Class # 7 - Parshat Vayishlach: Keep your friends close and your enemies closer!

Advanced Fellowship Parsha Class – Sponsored in memory of Alice Toby Barbanel Z”l

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Israel-Gaza Escalation After IDF Targeted Killings - 11/13/19

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=niuk37MvKco>

1. Why did Israel target Palestinian Islamic Jihad’s leader Bahaa Abu el-Atta in Gaza?
2. What was the response by Islamic Jihad?
3. Why doesn’t Israel go into Gaza and take it over and defeat Hamas and Islamic Jihad once and for all?
4. If Islamic Jihad has over 12,000 rockets in Gaza - why did they only shoot 200 into Israel?

The Midrash Rabbah relates that before Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi would travel to Rome to visit Antonius, he would study *Parshas Vayishlach* beforehand. Once it happened that he did not study *Parshas Vayishlach* prior to his trip and that mission was unsuccessful

*Jacob Meets Esau*

32:4 Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau, to [Edom's Field](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=1&CHAPTER=32#C597) in the [Seir area](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=1&CHAPTER=32#C598). 32:5 He instructed them to deliver the following message:

'To my lord Esau. Your humble servant Jacob says: I have been staying with Laban, and have delayed my return until now.

32:6 I have acquired cattle, donkeys, sheep, slaves and slave-girls, and am now sending word to tell my lord, to gain favor in your eyes.' 32:7 The messengers returned to Jacob with the report: 'We came to your brother Esau, and he is also heading toward you. He has 400 men with him.'

32:8 Jacob was very frightened and distressed. He divided the people accompanying him into two camps, along with the sheep, cattle and camels. 32:9 He said, 'If Esau comes and attacks one camp, at least the other camp will survive.'

Guiding Questions:

1. What strategies did Yaakov use in this first communication?
2. How would you feel if your brother was coming to kill you with a “seal team 6” squad of 400 men?
3. What experience does Yaakov share with any soldier on the eve of battle of being “very frightened and distressed.”?

' 32:14 After spending the night there, he selected a tribute for his brother Esau from what he had with him. 32:15 [The tribute consisted of] 200 female goats, 20 male goats, 200 ewes, 20 rams, 32:16 30 nursing camels with their young, 40 cows, 10 bulls, 20 female donkeys, and 10 male donkeys. 32:17 These he gave to his servants, each herd by itself. He said to his servants, 'Go on ahead of me. Keep a space between one herd and the next.' 32:18 He gave the first group instructions: 'When my brother Esau encounters you, he will ask, 'To whom do you belong? Where are you going? Who owns all this that is with you?' 32:19 You must reply, 'It belongs to your servant Jacob. It is a tribute to my master Esau. [Jacob] himself is right behind us.' ' 32:20 He gave similar instructions to the second group, to the third, and to all who went after the herd. 'You must [all] say the same thing to Esau when you meet him,' he said. 32:21 'You must also say, 'Your servant Jacob is right behind us.' '

[Jacob] said [to himself], 'I will win him over with the gifts that are being sent ahead, and then I will face him. Hopefully, he will forgive me.'

32:22 He sent the gifts ahead of him, and spent the night in the camp…...

1. What is the strategy of gift giving? Isn’t open bribery insulting?

**Rashi – Beraishit ch. 32:8**

והיה המחנה הנשאר לפליטה THEN THE REMAINING CAMP MAY ESCAPE in spite of him, for I will fight against him He prepared himself for three things: to give him a present — as it states ([Genesis 19:22](https://mg.alhatorah.org/Bereshit/19#22)) "So, the present passed before him"; for prayer — as it states ([Genesis 19:10](https://mg.alhatorah.org/Bereshit/19#10)), "And he said, 'O God of my father Abraham"; for war — as it states in this verse, "then the remaining camp may escape", for I will fight against him (Tanchuma Yashan 1:8:6).

1. What does Rashi tell us was Yaakov’s strategy?
2. Why isn’t War alone or Diplomacy alone or Prayer alone a good strategy?

[**4**](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8228/jewish/Chapter-33.htm#v=4) **And Esau ran toward him and embraced him, and he fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.**

**Radak**

וירץ when Esau saw that Yaakov had humbled himself so much before him, he forgave what he had done to him and his sense of compassion was stirred.

וישקהו, the word has a dot on each of the letters. In Bereshit Rabbah 78,9 Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says that everywhere where you find the dots do not cover each letter of the word underneath we give preference to the meaning of the text as is, without the dots. When there are more dots than letters, we give emphasis in our interpretation to the dots. In this instance, there are as many dots as there are letters in the word וישקהו, so that we understand that Esau kissed Yaakov sincerely with all his heart.

To this Rabbi Yannai countered by asking that if this is indeed so, why bother to put any dots on the word if they do not affect the meaning? We therefore must interpret that originally Esau had intended to bite Yaakov’s neck feigning an embrace. God made his teeth as soft as wax and Yaakov’s neck as hard as ivory. ויבכו, one on account of his neck, the other on account of his teeth.

1. According to Rabbi Yanai, what really occurred with Esav’s kiss?
2. What is meant by his desire to bite him?
3. What does the metaphor of “teeth of wax and neck of ivory” mean?
4. How does Israel deal with Hamas’s desire to bite?
5. What is the neck of ivory that the state of Israel has?
6. What is so difficult about this Hamas -IDF conflict?