



## Parshat Vayishlach

For the week ending 18 Kislev 5760  
26 & 27 November 1999

### Overview

**R**eturning home, Yaakov sends angelic messengers to appease his brother Esav. The messengers return, telling Yaakov that Esav is approaching with an army of 400. Yaakov strategically divides the camps, prays for assistance, and sends tribute to mollify Esav. That night, Yaakov is left alone and wrestles with the Angel of Esav. Yaakov emerges victorious but is left with an injured sinew in his thigh (which is why the Torah forbids eating the sciatic nerve of a kosher animal). The angel tells him that his future is against man (Lavan) and the supernatural (the angel). Yaakov and Esav meet and are reconciled, but together. Shechem, a Caananite prince, abducts and marries one of Yaakov's daughters. In the morning, Shechem and his father suggest that Yaakov and his family intermarry and enjoy the land. Shechem and his father by feigning agreement however, they stipulate that all the males of the city must be circumcised. When Yaakov's sons and Levi enter the town and execute all the males who were weakened by the circumcision. This action is done to protect their sister. Hashem commands Yaakov to go to Beit-El. Devorah, dies and is buried below Beit-El. Hashem appears again to Yaakov, blesses him and changes his name to Israel. While traveling, Rachel goes into labor and gives birth to Binyamin, the 12th of the tribes of Israel. She dies in childbirth and is buried on the Beit Lechem Road. Yaakov builds a monument to her. Yitzchak passes away at age 180 and is buried by his descendants.

### Insights

#### ODDS-ON FAVORITE?

*displaced sinew on the hip-*

**I**s a member of the time-honored craft of binding precious tomes in leather, but rather

Imagine you were asked for the odds on the survival of a small and broken people from the eastern end of the Mediterranean who were banished from their ancestral homeland after their country and the entire apparatus of government were smashed. What odds would you give for them surviving 100 years? How about 500? How about 2000?

What about the odds for the survival of a people of this fragmented people, who are incidentally persecuted and rejected in the vast majority of their host countries, enjoying financial prosperity and pre-eminence amongst those same host countries?

Calculating those odds would give even a bookie pause.

And yet the odds came up.

When G-d commanded Moshe to take the Children of Israel out of Egypt, He called to Moshe from the burning bush. The burning bush marked the beginning of events that would lead to the Exodus and to Sinai, and to the Jewish People being appointed as a holy nation of priests. It is apt then, that this beginning should mirror the very history of the Jewish People. And so it was. The bush burned, but it was not consumed by fire. Just as the

will the Jewish people burn in the fires of the nations of the world, but we will never be consumed.

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel

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Yaakov will always be alone. He will wrestle with an incorporeal spiritual entity whom he perceives as a man. This entity, this *malach*, is the *malach* of Esav. Throughout history there will be an adversarial and symbiotic confrontation between the offspring of Esav and the offspring of Yaakov. For the vast majority of history, Esav will do his best to annihilate Yaakov.

At the root of the mitzvah not to eat the sinew of the thigh-vein lies a daily assurance to the Jewish

persecutions, throughout all the Holocausts, the hell and high water of history, we will never perish.

## Haftarah: Ovadiah 1:1 - 21

**ET TUB**

**T** years from the rise of the Roman Empire to the coming of Mashiach.

Edom is synonymous with Esav. Esav, whose destiny was prophetically defined by his

It is this thirst for power that characterized the Roman nations, build grand structures, all to further exalt the great and mighty name of the Empire.

Yaakov/Israel Torah perspective. While Edom focuses on quantity, Israel looks towards quality. This means raising the spiritual self to personify G-

The Prophet Ovadiah envisions the fall of Edom: When Edom attempts to destroy Israel, G-d

Keeping the mitzvah of the *gid ha-nasheh* serves as a constant testimony that though the body of Yaakov is damaged, we survive. It reminds us to stand firm in our faith despite all we endure.

Esav has wounded us. He has made us limp through history. But he cannot destroy us. Eventually

limp. Mashiach must come. And Yaakov will then be healed forever, just as those dawn rays healed him on that morning three and a half thousand years ago.

Sources:

*Bereishet Rabba 76:8, Sefer HaChinuch - Mitzvah 3, Rabbi Yehoshua Bertram*

intervenes. G-emptiness that even her allies will stab her in the back. As Edom falls, Israel will flourish, proclaiming G-sovereignty over all the nations.

**AND THE FLAG WAS STILL THERE**

*your nest firmly among the stars, from there I will*

**T** nations send men to the poles and rockets to the moon for no reason other than to plant their sacred flags.

to conquer the world, Yaakov knows that his most sacred task is to learn to be in control of himself.

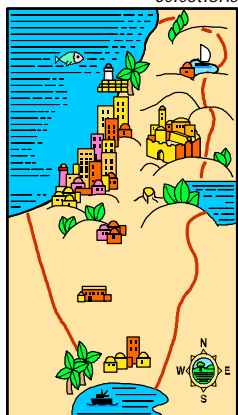
# LOVE OF THE LAND

*Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael*

## HAR HATZOFIM-MOUNT SCOPUS

*hatsofim*

*scopus*



capturing Jerusalem, as did the Crusaders in 1099 and the British forces in 1917. Although the Arab Legion captured this mountain in the War of Liberation, it did not succeed in using it as a springboard for conquering Jerusalem as did these predecessors.

With the liberation of East Jerusalem in 1967 the Jewish institutions on the mountain Hadassah Hospital and Hebrew University returned to Jewish hands and were restored to public service.

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