



Parshas Vayishlach

For the week ending 19 Kislev 5757
29 & 30 November 1996

Overview

Returning home, Yaakov sends angelic messengers to appease his brother Eisav. The messengers return, telling Yaakov that Eisav is approaching him with an army of 400 men. Yaakov takes the strategic precautions of dividing the camps, praying for assistance, and sending a tribute to mollify Eisav. That night, Yaakov is left alone, and wrestles with the angel of Eisav. Although Yaakov emerges victorious, he is left with an injured sinew in his thigh (which is the reason that it is forbidden to eat the sciatic nerve of a kosher animal). The angel tells him that his name in the future will be "Yisrael," signifying that he has prevailed against man (Lavan) and the supernatural realm (the angel). The brothers, Yaakov and Eisav, meet and are reconciled, but Yaakov, still fearful of his brother, rejects Eisav's offer that they should dwell together. Shechem, a Caananite prince, abducts and violates Dinah, Yaakov's daughter. In return for Dinah's hand in marriage, the prince and his father suggest that Yaakov and his family intermarry and enjoy the fruits of Caananite prosperity. Yaakov's sons trick Shechem and his father by feigning agreement — however, they stipulate that all the males of the city must undergo *bris mila*. While weakened by the circumcision, Shimon and Levi, two of Dinah's brothers, enter the town and execute all the males. This action is justified by the city's tacit complicity in the abduction of their sister. Hashem commands Yaakov to go to Beis-El and build an altar there. His mother Rivka's nurse, Devorah, dies and is buried below Beis-El. Hashem appears again to Yaakov, blesses him and changes his name to Yisrael. While traveling, Rachel goes into labor and gives birth to Binyamin, the twelfth of the tribes of Yisrael. She dies in childbirth and is buried on the Beis Lechem Road. Yaakov builds a monument to her, which is still there today. Yitzchak passes away at the age of 180, and is buried by his sons. The Parsha concludes by listing Eisav's descendants.

Insights

ALL AND NOTHING AT ALL

[Eisav:] "I have plenty..."

[Yaakov:] "I have everything" (33:9,11)

What's the difference between someone who says he has plenty and someone who says he has everything?

Someone who says he has plenty is telling you that although he has plenty, *he could have a lot more!* And someone who says that he has everything is saying that he is happy with what he has, though he may have but little.

"Plenty" and "All" symbolize the world/historical conflict of Eisav and Yaakov.

The nature of Eisav/Rome and their current cultural heirs is the desire to increase. More and More. Proliferation. Expansion. More money, more possessions. More. MORE. What's the biggest? What's the tallest? The fastest? More and More.

Can there be a more apt symbol of the More of modern culture than the InterNet? What is the boast of cyberculture? A billion home pages. Trillions of bytes. More and More and More. More can never have enough. It has an insatiable appetite which mocks the food it feeds on. On the other hand, "All" symbolizes the aspiration to return everything to unity, to the center. To the Center of Creation. To the Creator of "All." That's the purpose of Yaakov, of the Jewish People: To unify all the *plenty*, and to place it under the dominion of the One. To unify the great and vast "more" of the world so that it becomes "one." For "on that day He will be One, and His name One."

YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE

"And Yaakov was left alone..." (32:25)

There are some people who are so attached to their money that their money is more important to them than their bodies.

Some people even have their bodies deep-frozen in cryogenic suspension, hoping that one day they'll be able to carry on enjoying their money where they left off.

What makes it all the more surprising is that our Sages teach us that us that ***tzaddikim* (righteous people) value their money more than their bodies.** (*Chullin* 91a)

We learn this from an incident in this week's Parsha. Yaakov *Avinu* went back to collect some objects of minimal value that he had forgotten, even though by doing so he put himself in a dangerous situation.

Really, you would think that the more a person is immersed in the materialism of this world, the more careful he would be with his money. And the *more* spiritual, the less concerned.

However the reason materialistic people are careful with money, is not for the money itself, but for what they can do with it: Pamper their bodies, gain acceptance and status...

So really, it's their *bodies* which are important to them. The money is only a means to an end.

***Tzaddikim*, on the other hand, value their money more than their bodies only because of the spirituality that they can create with their wealth.**

With your body alone, maybe you could build one room in an orphanage — which would probably fall down after not too long a time!

But with your money, you could hire the best architects and contractors, and build a whole orphanage... **and** put a plaque on the wall that your grandchildren will be able to look up to.

Heard from Rabbi Mordechai Becher in the name of Rabbi Berel Eichenstein

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Written and Compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman

22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel

972-2-581-0315

fax: 972-2-581-2890

ohr@virtual.co.il

38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA

1-212-213-3100

fax: 1-212-213-8717

RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@Aol.com

613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada

1-905-886-5730

fax: 1-905-886-6065

Somayach@MSN.com

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THE FACE OF AN ANGEL

“And Yaakov sent ‘malachim’ before him to Eisav” (32:4)

The word in Hebrew *malach* can mean a human messenger or a supernatural one — an angel. Rashi teaches us here that these messengers were *angels*. How did Rashi know that?

It’s a disappointing fact that angels don’t walk around in this world with circular florescent tubes floating over their heads. If they did, they’d be much easier to identify. Rather, in this world, they clothe themselves in human bodies, and to most of us they are un-recognizable as anything more than flesh and blood.

That’s to most of us. Yaakov wasn’t most of us. He had the eyes to see who they really were.

Ostensibly, the words **“before him”** in this verse are redundant. Obviously if Yaakov sent messengers to Eisav, they went before him.

Rather, in front of Eisav these messengers would appear as mere flesh and blood, but **“before him”** — i.e., before Yaakov — they were clearly supernatural.

Based on Degel Machane Ephraim

TRUNK CALL

“But he [Yaakov] got up that night and took with him... his eleven children.” (32:23)

Rashi tells us that only 11 of Yaakov’s children are accounted for here, and that Yaakov had put Dinah in a trunk so that Eisav wouldn’t lay eyes on her.

How did Rashi know that it was Dinah that wasn’t present? Maybe she was among the 11 children numbered here, and it was one of Yaakov’s sons who did not attend this tense meeting with their uncle Eisav.

The Talmud tells us that the reason that the *Beis Hamikdash* (Holy Temple) was built in Binyamin’s part of the Land of Israel was because he didn’t bow down to his uncle Eisav. This was because he hadn’t been born at the time of this above incident.

If so, according to this, if it had been one of Yaakov’s other *sons* who was not present at the meeting with Eisav, and therefore did not bow to him, why wasn’t the *Beis Hamikdash* built on that son’s territory instead of on Binyamin’s?

Thus, it must have been that all the tribes of Israel had been there with Yaakov, and they all bowed to Eisav except for Binyamin who was yet unborn. It was only Dinah who could have been absent from their number.

The Vilna Gaon in Kol Eliyahu

Haftorah: Ovadiah 1:1-21

The entire Book of Ovadiah, the shortest in all of the *Tanach*, is this week’s Haftorah. Ovadiah was a convert to Judaism from the nation of Edom. Eisav lived among two *tzaddikim*, Yitzchak and Rivka, and failed to learn from them — Ovadiah lived among two of the wickedest people, Achav and Jezabel, yet he remained a *tzaddik*. His prophecy follows Eisav/Edom through various periods of history until its eventual downfall in the times of the *Mashiach*.

THE EAGLE HAS LANDED

“If he will rise up like an eagle and if he will make his nest among the stars — even from there I will bring him down” (1:4).

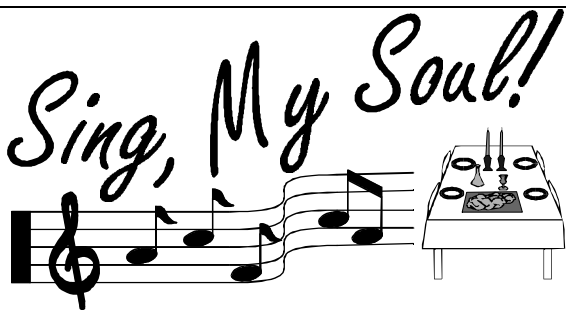
In last week’s Parsha, Yaakov has a dream of angels ascending and descending a ladder. The *Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer* explains that these angels represent the four nations who will exile the Jewish People.

At first, Yaakov saw the guardian angels of Babylon, Persia and Greece ascend and descend in succession. Finally, the protecting angel of Rome/Edom climbed up the ladder, but *he didn’t come down*. Yaakov feared that this final exile would never end, until Hashem said *“If he will rise up like an eagle and if he will make his nest among the stars — even from there I will bring him down.”*

We have still not emerged from that final exile. If a single moment in recent history epitomizes the over-confidence of our age, it is arguably the ‘Moon Landing’ in 1969. It seemed at the time that “we have the technology — we can do anything!” (Since then there has been the rude awakening of unimaginable mindless violence, urban poverty and pandemic disease, to knock the gloss off that arrogant assumption). The first words broadcast from the moon were *“Houston, this is Tranquillity Base. The Eagle has landed.”*

Nearly 2,000 years ago, Ovadiah predicted: *“If he will rise up like an eagle and if he will make his nest among the stars — even from there I will bring him down.”*

INSIGHTS INTO THE ZEMIROS
SUNG AT THE SHABBOS TABLE
THROUGHOUT THE GENERATIONS.



KOL MEKADESH - asenkf
“WHOEVER KEEPS SHABBOS...”

His reward if very great according to his action

שכרו הרבה מאד על פי פעלו

scharo harbay m’od al pi fo’alo

The reward for Sabbath observance varies according to the effort one invests in sanctifying the day. Careful avoidance of any form of forbidden activity and leisure hours spent in Torah study will certainly reap greater reward than minimal observance.

The “very great” reward refers to the credit one gets from the results of his mitzvah. The cosmic effect of a mitzvah, whose impact reaches the highest heavens, and the influence it exerts upon its performer and those around him, are rewarded by Hashem, along with the reward for doing the mitzvah itself. Sabbath observance is therefore an opportunity for gaining a “very great” reward.

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