

To Walk in the Stubbornness of our Hearts

This week's Torah Portion is from **Parashat Vayishlach** (*Shemot / Genesis 32:3-36:43*), we learn that Jacob sent messengers before him to spy out his brother Esau. The men return telling him that Esau has 400 men with him (*32:6*). Jacob sent along a gift ahead of him in order to appease Esau of the things he had done in the past (*32:3-20*). Jacob wrestles with a man (*32:24*) and realizes that he has seen God face to face and lived (*32:25-31*). Jacob and Esau meet (*33:1-16*) and Esau returns to his place in Seir while Jacob travels to Shechem. Jacob buys the piece of land before the city of Shechem (*33:19*) and his daughter Dinah is raped according to *Bereshit / Genesis 34:2 Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite took her by force (against her will)*. (NASB) Jacob's sons deceive the people of Shechem (*34:5-24*), and Simeon and Levi take their swords and kill every male in the city while they were in pain from circumcision (*34:25-33*). God instructs Jacob to go to Bethel and dwell there (*35:1*). The Lord appears to Jacob again and confirms both the covenant and his name change from Jacob to Israel and blesses Jacob (*35:9-15*). Traveling to Bethel, Rachael gives birth and dies (*35:16-19*). We are told that Isaac lives to 180 years old and dies and is buried (*35:28-29*). The Parashah ends stating the land cannot sustain the flocks of both Jacob and Esau, so Esau moves his family and all that he owns away (*36:1-43*). The Lord God has blessed both Jacob and Esau.

In this week's Torah Portion, Jacob says, יֵאָדָם קָטַנְתִּי מִכָּל הַחַסְדִּים וּמִכָּל-הָאֱמֻנָה אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֵת-עַבְדְּךָ כִּי בַמַּקְלָי עָבַרְתִּי אֶת-הַיַּרְדֵּן וְעַתָּה הֵייתִי לְשְׁנֵי הָאָמֳתִים 32:10 *I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness and of all the faithfulness which You have shown to Your servant; for with my staff only I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two companies*. (NASB) He calls out to the Lord saying that He is unworthy of God's grace (הַחַסְדִּים) and faithfulness (הָאֱמֻנָה, *32:10*). We can see how Jacob's life and his encounter with God at Peniel (פְּנִיֵאל) had changed him on the inside in his statement of being unworthy of the way in which the Lord has worked in his life. The Lord changes Jacob's name to Israel and strikes his hip changing both who he is and the way he walks. In a similar manner, our encounter with the Lord should also change our lives, on the inside and

the out.

ספר בראשית פרק לב Bereshit / Genesis 34:24-27

י וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי אֲבִי־
רָהֵם וְאֱלֹהֵי אָבִי יִצְחָק יְהוָה
הָאָמַר אֵלַי שׁוּב לְאַרְצְךָ וְלֹא־
מוֹלְדֹתֶיךָ וְאִיטִיבָה עִמָּךְ: יא
קִטְנֹתַי מִכָּל הַחַסְדִּים וּמִכָּל־
הָאַמֻּת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֵת־עַבְדְּךָ
כִּי בְמַקְלִי עָבַרְתִּי אֵת־הַיַּרְדֵּן
הַזֶּה וְעַתָּה הִיִּיתִי לְשְׁנֵי מַחֲנוֹת:
יב הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אָחִי מִיַּד
עֵשָׂו כִּי־יֵרָא אָנֹכִי אֹתוֹ פֶּן־יָבוֹא
וְהִכָּנִי אִם עַל־בָּנָיִם: יג וְאַתָּה
אָמַרְתָּ הֵיטֵב אִיטִיב עִמָּךְ וְשָׂמַ־
תִּי אֵת־זַרְעֶךָ כְּחוֹל הַיָּם אֲשֶׁר
לֹא־יִסְפָּר מֵרֹב: [שְׁנֵי] יד וַיָּלֶן
שָׁם בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא וַיִּקַּח מִן־הַבָּא
בְּיָדוֹ מִנְחָה לַעֲשׂוֹ אָחִיו:

32:9 Jacob said, ‘O God of my father Abra-
ham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord,
who said to me, ‘Return to your country and
to your relatives, and I will prosper you,’
32:10 I am unworthy of all the lovingkind-
ness and of all the faithfulness which You
have shown to Your servant; for with my
staff only I crossed this Jordan, and now I
have become two companies. 32:11 ‘Deliv-
er me, I pray, from the hand of my brother,
from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, that
he will come and attack me and the moth-
ers with the children. 32:12 ‘For You said,
‘I will surely prosper you and make your
descendants as the sand of the sea, which
is too great to be numbered.’‘ 32:13 So
he spent the night there. Then he selected
from what he had with him a present for his
brother Esau: (NASB)

In the opening verses to the Torah portion, we are told that Jacob sent messengers ahead of him, saying the following, *Bereshit / Genesis 32:3-5*,
ד וַיִּשְׁלַח יַעֲקֹב מַלְאָכִים לְפָנָיו אֶל־עֵשָׂו אָחִיו אֲרַצָּה שְׂעִיר אֲדוֹם: ה וַיִּצְוּ אֹתָם
לֵאמֹר כֹּה תֹאמְרוּן לְאֲדֹנָי לַעֲשׂוֹ כֹּה אָמַר עַבְדְּךָ יַעֲקֹב עִם־לְבָן גִּרְתִּי וְאַחַר עַד־עָתָה: ו
32:3 וַיְהִי־לִי שׁוֹר וְחֲמֹר צֹאן וְעֶבֶד וְשֹׁפְחָה וְאֲשָׁלְחָהּ לְהַגִּיד לְאֲדֹנָי לְמִצְאָ־חַן בְּעֵינֶיךָ:
*Then Jacob sent messengers before him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. 32:4 He also commanded them saying, ‘Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: ‘Thus says your servant Jacob, ‘I have so-
journed with Laban, and stayed until now; 32:5 I have oxen and donkeys and flocks and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight.’‘ (NASB) Notice how he instructs his messengers to tell Esau “I have sojourned (גִּרְתִּי) with Laban and stayed until now.” The word for “sojourner” (ger, גִּרְתִּי) also has the meaning*

of “*foreigner*” which suggests that Jacob was alluding to the fact that he was a foreigner in a different land, and that his staying with Laban was secondary to his home in the land of Canaan. Jacob’s wealth increased while he was with Laban. The increase in wealth may be described as the material blessing, as opposed to his home-land which may be compared to the spiritual blessing, e.g. the Torah and its commandments. Jacob’s statement of faith saying, *32:9 ... ‘O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord, who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your relatives, and I will prosper you,’ (NASB)* suggests that he remained aware of the promise the Lord God had made to him which includes the Torah and the mitzvot according to the rabbis. This caused Jacob to remain faithful to the Lord in the midst of an environment of idolatry and hostility to God’s holiness. In Jacob’s message to Esau as a sojourner, he described his faithfulness and obedience to God’s command as he took pride in his mission in life to live for the Lord God in heaven. The important point is though the Lord had greatly blessed him, he did not consider his personal faithfulness as the reason for his blessing. He believed in the faithfulness of his fathers Abraham and Isaac, and trusted in the promises of God. Note how the rabbis describe Jacob’s humbleness before God according *Bereshit / Genesis 32:10*, יא קטנתי מכל החסדים ומכל האמת אשר 32:10 עשית את-עבדך כי במקלי עברתי את-הירדן הנה ועמה הייתי לשני מחנות: *I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness and of all the faithfulness which You have shown to Your servant; for with my staff only I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two companies. (NASB)* Radak says the following:

Radak on Genesis 32:10, 1

ויאמר יעקב אלוקי אבי אברהם ואלוקי אבי יצחק, “*You are the One Who has assured me when I left my father’s house that due to the merit of my fathers You would assist and protect me. (28,13). Now I turn to You in prayer relying on their merit in hoping that You will keep Your promise. Secondly, it was You Who has told me while I was in Charan to go back to the land of my fathers since their country was my country.* אלהי אבי אברהם וגו’, אתה הוא שהבטחתני בנסעי מבית אבי בזכות אבותי אלה, ואמרת לי “אלהי אברהם אביך ואלהי יצחק” ובזכותם אני מתפלל לפניך שתקיים לי הבטחתך, וגם בחרן הבטחתני

(.שנית ואמרת לי שוב לארצך והוא ארץ אבותיך שאמרת)

Radak states that Jacob believed in the merits of his fathers Abraham and Isaac for his blessings. It is important to understand that this is not necessarily interpreted as the rabbis promoting a works based salvation. Within the idea of the merits of our fathers is the Torah context and understanding of the deeds of a faithful parent and how that affects his children. A faithful parent will not incur God's wrath which would bring destruction to not only himself but to his entire family, including his children (*e.g. or future generations*). Also, a faithful parent will teach his children in the fear of the Lord, in faith, and in obeying the mitzvot because of our love for Him. Living a faithful life will cause one's children to be instructed in the way of God and His Messiah Yeshua, and trusting in the Lord God in heaven that they will follow in our footsteps.

In an analogous manner, the children of the unrighteous will learn the wicked ways of their parents and thus incur the wrath of God. Relying upon the merit of the fathers, Jacob expressed faith in both the word of his fathers Abraham and Isaac, as well as faith in the word of the Lord and His promises which they communicated to Jacob. As a result, Jacob believed that it was the Lord God who assisted and protected him in the land of Haran.

Radak continues in his comments on *Bereshit / Genesis 32:11*, יב 32:11 הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אָחִי מִיַּד עֵשָׂו כִּי-יָרָא אָנֹכִי אֹתוֹ פֶּן-יָבוֹא וְהִכָּנִי אִם-עַל-בָּנָיִם: *'Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, that he will come and attack me and the mothers with the children. (NASB)* saying the following:

Radak on Genesis 32:11, 1

קטנתי, *I am not asking You G'd to help me in a manner commensurate with my merits, as I am perfectly aware that these are utterly inadequate.* כל החסדים וכל האמת אשר עשית את עבדך, *Yaakov described as חסד the acts of un-earned love G'd had performed for him, whereas he described as אמת, "truth," i.e. deserved compensation, that G'd would keep His promise to him. ("Here, I am going to be with you, etc." 28,15) He feels entitled to expect G'd*

to keep His promises when these are of a positive nature. When G'd had said to him that He would protect him wherever he would go, this had not been a conditional promise, dependent on Yaakov being worthy of such protection. He is aware that he may have sinned, but expects the promise to be kept for the sake of his father and grandfather both of whom G'd Himself had invoked in association with this promise. He feels that he deserves such protection, having heard that Esau is an unreformed sinner, still relating to him with hostility. (קטנתי, אינני שואל מאתך לפי מעשי כי ידעתי) תי כי אני קטן ונבזה מעשית עמי כל החסדים וכל האמת אשר עשית את עבדך, והחסד הוא רוב הטובה שנתן לו, והאמת לפי שהבטיחו ואמר לו הנה אנכי עמך, והוא ברוך הוא מקיים דבריו הטוב, אבל מה שאני שואל מאתך שתשמור לי הבטחתך שאמרת לי "ושמרתך בכל אשר תלך" ולא לזכותי, כי אולי חטאתי לפניך אלא לזכות אבותי אני מתפלל לפניך שתצילני מיד אחי מיד עשו, שאינו שומר (לי אחוה כי עדיין הוא עשו שעומד ברשעו ובשנאתו אותי:

Take note of what Radak states, he believes our merits (good deeds) are inadequate for causing God to help, or to move, or to cause God to save us. He says that it is because of "*the acts of unearned love G'd had performed for him.*" On the other hand, Radak states that אמת, "*truth,*" is a reference to "*deserved compensation, that G'd would keep His promise to him.*" Jacob's faithfulness is established in God's Word when the Lord told him "*He would protect him wherever he would go,*" under the idea that this was not a conditional promise, this was an unconditional promise. Radak states that this was not a conditional promise that was based upon his performance; the promise was based upon the faith of both his fathers Abraham and Isaac, and upon his own faith in the Lord. Remember that within Jacob's statement (*Bereshit / Genesis 32:3-5*) he was alluding to the idea that he was a foreigner in a different land, and that his staying with Laban was secondary to his home in the land of Canaan. Jacob remained faithful to the Lord and in His promises, and thus is the reason he is returning to his home-land which may be compared to the spiritual blessing, e.g. the Torah and its commandments. The understanding of merits, grace, and faith is a very important topic for us today.

We can glean insights into the relationship between these things from the Psalm of Asaph (*Tehillim / Psalms 81*).

In *Tehillim / Psalms 81*, Asaph speaks for the Lord saying, ט שְׁמַע עַמִּי וְאַעֲיֶדְהָ בְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל אִם-תִּשְׁמַע-לִי: י לֹא-יִהְיֶה בְּךָ אֵל זָר וְלֹא תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לְאֵל גֵּוָר: י אֲנֹכִי | יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הַמַּעֲלֶךְ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם הַרְחֹב-פִּיךָ וְאַמְלֵאֵהוּ: יב וְלֹא-שְׁמַע עַמִּי: *81:8 'Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you; O Israel, if you would listen to Me! 81:9 'Let there be no strange god among you; Nor shall you worship any foreign god. 81:10 'I, the Lord, am your God, Who brought you up from the land of Egypt; Open your mouth wide and I will fill it. 81:11 'But My people did not listen to My voice, And Israel did not obey Me. (NASB)* Listening is synonymous to the Lord admonishing His people. What does it mean to be admonished of God? The Aramaic Targum and Septuagint translate the MT to say the following. The admonishment of God comes in the manner of repeating *Devarim / Deuteronomy 12*, to not serving foreign gods and to not serve the Lord God in the way in which the nations serve their gods. This is brought into the context of the Lord God who delivered the people out of Egypt, and who would have filled their mouths if they would have had unwavering faith. Note how the rabbis translate the MT saying that God made Israel fast in the secret place, in His presence. The Lord Himself is described as the one who bears witness on behalf of the people, and the only stipulation is that they believe and remain faithful. They reiterate the command to not have foreign gods in their midst, and to keep the words of the Torah in their mouths, upon which the Lord will fill their mouths with all good things (וְאִמְלֵי יְתָה מְכַל טַבְתָּא) What are the good things the Lord fills us with if we keep the Words of the Torah on our lips? The Psalm is about glorifying God in His Word. Notice how often the scriptures refer to God's revelation of Torah through Moshe. The Torah is referred to throughout all of Scripture in the Prophets, the Writings, and the Apostolic Writings. The idea then is if we want to see wonderful things in our lives according to the Scriptures, it is not enough for us merely to ask the Lord God to open our eyes that we might see them. We must also walk in His ways in the same way in which Yeshua the Messiah walked in God's ways according to the Torah! (*1 John 2:6*) Note what Ezekiel states in *Ezekiel 8:9-12*.

Ezekiel 8:9-12

8:9 And He said to me, 'Go in and see the wicked abominations that they are committing here.' 8:10 So I entered and looked, and behold, every form of creeping things and beasts and detestable things, with all the idols of the house of Israel, were carved on the wall all around. 8:11 Standing in front of them were seventy elders of the house of Israel, with Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan standing among them, each man with his censer in his hand and the fragrance of the cloud of incense rising. 8:12 Then He said to me, 'Son of man, do you see what the elders of the house of Israel are committing in the dark, each man in the room of his carved images? For they say, 'The Lord does not see us; the Lord has forsaken the land.' (NASB)

Ezekiel sees all sorts of detestable things occurring in the inner sanctuary of a man's heart, the idols that have been erected and the things man bows down to. This is why it is so important for man to walk according to God's ways, and why the Lord determined it to be the way in which we are to live in His Messiah Yeshua.

Asaph concludes his psalm saying, יג וְאֶשְׁלַחֵהוּ בְּשִׁרְיֹת לִבָּם יִלְכוּ בְּמוֹעֲצוֹתֵיהֶם: יד לו עַמִּי שִׁמְעֵ לִי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּדַרְכֵי יְהוָה: טו כִּמְעַט אוֹיְבֵיהֶם אֶכְנִיעַ וְעַל-צָרֵיהֶם אָשִׁיב יָדַי: טז מִשְׁנֵאֵי יְהוָה יִכְחָשׁוּ-לוֹ וַיְהִי עֲתָם לְעוֹלָם: יז וַיֶּאֱכִילֵהוּ: 81:12 *'So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart, To walk in their own devices. 81:13 'Oh that My people would listen to Me, That Israel would walk in My ways! 81:14 'I would quickly subdue their enemies And turn My hand against their adversaries. 81:15 'Those who hate the Lord would pretend obedience to Him, And their time of punishment would be forever. 81:16 'But I would feed you with the finest of the wheat, And with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.'* (NASB) The Lord says that He gave them over to the stubbornness of their own heart to walk in their own devices. Notice how this is something the Lord does to a person. The Lord has control over whether a person is given to his stubbornness to walk in his own ways as opposed to God's ways. It appears that since the people do not listen to God's Word (His voice), the Lord gives them what they want. On the

other hand, there is a difference between the man who struggles with sin, and seeks the Lord for help to overcome sin. Think about the Moedim as another example, those who reject the idea that God wants us to obey His word and celebrate the Moedim as opposed to the traditions of the world. The Lord will give you over to the stubbornness of the heart and not being able to see the truth for as long as you are unwilling to listen to the voice of God.

The Hebrew text is written in the following way saying, וְאִשְׁלַחֵהוּ בְנֵשׁׁ, וְאִשְׁלַחֵהוּ בְנֵשׁׁ רִירוֹת לָבָם יֵלְכוּ בְּמוֹעֲצוֹתֵיהֶם “*I will send them in the authority / rule (שְׂרָרָה) of their heart, to walk in the counsel of themselves.*” *Bamidbar / Numbers 15:39* states, “*You will not go (roam) אַחֲרֵי לְבַבְכֶם וְאַחֲרֵי עֵינֵיכֶם after your own heart, and after your eyes.*” It is also interesting to compare the phrase שְׂרָרֹת לֵב, which is commonly translated as “*the imagination of the heart,*” where the deeper meaning is found in the “*authority / rule*” of the heart, meaning that this is one’s choices, to do as one pleases. In many ways un-scriptural traditions are idols because tradition is designed to make one feel good, and take note of how unwilling you may be to give up a tradition. This is synonymous to *Devarim / Deuteronomy 29:18* and *Tehillim / Psalms 71:13*, יָלוּ בְּמוֹעֲצוֹתֵיהֶם, “*walking in their own counsels,*” (e.g. Jeremiah 9:13, etc.) *Job 31:7* states, for “*the heart that follows the eye*” is among the grievous sins, being regarded as the head or the guiding force of sin, אִם אַחֲרַי עֵינַי הִלְךְ לִבִּי, “*if my heart hath gone after mine eyes,*” which describes the will or the conscience to make choices to sin. This is the very meaning of “*Walk in the way of thine heart;*” which is synonymous to a man following after his own pleasure.

It is interesting how the rabbis render the MT, they say that Israel did not listen to God’s voice (*81:12*), and that if they had the Lord would have removed these thoughts from their hearts so that they would have walked away from wicked counsels (*8:13*). Notice how the Lord desires for us to walk in His ways, to walk in His footsteps and He longs to help us in doing so. This is consistent with Paul’s words in *Ephesians 2:10* *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (NASB)* We are God’s ποίημα (thing made), therefore, our Messianic salvation is not something of our own acquiring, but a gift of God. We are created in the Messiah unto good works. Asaph and the rabbis understand this to mean that the

Lord works in us as a ποίημα (a thing made) which refers to His ethical and moral creation or that of the new spiritual state of life which causes us to have the desire to draw near to the Lord God in heaven and to His Messiah Yeshua. Notice that this is how the Lord God worked in Jacob's life to bring him to the point that he in Parashat Vayishlach, humble and thankful, saying, יֵאָדָם מְכַלֵּי הַחַסְדִּים וּמְכַלֵּי-הָאֱמֶת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֵת-עַבְדְּךָ כִּי אֲנִי מְחַנּוֹת: *32:10 I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness and of all the faithfulness which You have shown to Your servant; for with my staff only I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two companies. (NASB)* This is what God has provided us in the Messiah, He has provided us with His mercy, His faithfulness, and called us to be His people. This is how the Lord works in our lives today, to believe in the promises of God, to believe in the Messiah, and to turn from the stubbornness of our hearts, to be humble and thankful for what the Lord has provided. Thank You Lord for such a wonderful Salvation!



