Devora:
A Messenger Ignored in Life, but Mourned in Death?

R. Yaakov Bieler
Parashat VaYishlach, 5766

Each of the Parshiot of Beraishit focuses upon specific individuals and the fateful choices that they make which have ultimately contributed to the evolution of the Jewish people. Parshat VaYishlach is no different in this regard, and over the course of the Parsha (Beraishit 32:3-36:43), we empathize with Yaakov’s fears prior to his reunion with his brother Eisav who has every reason to be vengeful (32:3-18), the family has to respond to the rape of their daughter and sister Dina (34:1-31), Rachel dies while giving birth to Binyamin (32:16-21), and Reuven acts inappropriately towards Rachel’s handmaiden, Bilha (32:22).

However, in addition to considering the major protagonists in the events recorded in Beraishit, the “minor” characters that appear in these stories play intriguing roles as well. One such individual, mentioned in only two verses in the entire book of Beraishit, is Devora, the nursemaid of Rivka.

Beraishit 35:8
And Devora, Rivka’s nursemaid, died, and she was buried below Beit El, under an oak; and the name of it was called “Alon BaChut” (the oak of the cryings).

Commentaries attempt to answer two basic questions about this woman:

a) Why at this point is she traveling with Yaakov and his family?
b) What is the significance of mentioning her death, funeral, and place of interment?

With regard to the first question, it is necessary to consider the only other verse that may mention Devora, albeit indirectly, in Parshat Chaye Sara.

Beraishit 24:59
And they sent forth Rivka their sister and her nursemaid and the servant of Avraham (Eliezer) and his men.

On the one hand, the fact that Rivka is accompanied by her nursemaid when she leaves her family in order to marry, lends some support to the shocking Rabbinic

---

1[1] See RaMBaN below who suggests among his hypotheses that perhaps the nursemaid mentioned in 24:59 is not identical with Devora, but refers to another anonymous nursemaid.

2[2] Although this view is fairly widely cited by various Rabbinic sources, nevertheless to assume that Rivka was not only precocious enough at three to assert that she wanted to go with Eliezer in order to marry Yitzchak (24:58), but that she also would have been allowed to water her flock by herself (24:15) and was physically capable of filling her pitchers with water and offering the servant and his camels water to drink, begs credulity in terms of our experience with the cognitive and physical maturity of three year olds. Even if the verses in the Bible force us to grant that longevity in Beraishit runs far in excess of current life expectancy, does this necessarily mean that concurrently, maturity was achieved at an earlier point by most people of the time? Or is it necessary to assume that Rivka was an exception and simply preternaturally more developed than the average person both now and then? Of course there is also the position adopted by Tosafot in Yevamot 61b:
view that she was only three years old at the time that she agrees to become Yitzchak’s wife. Ibn Ezra on 24:59 neatly sidesteps the issue of Rivka possibly being exceedingly young at this juncture, when he modifies “nursemaid” with the phrase “in days gone by”, i.e., Rivka had long outgrown needing Devora to serve her in her original capacity, but rather took her servant along as perhaps a chaperon.

{Talmud: Concerning the following verse—[VaYikra 21:14] “A widow, or a divorced woman, or a ‘Chalala’ [the daughter of a Kohen and a woman who is prohibited for him to marry, e.g., a divorcée], or a prostitute he [a Kohen Gadol] cannot marry. But he shall marry a ‘Betula’ [a virgin] of his own people as a wife.”
It is taught: A “Betula”—the only meaning is a “Na’ara” [a girl between the ages of 12 and 12 ½]. And so it is stated in the Bible, [Beraishit 24:16] “And the ‘Na’ara’ was very fair to look upon, a ‘Betula’. [This proof text is referring to Rivka when Eliezer meets her for the first time. Consequently if we are describing Rivka as a “Na’ara”, she cannot by definition be three years old! Tosafot’s question concerns the reconciliation of the interpretation in the Talmud with the Rabbinic tradition of Rivka being much younger at this time.]

Tosafot: It is a question, that here (in Yevamot) it implies that Rivka was a “Na’ara”, and in Seder Olam, Chapt. 1 (a Rabbinic text that provides a chronology for the major events in Jewish tradition and history) we learn explicitly that she was three when she married Yitzchak. And it is impossible to simply correct/change the text (in Seder Olam) because it is taught there:
Our father Yitzchak was 37 at the time of the “Akeida” (when Avraham bound him as a sacrifice in Beraishit 22. This is derived by the following calculation—the text states immediately after the “Akeida” that Sara was 127 at the time of her death (Beraishit 23:1), and it had been previously stated that she was ninety when she gave birth to Yitzchak (17:17). Assuming that her death coincided with the “Akeida” (see RaShI on 23:2), that results in Yitzchak being 37 at the time of the “Akeida”), and it is at that very time that Rivka was born (Rivka’s birth is recorded in the verses immediately following the “Akeida”, in 22:23, leading to the conclusion that her birth coincided with Yitzchak’s being 37). Furthermore, it is written (25:20) “And Yitzchak was 40 when he married Rivka…” This results in the conclusion that she was 3 at the time of her marriage.
And Rabbi Shmuel HeChasid of Spires proves that she was 14, since it is taught in Siphre Devarim 357:7,

There were six pairs who achieved the same age: 1) Rivka and Kehat, 2) Levi and Amram, 3) Yosef and Yehoshua, 4) Shmuel and Shlomo, 5) Moshe and Hillel HaZaken, and 6) R. Akiva and R. Yochanan ben Zakai.
And Kehat lived to the age of 133, as it is stated in the biblical text (Shemot 6:18), and if Rivka was 14 at the time of her marriage, then the calculation is substantiated, since when Yaakov was born, she was 34 (Beraishit 25:26 states that Yitzchak was 60, i.e., 20 years older than he had been at the time of his marriage, when the twins were born. Consequently, if it is assumed that Rivka was 14 when she married, she was 34 when she gave birth). Yaakov was 99 when Rivka died, i.e., when she was 133. This can be demonstrated by the following: When Yaakov received Yitzchak’s blessing (Beraishit 27), he was 63, since it was at that time that Yishmael died (this is assumed due to superfluous language in 28:9, where after stating that Eisav when to Yishmael in order to marry one of his daughters, the text identifies the daughter as “Machalat bat Yishmael”). RaShI quotes the Talmud Megilla as understanding the extra language as revealing that Yishmael died after the engagement but before the wedding. Since Eisav goes to Yishmael immediately after Yaakov leaves to find a wife of his own, it is concluded that Yishmael’s death coincides with the time of Yaakov’s departure.) Yishmael was 137 at the time of his death (25:17), and since we know that Yishmael was 14 years older than Yitzchak (the year before Yitzchak is born, Yishmael is 13 in 17:25), and that Yitzchak was 60 when the twins were born, making Yishmael 74 at that time, Yaakov is therefore 63 years old at the time that he leaves home and Yishmael dies. According to Megilla 17a, Yaakov spends 14 years in the Yeshiva of Shem and Eiver, before continuing on to Lavan where he spends 20 years (31:41), travels another 2 years (see RaShI on 33:17), when Rivka dies as is interpreted in Kohelet Rabba on the verse 35:8 “An oak of crying”—two causes for crying, crying for Rivka as well as for her nursemaid, Yaakov’s age therefore adding up to 99.
And (in light of the two traditions of Rivka either being 3 or 14 at the time of her wedding) it is necessary to say that these are Midrashim that are at odds with one another (i.e., it is impossible to reconcile these two traditions).
confidant, or even as someone who Rivka would count on to raise her own children, once she bore them.

24:59 establishes how Devora traveled from Lavan’s home in Charan, where she had originally taken care of Rivka, to the encampment of Avraham in Canaan, where her charge marries the scion of the family. However, at the time of her death, she was once again traveling, this time with Yaakov and his wives and children. Apparently she had not remained in Canaan, but had returned to Charan at some point, only to later take advantage of Yaakov’s departure from Lavan’s home to try to once again visit Canaan, perhaps to see Rivka one last time.

But when did Devora’s comings and goings take place? It is in this regard that commentators have little biblical text to go on, and therefore are able to be ingenious and imaginative with regard to their respective hypotheses.\[3\] RaMBaN offers four possibilities, one of which he rejects out of hand:

RaMBaN on 35:8
1) And Devora was with Yaakov, because once she had accompanied Rivka (in 24:59), she returned to her land.\[4\] And now she comes with Yaakov to see her mistress.
2) Or, she took on the responsibilities of raising Yaakov’s children out of honor for Rivka and love for her, and for this reason she was in Yaakov’s home.
3) It is also possible that she (Devora) is not the same nursemaid concerning whom it had been stated (24:59) “And they sent forth Rivka their sister and her nursemaid...”, but rather she was a different nursemaid who had remained in the home of Betuel and Lavan, and now Yaakov was bringing her with him to support her in her old age in order to show honor to his mother, for it is common for important people to have a number of nursemaids.

\[3\] R. S.R. Hirsch apparently feels that the paucity of text does not allow for advancing one point of view in favor of another:

R. S.R. Hirsch on 35:8
How this old lady (Devora) who in any case must have been very advanced in years, found herself in Yaakov’s company, is not told. Whether she, as some suppose, had been sent by Rivka with a message, or had gone with him from Lavan’s house in order to see her former nursling, as RaMBaN suggests, are only suggestions...

R. Hirsch’s refusal to take a position with regard to this matter is intriguing. Since he had the option to state that both of the possibilities cited by others could simultaneously have been correct, i.e., she originally went on a mission for her mistress and now was attempting to return to her, suggests that R. Hirsch thinks neither to be particularly convincing. Perhaps R. Hirsch agrees with RaMBaN’s last point listed above, i.e., that a person so advanced in years would hardly have been entrusted to bring a message to Yaakov, and that once she would have returned to Charan, given her age, she would not have been able to make yet another arduous trip to Canaan, no matter how much she would have wished to see Rivka again.

\[4\] Such an assumption parallels what might have taken place with regard to Yitro. Once Moshe’s father-in-law reunites his daughter and grandsons with their husband and father in Shemot 19, it is unclear what he does subsequently. In BaMidbar 10:29-32, a conversation is recorded between Moshe and his father-in-law “Chovav”. (The Midrash Tanchuma, Shemot 11:11 states, for example, that Yitro, in addition to his given name, had a number of descriptive names, which could account for this apparent inconsistency.) Chovav/Yitro apparently desires to return to Midyan his homeland, and Moshe tries to convince him to stay with the Jewish nation. While Moshe has the last word in verse 32, it is unclear whether Chovav/Yitro’s silence indicates consent or refusal to listen. Short of an individual choosing to accept the Jewish way of life, it is understandable why people such as Devora and Yitro would have preferred to eventually resume living in the lands in which they grew up and were most familiar.
4) **But it is highly unlikely** that this old woman was the messenger that his mother had sent to Yaakov, according to the words of R. Moshe HaDarshan.

While RaMBaN dismisses R. Moshe HaDarshan’s explanation for Devora’s presence as too fantastical, RaShI and Chizkuni depend upon this theory as their sole explanation for why the nursemaid was traveling with Yaakov at the time of her death.

**RaShI on 35:8**

“And Devora died”—What is Devora doing in the house of Yaakov? But because Rivka had said to Yaakov, (27:43-5) “And now my son, listen to my voice and rise and flee to Lavan, my brother, to Charan. And you will dwell with him a few days until the anger of your brother dissipates. Until the time that the fury of your brother abates from you, and he forgets what you have done to him, and I will send for you and I will take you from there...” She sent Devora to Padan Aram that he should go out from there, and she died on the way (back).

**Chizkuni on 35:8**

RaShI asked, “What is Devora doing in the house of Yaakov”, i.e., how could Devora have been part of Yaakov’s household? Behold, he (Yaakov) stated, (32:11) “I am too insignificant/undeserving of all of the kindnesses and the true justice that You (HaShem) have Done on behalf of your servant (Yaakov), because with (only) my staff did I cross this Jordan (on my way out of Canaan, while traveling to Charan, I had nothing, including the company of Rivka’s nursemaid Devora) and now I am two encampments (Yaakov is marveling at the rapid growth of his family and possessions over the course of the twenty years that he spent with Lavan).” But rather it is to teach that Rivka sent Devora after Yaakov to bring him back... **And he did not wish to return**, causing Devora to remain with Yaakov in Lavan’s house, and she died on the way while still with Yaakov...

According to RaShI, it is possible that as soon as Devora arrived and delivered Rivka’s message, Yaakov began planning to leave Lavan’s home. Perhaps Devora’s coming to Charan coincided with HaShem’s Instructions to Yaakov in 31:3, and Yaakov therefore should not be accused of any undo delay with respect to his return to his parents in Canaan. Chizkuni, on the other hand, insists that Devora and the message that she carried were essentially ignored by Yaakov—“**And he did not**...
wish to return”. Rather than any specific message from his mother, the biblical text implies that there were two distinct catalysts for Yaakov’s decision to leave: a) (31:1-2) Overheard mutterings on the parts of Lavan’s sons as well as Lavan himself suggesting not only no love lost for Yaakov, but inordinate jealousy of the material success he had achieved, and b) (31:3) God’s Commandment to return to Canaan.7[7]

Chizkuni’s assumption leads us to wonder about just how long did Yaakov force Devora to wait, before acting upon her message? From a legal and moral point of view, the earliest Yaakov could have left was after 14 years, since he had agreed to such a term of servitude in exchange for the privilege of marrying Leah and Rachel (29:18, 20, 27-8).8[8] And indeed once the fourteen years had been completed, marked by the birth of Rachel’s first child Yosef, Yaakov requested permission from Lavan to leave (see RaShBaM on 30:25). Chizkuni’s assertion that Yaakov ignored Rivka’s plea to return must therefore assume that Devora arrived at some point during the ensuing six years (Yaakov emphatically states to Lavan that he had worked for him faithfully and honestly for a total of 20 years in 31:41), when Yaakov was willingly9[9] engaged in acquiring for himself great herds of speckled, spotted and brown sheep and goats.

If such a line of reasoning is substantiated, then we can understand that Yaakov found himself confronting a difficult dilemma: On the one hand, assuming that he believed that Devora was telling the truth regarding his mother’s request that he now return to Canaan, there is the consideration of “Kibud Eim” (respecting one’s mother) either exclusively in religious terms, or with respect to the special emotional connection that the text attests existed between Yaakov and Rivka (25:28).

7[7] While Yaakov could justify being suspicious of any message delivered by way of a human being, even someone like Devora, he could not sanguinely dismiss an objective, Divine Order. And if Eisav had not actually made peace with the past, then it was God’s Will that the two brothers confront one another nevertheless.

8[8] It is possible that Yaakov could have justified walking out on Lavan before the 14 years had passed because of the dishonest manner in which Lavan treated him. Switching Leah for Rachel (29:23) was an incredibly egregious thing to do; perhaps Yaakov felt that in order to eventually be permitted to marry Rachel, he would have to allow himself to be victimized by his father-in-law. However, the “Geneivat Da’at” (lit. stealing one’s mind; see http://www.kmsynagogue.org/VaYetze2.html) that Yaakov perpetrates upon Lavan in 31:20 certainly has its roots in how Lavan approaches Yaakov early on. In addition to being forced into a marriage with Leah, Yaakov, in 31:7, 41 suggests that Lavan had arbitrarily and unfairly changed the terms of Yaakov’s employment, outlined in 30:31-42, a number of times. RaMBaN on 31:8 suggests that each year of the additional 6 that Yaakov remained with Lavan, Lavan kept changing the terms, one year agreeing that Yaakov should keep the new-born spotted and speckled animals; the next year, after seeing Yaakov’s success with respect to how many of the newborns fell into the category of those belonging to Yaakov, insisting upon his son-in-law’s retaining only the solid-colored sheep and goats. Some commentators note that Yaakov’s apparent manipulation of using notched sticks to inspire certain colorations in the newborns (30:37-9, 41), which he attributes to a Divine Revelation (31:10-12), would not have not been necessary had Lavan not kept trying to gain an unfair advantage within the arrangement. Nevertheless, attempting to maintain one’s own sense of integrity and morality in the face of ongoing exploitation and dishonesty is a severe challenge which Yaakov, at least for the most part, seems to successfully achieve during his 20 year tenure. Yaakov attests to his honest approach to Lavan despite all that was done to him in 31:38-40. This is also the sense of RaShI’s famous comment on 32:5, wherein Yaakov catches up Eisav regarding what he has been doing these past 20 years:

RaShI on 32:5
“Im Lavan Garti” (With Lavan I have sojourned)----Another interpretation: “Gar”‘s numerical value (“Gimel” = 3; “Reish” = 200; “Taf” = 400; “Yud” = 10, = 613) is 613, as if to say, “With the evil Lavan I have sojourned and (nevertheless) the 613 Commandments I have observed. I have not “learned” (internalized, made my own) from his evil deeds.

9[9] No one forces Yaakov to accept Lavan’s offer in 30:28. In fact, Yaakov sets initial terms himself, and Lavan agrees. Although as is indicated in fn. 8 Lavan does his best to undermine the agreement, it would appear that Yaakov willingly enters into it.
However, the desire to comply with Rivka’s message to return to Canaan is powerfully countered by the urge to make himself independently wealthy, perhaps justifying such a desire by thinking that this was the means by which Yaakov was meant to achieve the fulfillment of Yitzchak’s blessing to him in 28:4! Prior to Yaakov leaving for Charan, Yitzchak had stated that the Blessing that HaShem originally Conferred upon Avraham, should now pass to Yaakov. According to RaShI on 12:2, Avraham’s original Blessing contained three provisions:

**Beraishit 12:2**
1) And I will Make you into a great nation,
2) and I will Bless you,
3) and I will Make your name great
and you will be a blessing.10[10]

**RaShI on 12:2**
Because traveling (HaShem had Commanded Avraham in 12:1 to leave his birthplace and take up residence in Canaan) causes three (negative) things: it interferes with having children, it imposes limitations upon one’s acquiring wealth, and it diminishes the ability of one to make a name for him/herself. Therefore Avraham was in need of these three Blessings (to counteract the detrimental aspects of what HaShem Wishes him to do). He Promises him concerning offspring, acquiring possessions and the proliferation of his name and reputation. “VaAvorechecha” (And I will Bless you)—with wealth.

Just as Rivka found herself in possession of a Divine Prophecy (25:23) regarding the future interrelationship of her twin sons, Yaakov and Eisav, and decided to take matters into her own hands and attempt to assure the prophecy’s fulfillment (27:5-17), perhaps Yaakov too had to decide whether or not remaining with Lavan was the long-awaited opportunity to not only marry and have children, but also to position himself in order for the Divine Blessing that his father gave him to begin to take effect. Assuming that one is not supposed to completely passively await the fulfillment of a Prophecy or Blessing, in the spirit of “Ein Somchin Al HaNeis” (one must not rely exclusively on the performance of a miracle), but rather to do one’s part so that such a Divine Pronouncement can be fulfilled, doubts always arise regarding when one is not doing enough, countered by when one might either be doing too much or choosing the wrong course of action in order to help along HaShem’s “Hashgacha Pratit” (Personal Intervention). Could Yaakov’s decision to put Devora’s message “on hold” have been based upon such a spiritual conflict? Or should we assume a less prophetic and more material temptation driving Yaakov’s decision, i.e., now that he had such a large family, he needs to be able to support them, and wishes to accumulate enough wealth in order that he could meet his domestic obligations. By the Tora’s avoidance of describing the internal thoughts and feelings of the individuals whose actions are recorded, we are left to try to sort out such motivations for ourselves.

Turning to Devora’s death and funeral in 35:8, while some commentators opine that the Tora is emphasizing how appreciative we must be to those who raise and educate us during even our most formative years, e.g.,

10[10] The last phrase is understood as an assurance that the three aspects of the Divine Blessing will be so obvious and profound, that others, when wishing to bless someone, will use Avraham as their prototype of a blessed individual. This is the same sentiment contained in 48:20.
ShaDaL on 35:8
...Certainly the moral of this story is to teach us the positive attribute to honor even the nursemaid who exerts great effort in order to raise the nursling, even once the child grows up. This is especially true in this case (Devora) who left her homeland and the house of her father in order to go with Rivka.

Ta'am VaDa’at on 35:8
...It would appear that the intent of the Tora is to emphasize the importance of upbringing/education from the very beginning, and so we heard regarding the Vilna Gaon, ZaTzal, that even once he had grown older and risen in prestige, he never forgot his teacher who taught him from his earliest years, and who established the basic foundations of his education...

most sources adopt the Rabbinic tradition that the mourning ostensibly shown for Devora’s passing in fact reflected the grief that resulted from having learned that her mistress, Rivka had also died at this time. Such a position is bolstered by the Tora mentioning that when Yaakov returned to Canaan, he saw only his father, Yitzchak.

Beraishit 35:27
And Yaakov came to Yitzchak, his father, to Mamre, to the city of Arba, which is Chevron, where Avraham and Yitchak had lived.

Given the aforesaid special relationship between mother and son, it would have been expected that some reference to a reuniting of the two would have been recorded, if it had indeed taken place; hence the conclusion that it never came about due to Rivka’s earlier death.11[11] 12[12] If Chizkuni’s assumption about Yaakov’s

11[11] It is strange to note that the Tora is uneven in terms of describing the deaths of the matriarchs: Sara’s death, mourning and burial is described extensively at the beginning of Parshat Chaye Sara (23:1-20). While Rachel’s death is not given the same detailed treatment, nevertheless, it plays a prominent role in the story of Yaakov (35:16-20). In contrast, we are told nothing about the deaths of Rivka, Leah, Bilha and Zilpa. Only in passing, as part of the instructions concerning his own burial just before he himself dies, does Yaakov mention that both Rivka and Leah were buried in the Ma’arat HaMachpeila that contains the remains of Avraham, Sara and Yitzchak as well (49:31). It could be maintained that in contrast to the demises of Rivka, Leah and the two handmaidens, the deaths of Sara and Rachel played significant parts in the overall story of Beraishit—the acquisition of a burial place for the entire family, and the burial of a Matriarch in a place other than Chevron due to her premature death during the birth of Binyamin. However, given that Yaakov had such a close relationship with his mother, one can understand why we would have expected some type of description of his reaction to her passing, just as we are stymied why Yitzchak, who had clearly been championed by his mother Sara, is nowhere to be found during Sara’s mourning period and burial—see Beraishit 23.

12[12] The standard Midrashic explanation for why Rivka’s death is not discussed directly in the Tora text, has to do with the low-key nature of her funeral.

Midrash Tanchuma, Ki Tetze, Chapt. 4
What is the implication of (Tehillim 58:4) “The wicked are estranged from the womb; they are estranged from birth, speaking lies”?...and the Rabbis say that he (Eisav) caused her coffin not to be given a public procession. You find that when Rivka died, they said, “Who will walk before the body? Avraham has died; Yitzchak sits at home because he cannot see; Yaakov went to Padan Aram; should Eisav the evil one walk before her bier? Everyone will say, ‘Cursed is this one’s (Rivka’s) existence. This one (Eisav) she nursed?’” (i.e., rather than the funeral being a celebration of Rivka’s life and accomplishments, it would be the cause for her being derided and criticized.) What did they do? They conducted the procession at night so that Eisav would not go before her (it is implied that they buried Rivka without Eisav’s knowledge. Otherwise, what difference would it have made to
ignoring his mother’s message being delivered by her nursemaid, is correct, then one can understand the incredibly devastating effect that the news of Rivka’s death finally has upon Yaakov. As children so often do, he was under the impression that his parents would live forever, and that there would always be time to see them. Fearing Eisav’s possible wrath probably also contributed to his rationalizations and justifications to stay away. But when faced with the realization that he could have and should have returned earlier, and now he would never be reunited with Rivka, Yaakov has to deal with the guilt arising from his procrastinations and self-absorption for all of these many years. Not only might Yaakov have been crying for Devora to whom he did not listen, and for Rivka, whom he never again saw, but also for himself and the errors of his ways.

Shabbat Shalom, and may we have the insight to know when and where to be and what and how to do things so that we live up to our responsibilities to not only fulfill ourselves, but to care for and respect all those who are near to us and depend upon us.

---

him whether the funeral was at night or during the day?) This was to avoid people saying, “Cursed are the breasts that nursed this evildoer!” Said R. Yose BeRav Chanina: Because they took out her coffin at night, for this reason the verses did not explicitly refer to her death, but rather only in an oblique manner, as it is said, (35:8) “And Devora, Rivka’s nursemaid died...and they called the place ‘the Oak of Cryings’, ” that they engaged in two “cryings” (acts of mourning). At the very time that Yaakov was engaged in mourning and guarding the remains of her (Rivka’s) nursemaid, news of his mother’s death reached him, as it is said, (35:9) “And HaShem Appeared to Yaakov while he was on his way, coming from Padan Aram and He Blessed him.” What blessing did He Bless him with? The Blessing said to mourners. Therefore it is written, (Tehillim 109:14) “...And let not the sin of his mother be blotted out.” Said the Holy One, Blessed Be He, “His father, he treated him badly; his mother, he treated her badly (see 26:34-5 where both Yitzchak and Rivka are upset at Eisav choices for wives); his brother, he treated badly (27:41); his grandfather, he treated badly (this is a reference to Avraham’s life being shortened by five years in order that he not witness Eisav’s immoral, murderous and idolatrous behavior—see RaShI on 25:30); you, he has treated badly (a reference to the attacks upon the Jewish people following the Exodus in Shemot 17:8-16). I will Treat him badly since his descendants (Edom, the Romans) destroyed My House (the Temple). I and you will Avenge Ourselves upon him, as it is said, (Ovadia 1:1) “...Arise and let us go up against her (Edom) in battle.” Israel said, “Master of the Universe! We cannot defeat him.” The Holy One, Blessed Be He Said to them, “You continue to remember his name below, and I will Obliterate his name above, as it is said, (Tehillim 109:15) “Let them be before HaShem continually, and He will Cut off the memory of them”...