

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	KETUVIM
Vayishlach	2 Dec 2017	14 Kislev 5778	Gen. 32:4 -36:43	Oba. 1:1-21	Matt. 2:13-23

Genesis 32:4-36:43

Few weeks ago, we learned from the parashat, Chayei Sarah (The life of Sarah) in detail. The Scripture revealed many attributes of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But it only hints of the matriarchs. It does not mean that their lives were not important. Rather, through their lives we learn of their courage, sacrifice to their families and faith in Hashem.

This week's parashat is no different. The Midrash tells us that at the end of 14th year while Jacob was in Charan serving Laban, Rebecca's maid, Deborah came to him and told him it was safe to return home. Deborah stayed with Jacob for six years until he returned to the Promised Land. Jacob was 99 years old when she died and buried her beneath Bethel under an oak.

Rebecca sent her soldiers to protect Jacob when she learned he was returning home. She told her men on how to appease Esau who was on his way to kill Jacob. And that is the parashat for this week. The Midrash continues that Rebecca was 123 years old when she died at Hebron without seeing her beloved son.

When the family of Jacob was fleeing from Laban, Rachel stole idols that belonged to her father to hide from revealing their departure. Jacob was 100 years old when Hashem appeared and blessed him. While he was on the road to Hebron where his father lives, Rachel dies on the way to Ephrath and dies at the age of 36 after giving birth to her son, Benjamin.

These three women died so Jacob's inheritance to Hashem can continue. Their sacrifice, while the Torah hints of their sacrifice and bravery, can only be discovered when we seek to find the truth. For they gave strength to their beloved husbands and sons, for them to live that they can fulfill the will of Hashem.

The wives of Israelites dedicated their lives not only to their family, but to Hashem as well before and after Exodus, i.e. not giving up their jewelries to make a Golden Calf. However, they gave their jewelries willingly before the men of Israelites did to build the Tabernacle. Their deeds were recognized by Hashem when Moses built a copper basin to wash hands before worship services.

We can easily recognize their deeds and continuance today as they hold *halachot* within their families. Thus, when the woman continues to stand firm in their faith of Hashem, to lead their families to Hashem, will the blessing flow through them and to their families. May Hashem bless them and keep them. Amen.

Genesis 32

The confrontation between the brothers reaches its climax and how Hashem protected His servant from the hand of a stronger enemy. It also showed that Jacob did not rely on his own righteousness,

but took active measures to protect his family. During the Talmudic period, the rabbis who had to fight against the Roman soldiers studied this chapter.¹

Verse 3: “Messengers” – It is said in Hebrew “mal-a-chim”. It can be translated as “angels” or “messengers.” Rashi and the Midrash teaches that Jacob sent real angels. We learned last week that when Jacob returned to Canaan, the angels² that were in Canaan joined him. Thus, we can understand that Jacob sent ‘the angels’ to deliver the message to Esau as “messengers.”

Rashi teaches that Jacob sent real angels, in order to both impress and terrify Esau. This teaches that righteous people are greater than angels, for when Jacob had need of emissaries, he had the right to summon angels to do his bidding (Tanchuma). The reason for the greater stature of human beings is that angels are created with a particular degree of holiness, and they remain forever static. Human beings, however, achieve their standing through their own striving, and they can grow constantly.

The Midrash teaches that when Rebecca heard her son, Jacob was returning to Canaan, she sent 72 servants of Isaac to Jacob. He knew all the servants of his father, and after a brief greeting, he asked them on the welfare of his parents. The servants said that they were well. And they continued to deliver the message given to them by Rebecca. That Jacob is to “supplicate him (Esau), and do not speak rashly to him (Esau), and give him (Esau) a present from what you (Jacob) possess, and from what Elohim has favored you with.” And Jacob listened to the words of his mother, Rebecca.

“To the land of Seir” – the mountainous region from the Dead Sea southward toward the Gulf of Aqaba. “Seir” also means “hairy” as “Edom” means “red.”

Verse 4: Jacob now commands his servant to deliver messages to Esau that he (Jacob) “sojourned with Laban.” The verb יָרַח (lodge), used in this verse implies Jacob staying as a (stranger) from יָרַח. Thus, Jacob is saying Esau, “I have not become a great prince nor have I achieved status... I remained merely an alien. Therefore, you need not hate me for having received Father’s blessing; since it has clearly not been fulfilled.”

Verse 5: “I have oxen,...” – The Sages teach that Jacob did not try to intimidate Esau because the humility was not part of him. Instead, Jacob referred to his “oxen” which also means “strength,” indicating Jacob his willingness to fight if necessary. Interestingly, the Torah does not mention Jacob owned any cattle. This is because oxen are used to plow fields whereas Jacob was a shepherd. He did not become a landowner for two reasons: (1) He knew the land was cursed; (2) His mother told Jacob to stay with Laban “for a short while.” The Torah did not mention oxen as he used them for growing food.

Verse 7: We can learn three strategies: (a) preparation for battle, (b) to pray to Hashem, (c) to prepare gifts. We see the flexibility of his mind as he prepares three different type of engagement. He prepares for battle (gevurah) by splitting his group into two. One group would consist of servants and livestock, and the other group would be his family. He knew, if confrontation arose the first group would succumb to Esau’s attack while his group would be protected by Hashem as He had promised protection for his family, not his estate.

¹ Beresheet Rabbah 78:15

² Genesis 32:1, NIV 1984

Jacob prepares gifts (*chesed*) (verse 14-21) for Esau following the commands of his mother. His final act is to pray (*rachamim-tiferet*) (verse 10-12) for Hashem's intervention as all of man's plans and exertions are in vain.

This is the reason the Rabbis read this chapter before going to war with the Romans. Jacob had shown multifaceted approach in confronting Esau to protect his family. Today, we are faced with crisis that require a multifaceted approach to protect our children and our family from physical dangers as well as spiritual dangers.

Verse 10: Jacob fears of numerous sins he committed might offset most of his merits, and the kindness Hashem has shown to Jacob might be a full reward for any leftover merits. Thus he says, "I am not worthy of the least of all mercy." "I passed over the Jordan" with a staff, and with Your kindness and thankfulness, I have become the head of "two camps."

We see the humility in Jacob when he "passed over the Jordan with a staff" which invokes humble beginnings when he crossed the river without any money but his staff. The Sages teach that we also need a small amount of pride and confidence as Jacob sent angels for his needs without hesitation. "Please deliver me" with a new petition I ask of You for Your protection from Esau who comes to destroy me, and my family.

Jacob took all his families over the brook and returned to the north shore of Yabok river to get some small articles left behind. The Sages says that the pitcher Jacob came back for was the same one used by Moses to dedicate the Temple and for the dedication during Maccabee time. He then fights with the angel. Their struggle was so great, the dust rose up from their feet and reached the heavens. When Esau's guardian angel could not overcome Jacob, he touched Jacob's hip joint became dislocated. Still, Jacob did not let go of him until the blessing was given.

The angel said in verse 28, "your name shall no longer be called Ya'akov" (from the verb *akov* (ensnare) which implies that Jacob 'wrest' Esau's blessing, but Israel (*Yisra'el*, from *serarah* (nobility; striven with Elohim) which implies that Jacob obtained the blessing from his father honorably. "For you have struggled with me" (angel of Elohim) and with men (Laban, Esau) and won.

Genesis 33

Jacob lifted up his eyes and saw Esau approaching with 400 men. He went to the second group which consisted of his families and he placed them in order of importance to the perpetuation of his Divine mission, knowing that Joseph was the most important of all his children. He then places himself in front of his families to protect them.

Jacob then bows seven times before Esau. The Midrash states that Jacob was punished for this behavior.³ However, the Sages disagree by saying that Jacob's behavior that "one should flatter the wicked for the sake of keeping the peace"⁴ rather than lowering oneself to Esau's level of darkness.

³ Beresheet Rabbah, 75:1-3

⁴ Torah, The Book of Genesis, p. 225

Esau then embraced Jacob and kissed him, and cried. The Gemara says that Esau bit Jacob on the neck out of hatred, but miraculously his neck became impenetrable and some of Esau's teeth imbedded on Jacob's neck. Jacob knowing this began to cry because he truly understood the hatred of his brother, Esau. On the other hand, Esau began to cry because of pain derived from breaking his teeth.

Jacob then insisted that Esau would return to Se'ir while he brings slowly as "the children are tender" and his flocks are young. This slow pace alludes to the long and arduous exiles of his descendants. It is compared to an express train, while it might arrive its destination faster, it would leave many passengers behind. However, the local train, while slower can 'pick up' more of its passengers from various stations.

Jacob arrived at a place, later he called the place Sukkot (shelter) and tarried there for 18 months (2205-2206) in Shechem. Hashem fulfilled His promise from the hands of Laban and Esau to protect Jacob. He purchased a land to symbolize that he was no longer a transient, but a resident of the land that Hashem had promised to his offspring.

Genesis 34

The Sages teach that Dinah's abduction was punishment for Jacob for not giving her to Esau in marriage and for having delayed in fulfilling his promises to Hashem. When Jacob started toward Charan, he asked that he would return safely to his father's home which was fulfilled. Instead of returning home, he tarried at Shechem which caused Dinah's violation.

In verse 25, the Torah describes Simeon and Levi as a "man." The Sages conclude that Levi became 13 years old when he took swords to kill people at Shechem with Simeon. This verse is the source for the law that a male becomes obligated to fulfill the commandments of *bar mitzvah* at the age of 13 since they reach their intellectual maturity to become a man.

Genesis 35

And Elohim said, "Your daughter Dinah was abducted and raped as punishment for your having hidden her from Esau⁵ and for having tarried in fulfilling your promise to offer up sacrifices to Me when you returned to Canaan."⁶ Therefore, now "Arise, go up to Bethel."

In verse 8, Deborah, Rebecca's nurse who went to Charan to bring Jacob home 8 years earlier, dies and "buried underneath Bethel." At the same time, Rebecca also died. Therefore, Jacob names the place as "Alon Bachu" (Plain of weeping), for he mourned for his mother there. The Torah does not mention specifically how Rebecca died, so no one could bring up her name and curse her for bringing Esau into this world. However, the Book of Jubilee tells a story of Jacob lived with his mother for several years before her death at the age of 155.

The Sages teach in verse 16-20 that a woman's account is examined in heaven when she is in labor. When Rachel improperly stole her father's teraphim (31:19) without Jacob's knowledge, he told Laban, "With whomever you find your gods, he shall not live (31:32). The curse was placed upon Rachel when she stole her father's idols. The Seder Olam places Rachel was born when Jacob

⁵ Genesis 32:23

⁶ Genesis 28:22, 33:18

received his father's blessing at the age of 63. Thus, she died at the age of 36. She named her son as Ben Oni which means "the son of sorrow." But Jacob changed his name to Benjamin (son of south) as he was the only one born in Canaan. She was buried on the roadside, outside of Bethlehem.

Jacob foresaw that his descendants would pass her tomb on the road to the Babylonian exile. He buried Rachel there so she should pray for them, as it is said concerning that tragic journey (Jer. 31:14): "Rachel weeping for her children." Jacob set up a monument over her gravesite (v. 20) so that the exiled Israel would recognize it and pray there as they were led into captivity (Midrash). To this very day, Rachel's tomb is a place where men and women shed tears and beg "Mother Rachel" to intercede with Hashem on their behalf.

Verse 21 reads that Jacob, again tarried of returning to his father's home in Hebron. For that he was punished again when Reuben violated Bilhah's bed. Jacob finally reunites with his father (2208) who was away from home for 36 years (20 years with Laban, 2 years on the road after leaving Haran, and 14 years with Eber). Verse 29 records death of Isaac (2228). The Torah does not follow chronological order, for Joseph was sold twelve years before Isaac's death (Rashi).

Genesis 36

This chapter describes in detail the genealogy of Esau. There are traditions that Eliphaz, Esau's firstborn, was the most deserving of his children. Rashi says that "he had been raised on Isaac's knee, and did not obey his father's command to kill Jacob." This is the same Eliphaz described in the Book of Job.

Verse 12: "And Timna was a concubine." – She was a descendant of chiefs (verse 22); she was the sister of Lotan who was one of the chiefs of Seir and a son of Seir himself (v. 20), a Horite who lived there from ancient times. Yet she was so anxious to marry a descendant of Abraham that she said to Eliphaz: "If I am unworthy to become your wife, let me at least be your concubine." (Rashi).

Her name also means "withholding." King Solomon taught, "Do not withhold (*al timna*) good from one who needs it when the power is yours to bestow it."⁷ The Talmud uses this verse to refer to those who withhold good even when they have nothing to lose from giving. Such was her nature that she was barred from marrying Jacob. Instead she became a concubine of Eliphaz and gave a birth to Amalek who inherited her heartlessness.

Verse 24: Anah crossbred a donkey with a mare, and the result was a mule. Anah himself was illegitimate, for in verse 20 he is called Zibeon's brother, and here he is called Zibeon's son, indicating that Zibeon committed incest with his own mother. Thus, the illegitimate Anah introduced into the world a "tainted" animal, which was born of an illicit breeding (Rashi; Pesachim 54a) thus intimating that "evil begets evil".

Obadiah 1:1-21

This week's *haftorah* describes the punishment of Edom who are the descendants of Esau. The prophet Obadiah was an Edomite who converted to Judaism. He describes the punishment for the nation of Edom because they did not come to Judea's aid when she was being destroyed by

⁷ Proverbs 3:27

the Babylonians, and even joined in the carnage. Many years later, the Roman Empire who were Edomites destroyed the Second Temple and mercilessly killed and enslaved their Jewish cousins.

Obadiah warns of the Roman Empire that they will be brought down by Hashem and “the house of Jacob shall be fire and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau shall become stubble, and they shall ignite them and consume them, and the house of Esau shall have no survivors, for the Lord has spoken.”⁸

Matthew 2:13-23

Verse 15 – This verse is a midrashic fulfillment of Hosea 11:1. The “son” in Hoses refers to Israel, not the Messiah. For the Messiah has to come from “his brethren” Israel to fulfill Deuteronomy 18:15-18. This applies to us as we are to come out of “Egypt” spiritually and physically by keeping the Torah.

Verse 18 – Jeremiah 31:14,15

Verse 23 – “prophet” – In NIV 1984 says, “prophets”. However, Korean version of NIV 1984 says, “prophet.” The commentators said that this is an example of singular plural confusion in Greek by the translator. The word “prophet” in Aramaic spelled the same in both singular and plural. The “prophet” mentioned in this verse refers to Isaiah the prophet in Isaiah 11:1 who refers to Messiah as a *netzer* which is translated as “young shoot” or “sprout”.

The Netzer represents the Kingdom of Elohim which is offered in Mashiyach Y’shua. These seven attributes listed in Isaiah 11:1-3 are imparted to those who follow the Messiah and permit the Ruach haKodesh to write Torah upon their hearts.⁹

The Netzerim faith, followed by Apostle Paul who was known as “the ringleader of the sect of the Netzarim”¹⁰, was a sect of Judaism in the First century who were Jews. Polycarp and Clement were the only two post-apostolic writers who had met or known Apostle John. Polycarp rejected the introduction of Easter into the church and taught that Christians must return to the Torah based Pesach.¹¹ Clement said that the book of Hebrews was originally written in Hebrew and then translated into Greek by Luke.

⁸ Obadiah, 1:18

⁹ Aramaic English New Testament, Netzer, p. 913

¹⁰ Acts 24:5

¹¹ Aramaic English New Testament, Netzer, p. 914