

PARSHAT VAYESHEV
GENESIS 37:1-40:23
HAFTARAH ZECHARIAH 2:14-47
FIRST NIGHT OF CHANUKAH/HANUKKAH
24 KISLEV 5784/07 DECEMBER 2023



La Cinquieme Saison
Oil on canvass by Rene Magritte

THE BEWILDERING OF SERENE FAITH

1. “And Jacob settled” (Genesis 37:1). After Scripture has written for you of the settlings of Esau, it explains for you the settlings of Jacob and his offspring....Jacob sought to dwell in tranquility. But then the *rogez* of Joseph sprung upon him [קפץ עליו רגזו של יוסף]. The righteous seek to dwell in tranquility. But the Holy Blessed One said, “The righteous do not consider that which is prepared for them in the world to come to be enough for them; they seek to dwell in tranquility in this world as well!” (Rashi at 37:1, 2)

רָגַז - be agitated, perturbed; רִגְזוֹ - agitation

2. “Jacob settled in the land of Canaan, in the land of his father’s sojournings [*megurei aviv*].” (37:1) He settled in the land of his father’s fear [*megurei aviv*] and in the land of Canaan, of humility [*kana*] - and he sought to dwell in peace. This peace obtains when a person behaves in such a way as to keep far from all doubt, and guards himself from any evil act. That is the modality of peace. But in response to Jacob’s desire for such peace, God told him that as long as a human being lives in a bodily experience, it is impossible to behave with extreme wariness and fear and humility. For God wants human acts, and in this world human beings must act in love, in ways that are not completely clarified. (Ishbitzer, Mei HaShiloach)

גור - to sojourn; גַּר - sojourner

גור - to stir up strife; מַגֹּר - fear, terror

3. In a sense, God turns Jacob’s quest away from philosophy, from the search for certainties, to the world of poetry. Poetic language is the loving act of the human being, who seeks to redescribe his reality, in the midst of, and against. *teruf*. (Avivah Zornberg, *The Beginnings of Desire*)
4. Surprised by joy—impatient as the Wind
I turned to share the transport—Oh! with whom
But Thee, long buried in the silent Tomb,
That spot which no vicissitude can find?
(“Surprised by Joy” by William Wordsworth)