

Parashat Vayishlach / פרשת וישלח

Shabbat Kislev 14, 5768, Nov. 24, 2007
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Spiritual Surrender

This Weeks Reading List:

Torah: Genesis 32:4-36:43

Haftarah: Hosea 11:7-12:12, Obadiah 1:1-21

B'rit HaChadashah: Hebrews 11:11-20, Matthew 26:36-46

Summary of this week's parsha

1. Ya'akov confronts Esav when entering the Promised Land (*Genesis 32:3-33:17*)
2. Ya'akov settles in the vicinity of Ir Shechem (city of Shechem, *Genesis 33:18-20*)
3. Ben Chamor the Chivvi takes Dena the daughter of Ya'akov sexually raping her. Shimon and Levi take action to kill all the men in the city. (*Genesis 34:1-31*)
4. Ya'akov moves to Beit-El and builds an altar to Adonai (*Genesis 35:1-8*)
5. Elohim blesses Ya'akov at Beit-El, followed by the death of Rachel in child birth of Binyamin. (*Genesis 35:9-22*)
6. A summary of Ya'akov's children, and the death of Yitzchak. (*Genesis 35:23-29*)

Reading through this week's parsha, Parashat Vayishlach, I find Ya'akov's actions very interesting. After having found assurance that his brother Esav will not kill him, Ya'akov decided to settle down next to Ir Shechem (city of Shechem). (*Genesis 33:18*)

בראשית 33:18

וַיָּבֹא אֵל יַעֲקֹב בְּשָׁלֵם עִיר שְׁכֵם אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן כִּבְּ אֹו מִפְּדַן אֶרֶם וַיִּחַן
אֶת־פְּנֵי דָעָיִר:

Genesis 33:18

33:18 Having traveled from Paddan-Aram, Ya'akov arrived safely at the city of Sh'khem, in Kena'an, and set up camp near the city. (CJB)

I find this interesting because Ya'akov did not immediately return to "the place" where he had made his vow with God. In the previous parsha, Parashat Vayetzei, Ya'akov set up a pillar in Beit-El stating that if Elohim will keep his promise, and return him to the land then Elohim would be his Elohim. However, when Ya'akov returned to the land he did not return to the place (Beit-El) but instead settled next to Ir Shechem.

Now Ya'akov's failure to return to Beit-El appears to me to be a form of complacency in his relationship with HaShem. Do you think Ya'akov has become complacent with his relationship with God after having made reconciliation with his brother Esav? There is a danger when one enters a state of complacency in their relationship with Adonai. For example, complacency says that it is ok to take a break from God or to be a little lazy with ones studies, prayer time, and the things of the world will not harm us. Because Ya'akov did not return to Beit-El his daughter Dena is rapped by Ben Chamor the Chivvi and his two sons Shimon and Levi kill all the men of the city Shechem. With this in mind let's read what happens, Ya'akov's response to his sons and HaShem's response to Ya'akov.

Genesis 34:30-35:7

34:30 And Ya'akov said to Shimon and Levi, Ye have brought trouble on me to make me a stench among the inhabitants of HaAretz, among the Kena'ani and the Perizzi; and I being few in mispar, they shall gather themselves together against me, and attack me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my bais. 34:31 And they said, Should he deal with achoteinu like with zonah? 35:1 And Elohim said unto Ya'akov, Arise, go up to Beit-El, and settle there; and make there a Mizbe'ach unto El (G-d) that appeared unto thee when thou didst flee from the face of Esav achicha. 35:2 Then Ya'akov said unto his Bais, and to all that were with him, Put away the elohei hanekhar that are among you, and be tahor, and change your simlah (garments); 35:3 And let us arise, and go up to Beit-El; and I will build there a Mizbe'ach unto El (G-d) Who answered me in my yom tzoros, and was with me in the derech in which I went. 35:4 And they gave unto Ya'akov kol elohei hanekhar which were in their yad, and all their nezamim which were in their oznayim; and Ya'akov buried them under the elah (terebinth) which was at Shechem. 35:5 And they journeyed; and the chittat Elohim (terror of G-d) was upon the cities that were around them, and they did not pursue after the Bnei Ya'akov. 35:6 So Ya'akov came to Luz, which is in Eretz Kena'an, that is, Beit-El, he and kol haAm that were with him. 35:7 And he built there a Mizbe'ach, and called the makom (place) El Beit-El; because there HaElohim appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of achiv. (OJB)

What happens when we enter into complacency? We begin to live outside of HaShem's will for our lives. So basically, we set up camp next to enemy territory and experience difficulty. That is exactly what happened in Ya'akov's life. (i) Ya'akov settles next to Shechem, (ii) Ya'akov's daughter Dena is violated by Ben Chamor the Chivvi, (iii) Shimon and Levi decide to kill all of the men of Shechem, and (iv) God told Ya'akov to go to Beit-El. Now remember, I am not saying that God has caused Dena to be violated, and God did not cause Shimon and Levi to kill all of the men of Shechem. These things happened simply because we live in a world filled with sin. However, in the midst of his problems HaShem uses the circumstances to call Ya'akov to Beit-El to build an altar and renew His covenant, and I believe He does the same in our lives too.

Another example of Ya'akov's complacency is the fact that Ya'akov needed to remove all the idols in his house and buried them at the bottom of the terebinth tree. When the spirit of God speaks to you, is your house clean? If not it is time to clean house so that you can move forward in your relationship with Elohim!

If the leader of the house would humble himself seek HaShem earnestly, and seek His face, HaShem will answer his prayers.

Each of us must go through a spiritual surrender. I believe Ya'akov finally had come to the point of spiritual surrender when he returned to the place he first saw Elohim in Beit-El. When Ya'akov arrived rather than building a pillar, he built an altar and called upon the name of the Lord. In the same way we must yield to HaShem's spirit in our lives. I want to leave you with a scripture from Deuteronomy, that shows how great and awesome HaShem is along with some suggestions for determining HaShem's leading in our lives.

Deuteronomy 4:7-8

4:7 For what nation is there so great, who hath elohim so near unto them, as Hashem Eloheinu is in all things for which we call upon Him? 4:8 And what nation is there so great, that hath chukkim and mishpatim tzaddikim as all this torah, which I set before you today? (OJB)

Discerning HaShem's leading

- Study the Bible for guidance – Regular Bible study saturates us with knowledge of HaShem's word which helps to condition our minds keeping us on the right path. Studying HaShem's word is important because He does not guide us contrary to what His written word says. We can learn from the mistakes in the lives of people which are recorded in the Bible.
 - *Psa119:105 Your word is a lamp for my foot and light on my path. (CJB)*
- Seek to do the will of Adonai which begins by obeying what Hashem has commanded. Ask HaShem for guidance and rely on HaShem's promise to guide.
 - *Psa32:8 "I will instruct and teach you in this way that you are to go; I will give you counsel; my eyes will be watching you." (CJB)*
 - *Isa58:11 ADONAI will always guide you; he will satisfy your needs in the desert, he will renew the strength in your limbs; so that you will be like a watered garden, like a spring whose water never fails. (CJB)*
 - *Psa25:12 Who is the person who fears ADONAI? He will teach him the way to choose. (CJB)*
 - *Prov3:6 In all your ways acknowledge him; then he will level your paths. (CJB)*
 - *Col1:9 Therefore, from the day we heard of it, we have not stopped praying for you, asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will in all the wisdom and understanding which the Spirit gives; (CJB)*

God says: Jer29:11 For I know what plans I have in mind for you,' says ADONAI,' plans for well-being, not for bad things; so that you can have hope and a future. (CJB)

In conclusion, I would like to leave you with a parting thought about our hearts. When the Lawyers/Doctors of the Torah asked Yeshua about which was the greatest of the commandments in the Torah, Yeshua quoted from Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (see *Matt22:37 Mar12:30 Luk10:27*). *“He told him, “You are to love ADONAI your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”* The part I want to focus upon is the heart. I believe that every word found in the scriptures has a meaning, and even every letter can show us a little glimpse of truth God desires us to know. Let’s begin by talking about our hearts. I believe there is what is called (i) the good inclination of the heart of man, and (ii) the evil inclination of the heart of man. Let’s call the good inclination the part that desires to do God’s will and the evil inclination all the other things we desire that does not bring glory to the Lord. Without these two inclinations, the world would cease to function. We can see this by listing a few examples (i) financial prosperity, (ii) sexual relations (I think this can be both, giving glory to God in marriage, versus one’s own desires), (iii) pursuing studies outside of studying the scriptures (secular schooling), etc. The point is our heart consists of two parts and all of our desires fall within these two categories. Now in Hebrew the word for heart is לב (Lev).

דברים 6:4-5

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד׃ וְאַהֲבַת אֵת
 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל־לִבְּךָ וּבְכָל־נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל־מַאֲדְךָ׃ וְהָיוּ

Evil inclination

Good inclination

Interestingly two letters “bet” are used in this verse which translates “with all your heart.” I believe these two letters are representative of the good and evil inclinations of our heart. God is telling us that we are to love him with “ALL” of our hearts which includes both the good and the evil inclinations. HaShem wants us to love Him with all of our hearts, honoring him with our lips, our eyes, our bodies, and all that we do.

Ya’akov finally had come to the point of spiritual surrender in his life, are you ready to surrender your life to HaShem with all your heart?

Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:

Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,

“Yeshua” King Messiah for ever and ever