

Fables from the Jewish Tradition  
By Rabbi Manes Kogan

(17)

**The Man and the Dogs**  
Genesis Rabbah 84:5



**Background to the Fable “The Man and the Dogs”**

**The Hares and the Frogs by Aesop**

The Hares were so persecuted by the other beasts; they did not know where to go. As soon as they saw a single animal approach them, off they used to run. One day they saw a troop of wild Horses stampeding about, and in quite a panic all the Hares scuttled off to a lake hard by, determined to drown themselves rather than live in such a continual state of fear. But just as they got near the bank of the lake, a troop of Frogs, frightened in their turn by the approach of the Hares scuttled off, and jumped into the water. "Truly," said one of the Hares, "things are not so bad as they seem:

"There is always someone worse off than yourself"

**?** What do you think about the moral of our fable? Does it help you lessen your fears?

**?** Why do you think would the hares be determined to drown themselves rather than live in such a continual state of fear?

**Genesis 36: 43 & 37:1**

43. The chief of Magdiel, the chief of Iram; these are the chiefs of Edom, according to their habitations in the land of their possession; he is Esau the father of the Edomites.

1. And Jacob settled in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.

## The Man and the Dogs

Genesis Rabbah 84:5

מדרש רבה בראשית פרשה פד סימן ה

ה מה כתיב למעלה מן הענין ואלה המלכים וגו' וכתוב הכא וישב יעקב, א"ר חוניא משל לאחד שהיה מהלך בדרך וראה כת של כלבים ונתיירא מהם וישב לו ביניהם, כך כיון שראה אבינו יעקב עשו ואלופיו נתיירא מהם וישב לו ביניהם,

A man was walking down a road when he saw a pack of dogs. He was afraid, so He sat down in their midst (to conceal his fear). If he had run, they would have chased him.

Genesis Rabbah 84:5

This brief fable is told by Rabbi Chanania in Genesis Rabbah to interpret the following verse: "And Jacob dwelt in the land of his father's sojourning, in the land of Canaan" (Genesis 37:1). The fable attempts to connect the first verse of chapter 37 with the last verse of chapter 36: "...These are the chiefs of Edom, according to their habitations in the land of their possession. This is Esau the father of the Edomites" (Genesis 36:43). Rabbi Chanania indicates that, like a man who is afraid of a pack of dogs and approaches them to overcome his fear, so our patriarch Jacob—peace be with him—on seeing Esau and his followers, approaches them instead of running away.

### Comprehension and Analysis Questions

**?** Jacob decided to reside in the midst of his enemies to conceal his fear?

What do you think about his tactic?

### Wrapping Up

**!** **Running Towards Your Fears: A Counter intuitive Way to Deal with Them!**

The Success Professor

"Those people who most quickly move towards their fears and move past them will be the first to succeed. What are you afraid of? What are the false expectations in your life? Identify them so that you know what to run towards. **Courage is not the**

**absence of fear; it is the ability to move towards the fear instead of away from it" (The Success Professor – Danny Gamache)**

**"Moishe! My Abram still owes you 20 rubles? Well he isn't giving them back!"**

Abram cannot sleep, tossing and turning from side to side... Finally his wife Sarah protests: "Abram, what's bothering you?"

"I owe Moishe 20 rubles, but I have no money. What shall I do?"

Sarah bangs on the wall and shouts to the neighbors: "Moishe! My Abram still owes you 20 rubles? Well he isn't giving them back!" Turning to her husband she says: "Now go to sleep and let Moishe stay awake!"

## **Bibliography**

The Fables of Aesop, by Joseph Jacobs with illustrations by Richard Heighway (1894).

## **Discussion Ideas from Rabbi Dorit Edut**

### **K-3rd GRADES:**

1)

Why did the man sit down in the middle of the pack of dogs even though he was afraid?

2)

Looking at the picture, what do you think the dogs are thinking? What do you think the man might be saying or thinking?

3)

What do you do to help yourself if you ever are afraid of something?

### **4th- 6th GRADES:**

1)

If you could write a caption for this illustration of this fable, what would it say?

2)

Do you think the man is brave to do this or felt that he didn't have a better choice? Explain your answer. What would you have done in this circumstance?

3)

What are things that you are afraid of? How do you deal with your fear?

### **7th - 12th GRADES:**

1)

This fable is like the saying "You can run, but you can't hide." What do you think that means? Can you give an example from real life of this?

2)

Read Genesis 32-33 about Jacob returning to Israel and learning of Esau's approach. How does Jacob reflect his fears and what does he do? This fable comes after Jacob and Esau's reconciliation —what, then, do you think the Rabbis were trying to tell us about Jacob?

3)

How might you apply this approach to any world conflicts today? What do you think would happen if people acted like the man in the story?

## **Language Arts Strategies from Dr. M. Patricia Cavanaugh**

### **Pre-Reading Strategy: Setting the Stage**

Prior to reading the text, the teacher should set up a situation similar to that in the fable and conduct a full class discussion. Students will be discussing themes and ideas with which they are familiar, and they will connect them with the text as they read.

The teacher should share a real life experience when he/she was in a scary situation with an animal: a large, frightening dog, a seemingly vicious cat, a swooping bird of prey. Have students share their own stories about animals.

Following the discussion, read "The Man and the Dogs" aloud.