

Oath Keepers

Excerpted and adapted from a shiur by Dayan Yitzhak Grossman

November 18, 2021

https://baishavaad.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/BER82_008_Vayishlach_Pulling_Some_Strings_Lobbying_and_Shtadlanus_in_Halacha.mp3

And he said, "If Eisav comes to one camp and strikes it down, the remaining camp will escape."

Bereishis 32:9

Yaakov's conduct during his confrontation with Eisav is viewed as a model for how we should interact with gentiles in *galus*. But Yaakov's preparation for war in this *pasuk* (see Rashi) is not usually viewed as part of this paradigm. In fact, Chazal state that Hashem bound the Jewish people and the other nations by oaths (the *shalosh shvuos*), one of which is that the Jews must not return to Eretz Yisrael from *galus* by force. This passage was rarely discussed in a halachic context until recent times. After the Balfour Declaration in 1917, *poskim* began to debate whether mass *aliyah* to Eretz Yisrael was forbidden due to the *shalosh shvuos*. R' Yoel Teitelbaum of Satmar took the strong stance that this was forbidden and we must wait for the advent of Mashiach before returning en masse to Eretz Yisrael. But R' Avraham Borenstein of Sochatchov (the Avnei Neizer) and R' Meir Simcha of Dvinsk (the Ohr Sameiach) argued that the *shvuah* only forbids returning to Eretz Yisrael against the will of the nations. But if they grant Klal Yisrael permission, it is certainly permissible, and perhaps the mitzvah of *yishuv* Eretz Yisrael applies again in full force. (R' Meir Simcha adds that this may be Hashem's way of initiating the *ge'ulah*.) Other *poskim* offered another lenient approach—one already found in basic form in the hagadah of R' Shlomo Kluger—that the *shalosh shvuos* only remain in effect when the gentiles fulfill their own *shvuah*, which is not to cause the Jews excessive suffering. Since they have violated their oath, we are no longer bound by ours and may return to Eretz Yisrael.