

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	RENEWED
Vayishlach	14 Dec. 2019	16 Kislev 5780	Gen.32:3-36:43	Oba. 1-21	Matt. 2:13-23

“And Ya’akov sent messengers ahead of him to Esav his brother, to the land of Seir, the field of Edom.’ This week’s Torah portion continues the life of Ya’akov after leaving Charan. The angels of Elohim met him (Gen. 32:1) and called “that place Mahanayim.” He struggles with an angel (v. 24); his meeting with Esav (33:4), the violation of Ya’akov’s daughter Dinah by Shechem (Ch. 34), and the revenge of Shimon and Lewi on the city (Ch. 34); Hashem’s additional name of Yisrael to Ya’akov (35:10); the birth of Benjamin and death of Rahel (vs. 18-19), the burial of Yitzchak by Ya’akov and Esav (v. 29).

The parashah spans 23 years, from the time of the encounter between Ya’akov and Esav to Yitzchak’s death. The three patriarchs, Abraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov are synonymous with one of Hashem’s Divine attributes, based on the template of how they served Hashem during their life. Abraham’s life teaches us that he was the personification of *Chesed* (Loving-Kindness), Yitzchak is the embodiment of *Gevurah* (Fear and Awe) of Hashem, and Ya’akov, *Tiferet* (Beauty) as it is written, “You give truth to Ya’akov, kindness to Avraham.” (Micah 7:20)

The sages teach that the forefathers themselves are the chariot of Hashem’s presence in this world. That they rose to their full potential, and perfected themselves their very lives, their very essence, and became like a vessel to convey His will to others, which is of course the purpose of life. This is the beauty of life and the challenge that Torah presents us all with, to become the best human beings we could possibly be, as did our forefathers. But, no matter how saintly they became, the forefathers did not transcend or somehow transpose into beings other than human.

But this is the whole point, that we can become very great. Ya’akov is called by our sages the choicest, the perfection of the three *avot* (forefathers). We are taught that his likeness is engraved on Hashem’s Throne of Glory, but what does that really mean? Hashem does not have a body to sit down on a throne. It is a metaphor conveying the idea that Ya’akov personified Hashem’s goal in the creation of man, an idea further emphasized by our sages’ teaching that Ya’akov’s face resembled that of Adam. Again, it’s all about the continuation of and the guaranteeing of the legacy of Adam. Meaning - becoming human.

We also learned that the place of the Holy Temple figured prominently in the development of personal spiritual relationship that each of the three patriarchs sought with Hashem. Based on the verses in the *parshiot* we’ve been studying, we know that Avraham called the Holy Temple “a mountain” (Gen. 22:14), Yitzchak called it a field (Gen. 24:63), and Ya’akov called it a house (Gen. 28:17). When we say “house,” it brings peace, comforts, and being with loving family. We can relate to “house” much more than a distant mountain or even a cultivated field. Yeshayahu (Isaiah) prophesied, “And it shall be the latter days that the mountain of the House of YHWH is established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills. And all nations shall flow to it. And many peoples shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of YHWH, to the House of Elohim of Ya’akov, and let Him teach us His ways, and let us walk in His paths, for out of Tsiyon come for the Torah, and the Word of YHWH from Yerushalayim.” (Isa. 2:2-3)

Ya’akov is credited with establishing the Nation of Y’israel. He did this with great self-sacrifice, while keeping all of Hashem’s commandments, and as an indentured servant in the house of Lavan, despite all the hard, physical labor and subterfuge and impediments that Lavan set before Ya’akov to cause him to fail. The sages describe Ya’akov as a person who was occupied with fixing the world. Ya’akov also studied

Torah all his life, and kept the commandments, he even kept Shabbat. An argument can be made that how he could keep Shabbat since he was born before the Torah was given. Therefore, what Torah did Ya'akov study if it hadn't been given yet? We are taught that he studied the mysteries of creation. He had the *Sefer Adam* (Book of Adam), *Sefer Chanoch* (Book of Enoch), and *Sefer Yetzirah* (Book of Formation) written by his grandfather Abraham.

In last week's Torah portion, we learned how Ya'akov whittled away at some wooden rods, and as a result the sheep gave birth exclusively to specked and spotted sheep, and the goats to brownish goats. Was he a genetic engineer or scientist? No, he was a perfect *tzaddik*. Hashem did his will, as the verse states explicitly, (Psa. 145:19), 'The will of those who fear Him He will do,' or as the sages pithily put it, 'The *tzaddik* (righteous) decrees and the Holy One fulfills.'

He had Avraham's book of Formation, and he knew the secrets of creation. As the Zohar describes it, 'he decreed on the sheep...all that was missing was to inject them with souls.' And we learn in the writings of our sages that all during Ya'akov's lifetime, there was no harsh *din* (judgment) in the world because of his merit. Finally, there were only two people to whom the secret of the End of Days were revealed: Ya'akov (in Gen. 49:1), and Daniel (in Dan. 8:17).

In fact, we said that the *parasha* is called 'Vayishlach,' 'and he sent.' It is written, "Ya'akov sent messengers ahead of him to Esav his brother." That's one interpretation of the use of the Hebrew word 'malachim,' – but the world also means 'angels' – literal angels. And Rashi maintains that these were real angels. That's the kind of super man Ya'akov was...he had angels under his command. Looming confrontation with my angry, hatred-driven psychotic brother who's converging on me and my family with an army of 400 armed men? No problem, I'll send some angels on ahead. So now open up your hearts in the deepest way for a profound, game-changing life lesson taught to us by our father Ya'akov in this week's parashah. And we learn it from some unsung words, not a dramatic verse, that we might tend to gloss over. This man, who had angels under his command. What kind of a man was he really?

Although more than twenty years have passed since Ya'akov received the blessings from his father Yitzchak, he is still concerned about the destiny-charged meeting with Esav, who is closing in to meet him with an army of 400 men. So, he prepared a three-part strategy, consisting of sending a gift, praying for deliverance, and preparing for war if necessary.

As part of the preparation for this dramatic meeting with Esav, Ya'akov prays to Hashem to save him from the hand of his brother Esav. He begins to pray, in 32:10, 'Elohim of my father Avraham and Elohim of my father Yitzchak, Hashem who said to me, 'Return to your land and to your relatives and I will do good for you' – I have become diminished by all the kindness and by all the truth that You have done Your servant; for with my staff I crossed this Yarden, and now I have become two camps. Rescue me please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esav...'

"I have become diminished,' says Ya'akov at the beginning of his prayer, by all the kindnesses and truth that You have performed for your servant." What did Ya'akov mean by this, 'I have become diminished?' There are two ways of understanding what Ya'akov meant when he said 'for with my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.' One way of understanding it is that all Ya'akov had when he crossed the river, when he was originally fleeing from Esav on his way to Lavan, was a staff. He had nothing else to his name, and now, he has so much family and possessions that he can divide it all into two huge camps, as he had done now in preparation for his confrontation with Lavan.

But the other famous and widely accepted interpretation is that ‘with my staff I crossed this Jordan...’ that the Jordan River split before Ya’akov’s staff, literally, ‘with my staff I crossed this Jordan.’ We’re talking a miracle here. The Talmud understands from Ya’akov’s words ‘I have become diminished’ that the merits of a person for whom a miracle is performed, are diminished. It costs something to have a miracle done for you, and your balance goes down.

Rashi explains that based on this principle, Ya’akov feared that Hashem’s great help that He heretofore gave him diminished from his merit and his ‘credit’ as it were was maxed out, and thus he was afraid for his meeting with Esav. ‘I have been diminished,’ meaning, I am inadequate on account of all the kindness that Hashem has bestowed on me. Ya’akov, who saw Hashem at the top of the ladder, who had the ability to send out angels, who fought with an angel and won, who had the ability to split the Jordan...he felt inadequate on account of all Hashem’s kindness. Undeserving of Hashem’s kindness. Reflecting on all of the Holy One’s kindnesses, he said, “I have become small.”

In short: He didn’t feel he deserved anything nor feel worthy. He knew his worth, yet still he felt his smallness, his inadequacy as compared to the great kindness that Hashem was showering upon him. He didn’t count his merits and assume that they should stand for him, to deliver him from harm. He feels and understands that he doesn’t deserve Hashem’s kindness.

It is written (Gen. 33:3), “He [Ya’akov] ... bowed himself to the ground seven time, until he came near to his brother [Esav].” From the beginning of chapter 32 in Genesis, Ya’akov acted submissively and even called his brother, Esav as “my master” and to himself as “your servant.” He sent gifts and bowed seven times before him which appears that Ya’akov was going against the prophecy that he will rule over Esav.

The Midrash¹ points out that Ya’akov was punished for this behavior. It explains: The expression of “rise up” addressed to Hashem is mentioned nine times in the first book of Psalms (Chs. 1-41). King David asked Hashem, “Rise up, Hashem; save me, my Elohim” (3:89), *et al.* Hashem replied, “David, My son, even if you ask me many times to rise up, I will not rise fully,” for His glory will not be appreciated properly if it is revealed constantly.

As King David was in fear, so was Ya’akov’s fear of Esav. Thus, Ya’akov sent messages to Esav humbling himself. The Midrash continues that Ya’akov: (1) needs not have feared the merit of Esav’s honoring his father Yitzchak, since Hashem would reward him in other ways and leaving liabilities alone. (2) He needed not feared and respected Esav because of his current status as a powerful warlord as Hashem granted him that power in order to serve as His tool to punish the wicked. (3) He should not have feared that Esav would succeed in harming him on account of Yitzchak’s blessing, since the blessing was dependent on his serving Ya’akov. (4) He did not need to give respect to Esav since he was wicked (one who intentionally violate Hashem’s commandments) and did not deserve any respect. To sum it all, Ya’akov should have trusted that Hashem would “break” Esav and not let him harm Ya’akov.

The sages explain that Ya’akov’s fear and its subsequent messages of appeasement that he sent Esav, were unwarranted. They said that Esav was on his way to Se’ir and he had no knowledge of Ya’akov until he sent him a message as it is written, “Ya’akov sent messengers before him to Esav his brother unto the land of Se’ir, the field of Edom.” (32:4) And, “You shall say to my master Esav.”

The Zohar² explains that one who bows to an idol (Exo. 34:14) is forbidden as Esav bows to an idol. Thus, Ya’akov’s bow is considered as bowing to Esav as bowing to an idol. Rather, Ya’akov bowed toward Shechinah who went ahead of him. The verse (33:3) reads, “And he [Ya’akov] himself passed over them [his wives and children], and bowed

¹ Bereishis Rabbah, 75:1

² Zohar, 1:171b

himself to the ground seven times [to the Divine Presence], until he [Ya'akov] came near to his brother [Esav].” Therefore, Ya'akov is considered righteous whose actions (bowing) are for the glory of Hashem, deviating neither right nor left.

By bowing seven times, Ya'akov refined the seven corrupted emotions of *Tohu* (unformed; Gen. 1:2) embodied in Esav and elevated the good that each one contained.³ He explains this idea using numerical values of Ya'akov and Esav. The name *Havayah* (יהוה) has a numerical value of 26. The numerical value of Yitzchak (יצחק) is 208 that equals 8×26 . The numerical value of Ya'akov (יעקב) is 182 that equals 7×26 , meaning he inherited seven of the occurrences of the name *Havayah* in Yitzchak. Esav inherited the remaining Name *Havayah*. Esav (עשו) has a numerical value of 376, meaning that besides the 26 of the Name *Havayah* he inherited from Yitzchak, his “intrinsic” value was only 350. This number is 7×50 which has same numerical value for *tamei* (impure, טמא). Thus, Esav possessed seven measures of impurity plus one measure of the Name *Havayah* ($350+26=376$).⁴ To sum it all, Esav had one portion of *Havayah* because he was the brother of Ya'akov and he possessed seven measures of impurity, opposite of Ya'akov who possessed seven times of *Havayah* that caused Esav to hate his brother. Thus, the reason for Ya'akov bowing seven times to Hashem, but not toward Esav. (See below)

It is written (Gen. 34:1), “And Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne unto Ya'akov, went out to see the daughters of the land.” This chapter follows an event that occurred after Ya'akov arrived in the city of Shechem. And Dinah “went out to see the daughters of the land.” Soon after, she was violated and her brothers Levi and Shimeon deceived the Hivite into circumcision and killed all males of the city. The incident, on the surface, seems that it was wrong for Dinah to associate herself with the girls of region.

Or HaChaim explains there are three causes. The first cause is seen in the words, “And Dinah the daughter of Leah.” Because she was the daughter Leah, for if she had been the daughter of Rahel, she would not have gone out. Thus, Leah gave birth of her own temperament and nature to her newborn child. Second cause is that Dinah copied the bold behavior of her brothers, as hinted, “whom she had born to Ya'akov.” Third, the daughters of Shechem brought and played musical instruments around the tent of Ya'akov, so that Dinah would be drawn to the music, and “went out to see the daughters of the land.”

He continues that if Ya'akov was not well known, Chamor would not have violated Dinah. Because Ya'akov was rich and famous, it was the intention of Chamor from the beginning to draw out Dinah and made it his business to meet her. Thus, it was not Dinah's fault.

The Zohar⁵ view of Dinah, however, is bleak. By “going out,” she exposed and endangered herself for she symbolizes *Shechinah* (Presence or Glory) who derived from *Din* (Judgment). Therefore, when she was exposed, the *Shechinah* became vulnerable to demonic forces. The secular (lower) world constantly crashes with the heavenly (upper) world to take dominance.

The deeper understanding of this event is somewhat complex. First, as we will see, it was not Dinah's fault that she was abducted, rather the fault lies in Ya'akov. The sages teach that before crossing the river to meet with Esav, Ya'akov hid her in a crate so that Esav would not see her and desire her. Even though, his motive was praiseworthy, he erred for her extraordinary righteousness would have enabled her to reform Esav. Thus, her abduction was punishment for Ya'akov not having given her to Esav in marriage, and for having tarried in fulfilling his promises to Hashem.

Secondly, Leah inherited her mother's willingness to venture out of the safety of her home for righteous purpose. She was confident of her ability to positively influence others. Thus, she “went out to see the daughters of the land.” And, her efforts did bear fruit. Levi and Shimeon had all the men of Hivites circumcised. Although, this was a ruse to

³ Or HaTorah, Bereisheis, vol. 2, 231ab

⁴ The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Beresheis, p. 225-226

⁵ Zohar, 1:172b

weaken the men of Hivites, it also meant to have a metaphysical effect. The inhabitants of Shechem well knew that the descendant males of Avraham had to be circumcised to show their fealty to Hashem. By agreeing to be circumcised, the males of Shechem were agreeing to be refined to a certain degree. This collective assent to become at least partially refined their whole society, as well, including the girls. Although all the men of Shechem were killed, the women and children were taken captive. So, we can presume that most of them became servants in Ya'akov's household and thereby absorbed his values and morals.⁶

Hashem created women with special abilities to connect emphatically with others. Dinah's behavior teaches us that women who are blessed with such abilities to influence others should utilize those talents, not just to build their homes and families. Therefore, they should reach out to draw the hearts of their fellow women to the Torah and its ways that in no way to compromise the spirit of feminine modesty.

It is written (Gen. 34:30-31), "And Ya'akov said to Shim'on and Lewi, "You have troubled me by making me a stench among the inhabitants of the land, among the Kena'anites and the Perizzites. And I am few in number, they shall gather themselves against me and shall smite me, and I shall be destroyed, my household and I." But they said, "Should he treat our sister like a whore?"

"You have troubled me by making me a stench among the inhabitants of the land" because until now, they did not consider us as a threat, for they knew of Hashem's promise to give this land. "And I am few in number," in my household." And "they shall gather themselves against me and shall smite me," because you took the judgment on Shechem on your own and destroy us for we are "few in number." This does not sound like Ya'akov who trusted in Hashem. So, let's dig a little deeper. As implied in verse 11, "And Shechem said to her father and her brother," he was with his sons when they discussed their plan that Shechem and his men of the tribe should be circumcised. However, Ya'akov did not know Shim'on and Lewi's hidden agenda, for they spoke in "deceit" (v. 13) which implies that Ya'akov was not privy to their war plan. He believed that the purpose of deception was to take Dinah from Shechem's house against his will while he was weakened by circumcision, but not to kill all the men of Shechem. If Ya'akov realized that they would kill all the men and then he certainly would not have allowed it. Therefore, Ya'akov said in anger, "You have troubled me by making me a stench among the inhabitants of the land [through your deceit.]"

Shim'on and Lewi answered, "Should he (Shechem) treat our sister like a whore?" The brothers were addressing about Ya'akov's concern the danger of his whole household being annihilated. However, this does not seem to be sufficient reason to endanger the entire family. Or HaChaim suggest two answers:

First, what Shim'on and Lewi meant to say that Ya'akov need to be concerned about this because the surrounding nations would raise an outcry because they killed with a good reason. Because, Shechem had taken their sister by force and treated her as a harlot. Since the surrounding nations were aware of this, they would not disapprove of killing all the men of Shechem. Therefore, since Shechem treated Dinah as a harlot, the neighboring Canaanites would be not angered by their vengeance.

Second, the answer Shim'on and Lewi address the anger Ya'akov had shown, "And I am few in number, they shall gather themselves against me and shall smite me, and I shall be destroyed, my household and I." If they did not take any action against Shechem, they would be in danger from the surrounding nations. For these nations would see Ya'akov as a weak man who failed to protect his daughter from harlotry, and would rise up against Ya'akov's family. To the contrary, since they (Shim'on and Lewi) took vengeance on Shechem, the nations would be in fear of them and they would tremble at their approach. Thereby, they would refrain from attacking them. They maintained that inaction would lead to greater danger for Ya'akov. Thus, they argued, "Should he treat our sister like a whore?", suggesting that allowing Shechem to do this without suffering any consequences would result in the very danger Ya'akov had feared.

⁶ Likutei Sichot, vol. 35, p. 154

The Torah tells us that Ya'akov remained silent by not mentioning his reaction. However, later in the chapter, we find that he did not agree with his sons' action by killing all the men of Shechem. Only on his deathbed did he curse their anger – but not them. (Gen. 49:6)

It is written (Gen. 35:10), “And Elohim said to him, “Your name is Ya'kov, your name is no longer called Ya'kov, but Y'israel is your name.” So He called his name Y'israel.” Throughout the Sefer Beresheis, he was called Ya'akov, and at other times, he was called Y'israel. We learned that when the Torah says “Ya'akov”, he was acting on his own without the guidance of Hashem. When the Torah says “Y'israel”, he was acting in accordance with Hashem.

Although Hashem changed Ya'akov's name to Y'israel, he is still referred to as Ya'akov throughout Scripture. Ya'akov differs in this way from Avraham, whose former name Avram, once changed, was never used again. We first need to understand why Ya'akov is treated differently from Avraham in this matter. The Talmud⁷ teaches that someone who calls Avraham as Avram violates the commandment (Gen. 17:5), “Your name shall be Avraham.” But someone who calls Y'israel by his original name Ya'akov does not violate the commandment despite “Y'israel is your name.”

When we compare, “Your name shall be Avraham,” and “Y'israel is your name,” we can see that, “Your name is” precedes Avraham, whereas “Y'israel” precedes “is your name.” Therefore, Hashem is saying, “Your name is Ya'akov,” meaning He does not have any intention his name to something else. Rather, he will have another name “Y'israel,” but “Ya'akov” will remain his permanent name.

It is well known fact that people's names are not random, but are the essential names of their souls. This idea is alluded in Tehillim, “[Hashem] who has made desolations in the earth.” (46:9) The word “desolations” is translated from Hebrew word שְׁמוֹת (*sha-mot*) which also means “names.” Therefore, the Talmud⁸ teaches that Hashem Himself assigns a person's name that reflects one's essential soul. Or HaChaim explains that Hashem inspires parents to give their child the very name by which Hashem calls the child's soul in the Heavenly spheres. Thus, a name reflects the depths of a person's spiritual nature.

In Ya'akov's case, the name “Ya'akov” was his original “name of the soul,” since it was the name he was given at birth. Although, he later acquired an additional level of soul, a spirit of the Divine called “Y'israel,” this did not cause him to lose the first and basic soul that he began with. So, the first level of soul and the second level of soul coexisted together. Therefore, he could still be called “Ya'akov.”

The same rule does not apply to Avraham because even with the uplifting change in his name. Because, the letters of Avram (אברם) are included in the name Avraham (אברהם). The name “Avraham” preserved the “soul name” Avram in its letters. Therefore, there was no reason to actually use the name Avram. Such hint is found in Divrei HaYamin Alef (1Chr. 1:27), “Avram—the same is Avraham.” It identifies Avram as the person better known as Avraham. By contrast, the name Y'israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל) has completely uprooted his “soul name”, Ya'akov (יַעֲקֹב).

In Hebrew, “לֹא-יִקְרָא עוֹד אֶת-שְׁמִי, אַבְרָם” (*lo-yi-ka-rei od et-shim-cha, avram; no/called/any longer/name/avram*).⁹ Whereas, “לֹא-יִקְרָא עוֹד יַעֲקֹב” (*lo-yi-ka-rei shim-cha od ya-a-kov; no/called/name/any longer/Ya'akov*)¹⁰ Notice that in Avraham, the word “*od* (any longer)” precedes “the name,” therefore, it is saying that Avraham's former name will not be used any longer. But in Ya'kov, it comes after “name,” which translates as “not called your name any longer as Ya'akov.” Meaning, you shall not be called as you were previously, by the name Ya'akov alone. Rather, you are to be called, עוֹד יַעֲקֹב, “also¹¹” Ya'akov, because the name Ya'akov will be in addition to the new name of Y'israel.

⁷ Berachos 13a

⁸ ibid, 7b

⁹ Beresheis 17:5

¹⁰ ibid, 35:10

¹¹ עוֹד, another meaning is “also”

As explained above in page 4, listed below is visual display of numbers:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{YHWH (יהוה)} &= 26 = 5 + 6 + 5 + 10 \\ \text{Yitzchak (יצחק)} &= 208 = 100 + 8 + 90 + 10 \\ \text{Ya'akov (יַעֲקֹב)} &= 182 = 2 + 100 + 70 + 10 \\ \text{Esav (עֵשָׂו)} &= 376 = 6 + 300 + 70 \\ \text{Tamei (טמא, impure)} &= 50 = 1 + 40 + 9 \end{aligned}$$

1. We divide Yitzchak (208) by YHWH (26), and we get 8. ($208 / 26 = 8$). Meaning, Yitzchak was a whole man who had all eight attributes (or characters) of Sefirot. (See below)
2. We divide Ya'akov (182) by YHWH (26), and we get 7 ($182 / 26 = 7$). Meaning, Ya'akov had seven attributes of Sefirot. Where did one Sefirah (singular form of Sefirot) go? It went to Esav as we will see below.
3. We subtract Esav (376) from YHWH (26), and we get 350 ($376 - 26 = 350$).
4. We then divide Esav (350) by Tamei (50), and we get 7 ($350 / 50 = 7$). Meaning, Esav had seven attributes of Impurity of Sefirot. And one Purity of Sefirot for serving his father in exemplary manner.

In conclusion: Ya'akov had seven portions of Hashem and one portion of Impurity, whereas Esav had seven portions of Impurity and one portion of Hashem.

Sefirot Table:

<u>Right</u>	<u>Center</u>	<u>Left</u>
Binah (Understanding)		Chukmah (Wisdom)
	Da'at (Knowledge)	
Gevurah (Severity; Judgment)		Chesed (Mercy; Loving-Kindness)
	Tiferet (Beauty)	
Hod (Splendor)		Netzach (Victory)