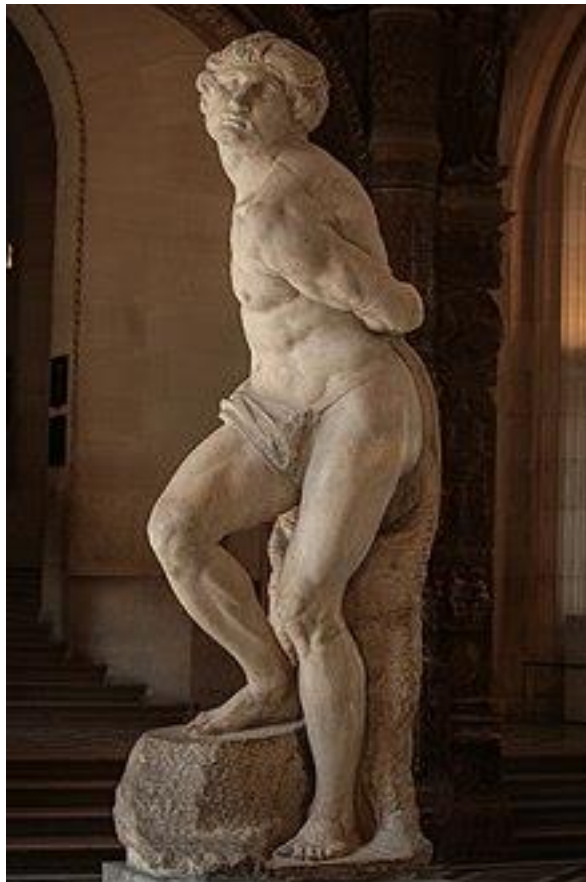


PARSHAT VAYESHEV  
GENESIS 37:1-40:23  
HAFTARAH AMOS 2:6-3:8  
19 KISLEV 5785/19 DECEMBER 2024



*The Rebellious Slave*  
Marble sculpture by Michelangelo

## THE BEAUTY OF UNCERTAINTY

1. לְמִשְׁבֵּתָם בְּאֶרֶץ אֱחָזָתָם הוּא עָשׂוּ אָבִי אֱדוֹם...

This is the line of Esau...(These are the tribal chiefs of Edom), that is of Esau, the progenitor of the Edomites, according to their **settlements** in the lands that they possessed. (Genesis 36:1, 43)

וַיֵּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב...

Jacob **settled** in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan. This is the line of Jacob...Joseph... (Genesis 37:1-2)

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 - v., to sojourn; גַּר – n., sojourner, temporary dweller

גור - v., to stir up strife; מְגוּר – n., fear, terror

3. The Ishbitzer suggests an eternal oscillation between extremes of fear and love, certainty and courage, in the face of perplexity. A worldview based on fear and humility...risks human atrophy; for such fear and humility grant all power to God. Only a vision in which the plot is unclear, in which anomalies bewilder serene faith and integrities are torn apart, can open the possibility of human action. Cognitively, action means the capacity to reintegrate the fragments of experience into new wholes: in re-remembering, to create something unprecedented, a personal language of self-description. (Avivah Zornberg, *The Beginning of Desire*)
4. “I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free.” (Michelangelo)