

What do you think Righteousness is about?

This weeks reading is from Parashat Vayishlach (*Bereshit / Genesis 32:3-36:43*). This week we read that Jacob, before crossing over the river Jordan into Eretz Canaan, wrestles with a man (*32:24*) and realizes that he has seen God face to face and lived (*32:25-31*). God instructs Jacob to go to Bethel and dwell there (*35:1*). The Lord appears to Jacob again and confirms his name change from Jacob to Israel (*35:9-15*). The Parashah ends with Esav, the land cannot sustain the flocks of both Jacob and Esav, so Esav moves his family and all that he owns away from Jacob (*36:1-43*). The opening verses of Parashat Vayishlach reveal to us that at this point in Jacob's life he is at a major turning point. Jacob realizes that encountering Esav is inevitable when he returns to Canaan and prepares for meeting his brother. Jacob calls out to the Lord saying that He is unworthy of God's grace and truth (*32:11*). Jacob encounters God at Peniel (פְּנִיֵאל) and sees God face to face. The Lord changes Jacob's name to Israel and strikes his hip changing both who he is and the way he walks. Has your encounter with God changed you in both who you are and in the way you walk?

כתבי הקודש / The Holy Scriptures

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כה וַיִּנְתֵּר יַעֲקֹב לְבַדּוֹ וַיִּאָּבֶק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ עַד עֲלוֹת הַשָּׁחַר:
 כו וַיֵּרָא כִּי לֹא יָכַל לוֹ וַיִּגַע בְּכַף-יָרְכוֹ וַתִּקַּע כַּף-יָרְכוֹ יַעֲקֹב
 כְּהִאָּבֶקוֹ עִמּוֹ: כז וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁלַחְנִי כִּי עֲלֶה הַשָּׁחַר וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא
 אֲשַׁלְּחֶךָ כִּי אִם-בֵּרַכְתָּנִי: כח וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מֶה-שְּׁמֶךָ וַיֹּאמֶר
 יַעֲקֹב: כט וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יַעֲקֹב יֹאמַר עוֹד שְׁמֶךָ כִּי אִם-יִשְׂרָאֵל
 כִּי-שָׂרִיתָ עִם-אֱלֹהִים וְעַם-אֲנָשִׁים וַתִּגְבַּל:

Bereshit / Genesis 32:24-28

32:24 Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. 32:25 When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him. 32:26 Then he said, 'Let me go, for the dawn is breaking.' But he said, 'I will not let you go unless you bless me.' 32:27 So he said to him, 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Jacob.' 32:28 He said, 'Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed.' (NASB)

Did you know that “righteousness” is terribly misunderstood in the body of Christ today? Is righteousness something we do or something we are? I have heard it said that “you are not righteous because of how moral you are, your level of self control, how many scriptures you read each day, etc,” and “we simply must just believe in Jesus and we are righteous.” Is this really what the Apostle Paul was saying to the Romans? Often Romans chapters 3 and 4 are quoted as proof texts for example in *Romans 4:14 For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified (NASB)* thus “if righteousness can be obtained by our work and effort then faith would become void” and therefore the Law has passed away because we are not to do anything “by the Law.” Some also quote from *Romans 10:3 For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. NASB* (τέλος γὰρ νόμου Χριστὸς εἰς δικαιοσύνην παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι) and say therefore Christ is the end of the Law, it is gone. I have even read some say to just believe in Jesus, you are righteous and you do not have to live a righteous life, God's righteousness will just seep from your pores. Again I ask, was this what Paul was saying to the Romans? How does one reconcile *Romans 3:31* that we do not nullify the Law through faith rather we establish it? Having a closer look at *Romans 10:3-4*, Paul is trying to address the issue of the people not subjecting themselves to the righteousness of God. They thought they were righteous enough. Paul says τέλος γὰρ νόμου Χριστὸς εἰς δικαιοσύνην (telos gar nomou christos eis dikaiosunen) “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness.” The word τέλος is a neuter noun and translates to mean “the end-goal, purpose” in the sense of “reaching the end (aim).” The Torah is the aim, the end-goal that directs us to understand Yeshua the Messiah is our righteousness. How so? The Law is a school master that trains us in the righteousness of God. The point is we are unable to reach the goal on our own (we fall short). We are expected to live both holy and righteous lives; i.e. the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin validating (establishing) the requirements of the Law in our lives. We then seek the Lord by the power of His Holy Spirit to empower us to produce the fruits of righteousness and faith, the very meaning of faith and works (see *James 2:24*). Jacob was touched by God and he walked differently the rest of his life. Have you been touched by God? Do you walk differently today in Christ? As believers, we are to strive for righteousness and holiness in our lives and seeking God, in Yeshua the Messiah, by the power of the Holy Spirit to help us to live in obedience to His Word. We are not told to declare our righteousness in Christ and go on living as usual. The Lord calls us to a greater standard, *1 Peter 1:16 because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.” (NASB)* The Torah is not something to run from, it helps us to understand who the Messiah truly is and most importantly that we are in need of a Savior!