than Esau meant when he previously said, "I have much" (Gen. 33:9). But how can any person say "all"? Surely there were some things that he didn't have! But for one who is attached to the Divine, whatever he has is "all." For everything contains a point of divine life. In that point all is included. Thus the Midrash says, "all are considered blind," with regard to Hagar who found the well. This means that all is really found everywhere, because everything contains that godly life. That is why God is called shalem because every point of divine energy contains all. (Trans. Arthur Green, *The Language of Truth*, 52)*

According to this beloved commentator, Jacob's statement is not simply about his material wealth but about a deeper worldview reflecting his relationship with the larger world and with God. Those who can root themselves in and attach themselves to the Divine have a sense of wholeness and equanimity. They relate to their own lives and the people around them with fullness and joy (even though they clearly lack certain things, like every human being). It is a posture of gratitude that people like Jacob project to the world. In contrast, the one who has *much* may be incessantly acquisitive—seeking more and more and failing to live within more modest constraints. A posture

of *much*, the Sefat Emet writes, derives from “human hands”; a stance of *all*, of the unity connecting everything, has its roots in the Divine.

Esau and Jacob, seemingly from the beginning, represent two different and opposing worldviews. Esau, recall, is described as “a man ensconced in the art of hunting, a man of the field,” אִישׁ יָדָע צַדִּיק אֵשׁ שְׂדֵה and Jacob is called a “simple man, who sits within his home,” אִישׁ תָּם יֹשֵׁב אֹהֶל־לָם (Gen. 25:27). Esau’s way of life is far more deeply connected with the physical and human realm, while Jacob seems to be the character more deeply connected with the spiritual and divine aspects of life. Though many of us fall into one category or other, most of us find ourselves, at different points, wandering between these two poles. Sometimes we are more deeply connected to the physical, and sometimes we resonate with the Divine. But when all is said and done, it is the posture of *kol*, everything, that we seek and desire.

Last week, we celebrated Thanksgiving—a time which typically (in non-pandemic years!) is devoted to family reunions and appreciation. How different the world would be if we could embrace a posture of unity, wholeness, and satisfaction. To eschew acquisitiveness and go forward with an attitude of generosity of spirit is indeed what our world needs today—especially now. May we be inspired by this sacred reunion between brothers and hold fast to the view of Jacob all the days of our lives, approaching our world and God with a sense of fullness and peace. (*Matthew Berkowitz is Director of Israel Programs at JTS*)

[What Goes Around: Vayishlach 5781 by Rabbi Michael Rothbaum](https://ajr.edu/teachings/divreitorah/)

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The aphorism “what goes around comes around” is so ingrained in the English language as to seem timeless. I’d always assumed it was from a Shakespearean sonnet, or maybe one of Aesop’s fables.

But a little Googling reveals it to be of a much more recent vintage. The earliest citation I found was from an African American newspaper, The Pittsburgh Courier, in 1952. Today it refers to getting one’s comeuppance — and not in a good way. But in what appears to be the first time the phrase appeared in print, columnist Nat D. Williams uses it to express a positive sentiment. Williams writes with pride of African American athletes finally getting their chance to prove their ability in the Olympics and in Major League Baseball, offering Black spectators “a surge of pride in seeing the keen minds and well-balanced temperaments of dark-skinned Olympic competitors placed upon the world scales of sport.” This surge of pride was matched by a sense of justice, “that the scales do balance” — in Williams’ words, “that what goes around comes around... that life has its compensations.”

Nobody in Torah experiences more “what comes around goes around” moments than our patriarch, Jacob. The most famous instance is a negative one. Jacob is “repaid” for misrepresenting himself as his older brother Esau by subsequently being tricked into marrying his intended bride’s older sister.

In this week's parasha, Vayishlah, twenty years have passed since Jacob lied to his father and cheated his brother out of his paternal blessing. Word arrives that Esau himself will be "coming around." Backed with 400 of his closest buddies, he's on his way to meet Jacob by the river Yabok.

In abject terror, Jacob sends his wives and children ahead of him. He is left on the other side of the river, alone. If he is to be attacked, the family will be safe. The man who tore his family of origin apart as a youth is now obsessed with keeping his new family secure.

Alone, in the dark of nightfall, Jacob suddenly he finds himself in a struggle, wrestling with a mysterious, unnamed being. An angel? A man? The text tells us that "he saw he could not prevail against him," and "he struck the socket of his hip" ([Genesis 32:26](#)). The pronouns are confusing, ambiguous. He, him, he... which he is which?

Perhaps Jacob's sparring partner is not another being, but a part of Jacob himself. The kabbalists call the shadow part of ourselves the sitra aħra – in Aramaic, the "other side" (See, for example, [Zohar I:14b](#)). Jacob knows what he has done in the past – but he's never had to face it. And now, for the first time, he is forced to do just that.

In the narrative, there are a preponderance of words with similar letters. Ya'akov wrestles – va'yei'aveik – the letters are similar, but jumbled. During the night, Jacob's hip is dislocated b'hei'avko, "as he wrestled." Even the name of the river he crosses, Yabok, too, has the similar letters. The difference is the order. As Jacob struggles, he seemingly rearranges the very elements of his being.

What's gone around has come around. In the past, he might have run from this painful reality. But now, hip dislocated, that's no longer an option.

Jacob's internal struggle is clear in his reactions to the external one.

"Let me go!" one part of Jacob yells, as dawn breaks over the river Yabok. But the other side of Jacob is not ready for the encounter to end. He demands, "give me a blessing!" Why would Jacob need a blessing? Perhaps he is facing, for the first time, that the blessing he received from his father Isaac isn't really his. Like all of us, Jacob wants his own blessing.

Is Jacob ready? The mystery being tests him. "What is your name?" Jacob replies, "Jacob." The last time he was asked this question — covered in animal skins he did not procure, carrying food he did not prepare — Jacob lied to his father, "I am Esau, your first-born."

In our parashah, he finally tells the truth – to this man, to himself. And this Jacob is blessed with a new name. No more Ya'akov, no more pretending. Now you are Yisrael, he is told, because sarita imElohim – you have wrestled with Godliness and humanity and you have been found worthy of that struggle ([Genesis 32:29](#)).

Israel becomes the name of our people. To be a Jew is to wrestle – to confront the difficulties of being human, to confront the struggle of living with God.

Twenty years ago, Jacob the coddled adolescent ran away from himself. The sun set on him, and he slept in darkness. Now, Israel leaves his place of struggle limping, marked

by the journey, but now a witness to God's power. Esau sees as much, when he and Jacob reconcile after their painful exile from one another. As readers, we realize that the resolution of this fraternal conflict would not have been possible without Jacob's elemental, internal struggle.

In Talmud, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi teaches that the dust from Jacob's wrestling match "ascended to [God's] Throne of Glory" (Babylonia Talmud, Hullin 91a). Jacob must indeed face down his shadow side, but such a struggle is deeply Jewish and profoundly holy.

Facing our brokenness is humbling, and not without pain. But the ability to do so is also a divine gift. Like Jacob, we may be gripped by fear of the consequences. But Jacob stands as a timeless example of what might be. Rather than witnessing the violence of a vengeful brother — or a vengeful God — we as readers are witnesses to a spiritual transformation.

Jacob balances his own scales. He, himself, has come around. His example beckons to us as individuals, and perhaps as a nation, to do the same.

May we be as brave as Jacob, facing our own shadow side, balancing our own scales, building lives and communities of honest struggle and fierce love. (*Rabbi Michael Rothbaum ('06) is spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Elohim in Acton, Mass. He serves on the advisory boards of the Jewish Alliance of Law and Social Action (JALSA) and the New England Jewish Labor Committee, and is a member of T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights. He lives in Acton with his husband, Yiddish singer Anthony Russell.*)

I have decided to include an opinion piece from the New York Times written by Pope Francis. I hope that no one will be offended by this. It is adapted from his new book "Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future". It reminded me of something Rabbi Sacks would write. Please let me know if you found it offensive for me to include something from the Pope in the weekly brochure. I want to be sensitive to everyone in our chevra (group).

Pope Francis: A Crisis Reveals What Is In Our Hearts

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/26/opinion/pope-francis-covid.html?searchResultPosition=3>

To come out of this pandemic better than we went in, we must let ourselves be touched by others' pain.

In this past year of change, my mind and heart have overflowed with people. People I think of and pray for, and sometimes cry with, people with names and faces, people who died without saying goodbye to those they loved, families in difficulty, even going hungry, because there's no work.

Sometimes, when you think globally, you can be paralyzed: There are so many places of apparently ceaseless conflict; there's so much suffering and need. I find it helps to focus on concrete situations: You see faces looking for life and love in the reality of

each person, of each people. You see hope written in the story of every nation, glorious because it's a story of daily struggle, of lives broken in self-sacrifice. So rather than overwhelm you, it invites you to ponder and to respond with hope.

These are moments in life that can be ripe for change and conversion. Each of us has had our own "stoppage," or if we haven't yet, we will someday: illness, the failure of a marriage or a business, some great disappointment or betrayal. As in the Covid-19 lockdown, those moments generate a tension, a crisis that reveals what is in our hearts. In every personal "Covid," so to speak, in every "stoppage," what is revealed is what needs to change: our lack of internal freedom, the idols we have been serving, the ideologies we have tried to live by, the relationships we have neglected.

When I got really sick at the age of 21, I had my first experience of limit, of pain and loneliness. It changed the way I saw life. For months, I didn't know who I was or whether I would live or die. The doctors had no idea whether I'd make it either. I remember hugging my mother and saying, "Just tell me if I'm going to die." I was in the second year of training for the priesthood in the diocesan seminary of Buenos Aires.

I remember the date: Aug. 13, 1957. I got taken to a hospital by a prefect who realized mine was not the kind of flu you treat with aspirin. Straightaway they took a liter and a half of water out of my lungs, and I remained there fighting for my life. The following November they operated to take out the upper right lobe of one of the lungs. I have some sense of how people with Covid-19 feel as they struggle to breathe on a ventilator.

I remember especially two nurses from this time. One was the senior ward matron, a Dominican sister who had been a teacher in Athens before being sent to Buenos Aires. I learned later that following the first examination by the doctor, after he left she told the nurses to double the dose of medication he had prescribed — basically penicillin and streptomycin — because she knew from experience I was dying. Sister Cornelia Caraglio saved my life. Because of her regular contact with sick people, she understood better than the doctor what they needed, and she had the courage to act on her knowledge.

Another nurse, Micaela, did the same when I was in intense pain, secretly prescribing me extra doses of painkillers outside my due times. Cornelia and Micaela are in heaven now, but I'll always owe them so much. They fought for me to the end, until my eventual recovery. They taught me what it is to use science but also to know when to go beyond it to meet particular needs. And the serious illness I lived through taught me to depend on the goodness and wisdom of others.

This theme of helping others has stayed with me these past months. In lockdown I've often gone in prayer to those who sought all means to save the lives of others. So many of the nurses, doctors and caregivers paid that price of love, together with priests, and religious and ordinary people whose vocations were service. We return their love by grieving for them and honoring them.

Whether or not they were conscious of it, their choice testified to a belief: that it is better to live a shorter life serving others than a longer one resisting that call. That's why, in many countries, people stood at their windows or on their doorsteps to applaud them in gratitude and awe. They are the saints next door, who have awakened something important in our hearts, making credible once more what we desire to instill by our preaching.

They are the antibodies to the virus of indifference. They remind us that our lives are a gift and we grow by giving of ourselves, not preserving ourselves but losing ourselves in service.

With some exceptions, governments have made great efforts to put the well-being of their people first, acting decisively to protect health and to save lives. The exceptions have been some governments that shrugged off the painful evidence of mounting deaths, with inevitable, grievous consequences. But most governments acted responsibly, imposing strict measures to contain the outbreak.

Yet some groups protested, refusing to keep their distance, marching against travel restrictions — as if measures that governments must impose for the good of their people constitute some kind of political assault on autonomy or personal freedom! Looking to the common good is much more than the sum of what is good for individuals. It means having a regard for all citizens and seeking to respond effectively to the needs of the least fortunate.

It is all too easy for some to take an idea — in this case, for example, personal freedom — and turn it into an ideology, creating a prism through which they judge everything. The coronavirus crisis may seem special because it affects most of humankind. But it is special only in how visible it is. There are a thousand other crises that are just as dire, but are just far enough from some of us that we can act as if they don't exist. Think, for example, of the wars scattered across different parts of the world; of the production and trade in weapons; of the hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing poverty, hunger and lack of opportunity; of climate change. These tragedies may seem distant from us, as part of the daily news that, sadly, fails to move us to change our agendas and priorities. But like the Covid-19 crisis, they affect the whole of humanity.

Look at us now: We put on face masks to protect ourselves and others from a virus we can't see. But what about all those other unseen viruses we need to protect ourselves from? How will we deal with the hidden pandemics of this world, the pandemics of hunger and violence and climate change?

If we are to come out of this crisis less selfish than when we went in, we have to let ourselves be touched by others' pain. There's a line in Friedrich Hölderlin's "Patmos" that speaks to me, about how the danger that threatens in a crisis is never total; there's always a way out: "Where the danger is, also grows the saving power." That's the genius in the human story: There's always a way to escape destruction. Where humankind has to act is precisely there, in the threat itself; that's where the door opens.

This is a moment to dream big, to rethink our priorities — what we value, what we want, what we seek — and to commit to act in our daily life on what we have dreamed of.

God asks us to dare to create something new. We cannot return to the false securities of the political and economic systems we had before the crisis. We need economies that give to all access to the fruits of creation, to the basic needs of life: to land, lodging and labor. We need a politics that can integrate and dialogue with the poor, the excluded and the vulnerable, that gives people a say in the decisions that affect their lives. We need to slow down, take stock and design better ways of living together on this earth.

The pandemic has exposed the paradox that while we are more connected, we are also more divided. Feverish consumerism breaks the bonds of belonging. It causes us to focus on our self-preservation and makes us anxious. Our fears are exacerbated and exploited by a certain kind of populist politics that seeks power over society. It is hard to build a culture of encounter, in which we meet as people with a shared dignity, within a throwaway culture that regards the well-being of the elderly, the unemployed, the disabled and the unborn as peripheral to our own well-being.

To come out of this crisis better, we have to recover the knowledge that as a people we have a shared destination. The pandemic has reminded us that no one is saved alone. What ties us to one another is what we commonly call solidarity. Solidarity is more than acts of generosity, important as they are; it is the call to embrace the reality that we are bound by bonds of reciprocity. On this solid foundation we can build a better, different, human future. *(Pope Francis is the head of the Catholic Church and the bishop of Rome. This essay has been adapted from his new book "Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future," written with Austen Ivereigh.)*

Yahrtzeits

*Ken Kraus remembers his father David Kraus on Saturday December 5th (Kislev 19)

*Amy Cooper remembers her aunt Charlotte Stieglitz (Sora Duba bat Abraham) on Tuesday December 8th (Kislev 22).

*Russett Feldman and Nikki Pusin remember their father Max Nathaniel Pusin on Wednesday December 9th (Kislev 23).