



8 years of Points to Ponder on Parashas Vayishlach

**וישלח יעקב מלאכים  And Yaakov sent messengers  (32:4) – Rashi** tells us that he sent real angels. What is the point of Rashi’s comment? **Rav Schachter Shlita**noted that even when Yaakov was so busy working – as he describes to his wives before he leaves Lavan’s home, he still had loftier things on his mind. This is the intention of Pirkei Avos when we are עשה תורתך קבע ומלאכתך עראי  . People should make sure that no matter what occupies their day, their experiences should be Torah centered and growth centered. Those who do will have celestial matters on their minds all of the time.

**וישלח יעקב מלאכים  And Yaakov sent messengers (32:4) – Rashi** notes that there is a difference of opinion if these were real  Malachim or messengers.  But assuming that they were real Malachim why was he allowed to send them? Why utilize a miracle when a regular person would have been enough? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** explained that to the truly Shalem person, it was not the utilization of a miracle. To Yaakov it didn’t matter if the messenger was a Malach or a human. If he was bringing the word of Hashem THAT was the impressive part. One who needs to see the miracle in order to believe is really not as faithful beyond the miracle (See further “The Warmth and the Light” P. Vayetze and Michtav MiEliyahu I: p. 178-9).

**וישלח יעקב מלאכים  Yaakov** sent – Rashi notes that he sent Malachim Mamash. **Rav Shach ztl**. notes that Yaakov Aveinu is teaching us an important lesson in life. He is noting that the entirety of creation, INCLUDING the malachim were created to serve man. Man, can either be on the highest levels of spirituality and his existence as last in creation be like a king for whom others clear the way – or, if too haughty, man can be reminded that even the flies preceded his arrival. Rav Shach asks how knowing that everything was created for you will keep people from becoming haughty? He explains that EVERYONE has the responsibility to make the same declaration of “b’shvili nivra HaOlam”(the world was created for ME) . When we are all given the same princely status, there is no room for Gaavah (haughtiness) . He adds that the message behind the Malachim (angels) who accompany us home on Friday night is also part of the recognition that Malachim continuously accompany us – giving each Jew his malachim to work for him.

**עִם־לָבָ֣ן גַּ֔רְתִּי I lived with Lavan (32:5)** – **Rashi** notes that Yaakov was warning Esav that he continued to keep the Mitzvos in Galus and still deserved the Berachos. **Maran HaRav Schachter Shlita**  (citing the Beis HaLevi) notes that Yaakov sent the message to Seir in order to remind Esav that Eretz Yisroel was not Esav’s. He reminded him that he lived with Lavan as a Ger – not, as the Gemara (Bava Basra 8a) notes as a Yosheiv HaIr (to which you acclimate in 30 days) or even as Anshei HaIr (to which you become, after 12 months). Rather, for 20 years, Yaakov notes “Gartee” I was a Ger – a stranger – and therefore able to keep all 613 mitzvos. Maran HaRav Schachter Shlita adds that this is precisely why the Malach attacked Yaakov in the Gid HaNasheh which symbolized the terror of the future. The terror can try to take away our financial ability and success but it will never get the Spiritual success of the Jew.

**עִם־לָבָ֣ן גַּ֔רְתִּי I lived with Lavan (32:5) – Rashi**famously quotes 2 ideas – that I lived with Lavan and was not some sort of leader and the idea that Yaakov lived with Lavan and kept the 613 mitzvos. One approach is humbling and the other is competitive and challenging. How can they both reflect Yaakov’s intent? **Kli Yakar** suggests that Yaakov was telling Eisav that you cannot assume that the Berachos worked magically for you see that they didn’t. Therefore Eisav should realize that no matter what, Yitzchak’s Beracha will fall on the head of whomever it was intended. **Rav Bernard Weinberger Shlita** adds that the message is actually one of strength. Yaakov was telling Eisav that only one who knows he is undeserving – only one who sees himself as undeserving of being a Sar V’Chashuv in this house – and keeps the 613 even in Lavan’s – will be successful in this world. Yaakov told Eisav, you come with 400 men but know that all of that Kavod is not going to make you successful.

**עִם־לָבָ֣ן גַּ֔רְתִּי I lived with Lavan (32:5) – Rashi** adds the famous comment that while at Lavan’s Yaakov also kept the Taryag Mitzvos and did not learn from Lavan’s actions. What does Rashi add by noting that Yaakov did not learn from Lavan’s evil ways ? **Rav Don Segal Shlita** explains that we learn that one can keep the Taryag mitzvos and still be a Rasha. By declaring that he went in the right direction of observing mitzvos and still remained on course for living an ideal lifestyle within the boundaries of Torah but also focused on Torah Avoda and Gemillas Chessed.

**וַֽיְהִי־לִי֙ שׁ֣וֹר וַֽחֲמ֔וֹר צֹ֖אן וְעֶ֣בֶד וְשִׁפְחָ֑ה And I had an ox and a donkey (32:6) – The Brisker Rav ztl**. reportedly once quipped that if one gives too much credit to the accomplishments or goals of a Rasha, it is possible that one will become swayed by his ways. When one objectifies the actions, then one does not learn to make those actions into goals. In other words, one learns to appreciate the positive actions of someone with ulterior motives will help one be careful not to be swayed by those ulterior motives.

**וַֽיְהִי־לִי֙ שׁ֣וֹר וַֽחֲמ֔וֹר צֹ֖אן וְעֶ֣בֶד וְשִׁפְחָ֑ה I had an ox, a donkey sheep etc. (32:6) - Rabeinu Bachaya** notes that whenever we mention assets, it is the sheep that always come first. Here, the sheep are close to the end. Why the difference? Rabbeinu Bachaya answers that Eisav lost the Bechora because of the sheep that Yaakov brought so Yaakov didn’t highlight it. But why does Yaakov place the goats first when he sends the gifts to Eisav? Why wasn’t he worried that Eisav would react badly to THAT? **Rav Mordechai Druk ztl.** explained that from the time that Yaakov contacted Eisav, he also had davened to Hashem. Yaakov was secure in his Tefillah that he had nothing to worry about -- because Hashem WOULD accept his Tefillah.

**וַֽיְהִי־לִי֙ שׁ֣וֹר וַֽחֲמ֔וֹר צֹ֖אן וְעֶ֣בֶד וְשִׁפְחָ֑ה I have an ox and a donkey (32:6) –** Why doesn’t Yaakov mention the camels**? Rav Schachter Shlita** quoted the **Meshech Chochma** who explains that the original purpose of creation was to only do “good” always. After Chava’s sin with the Nachash, the concept of Tumah became apparent within the world. At that point it became the job of the Jew to do Tov in the face of Eisav who are bent on achieving Ra – hence the argument that he kept the 613 Mitzvos – a fitting contrast to Shor, Chamor etc which are distinctly categorized as either Kosher or non-kosher as opposed to camels which demonstrate their split hooves but are not Kosher.

**וְאַרְבַּע־מֵא֥וֹת אִ֖ישׁ עִמּֽוֹ Eisav is coming and 400 men with him (Imo) (32:7)** – Later with Yaakov it notes that he divided the camp that was with him (Ito). Why in one case does it note Imo while with Yaakov it was Ito? **Rav Aizik Ausband Shlita** quoted the **Gra** who explained that Imo denotes a coming together in action as well as in mind. Ito denotes merely action. Rav Ausband explains that when Eisav’s 400 men were coming they came in like mind and action. They all wanted to plunder and murder Yaakov. Yaakov, on the other hand was in like action with his camp --- his sons – but not in thought. For while Yaakov was afraid, his children believed that they would be saved from Eisav.

**וַיִּירָ֧א יַֽעֲקֹ֛ב מְאֹ֖ד וַיֵּ֣צֶר ל֑וֹ  And Yaakov was afraid and he was distressed (32:8)** – In last week’s Parsha, we learned how strong and smart Yaakov Aveinu truly was. Why was he afraid of the approaching army? **Rav Ovadiah Yosef ztl.** explained that Yaakov knew and believed in Rivka’s Nevuah that both children would die the same day. He knew that he could defeat Eisav but was afraid that the cost would be too much to bear as it would ultimately cost him his own life. He was not sure that this was worth it.

**והיה המחנה הנשאר לפליטהAnd the camp that remains shall be able to run away (32:9) – Ramban** notes that he prepared the children with prayer, sending gifts and preparing them for war. In his introduction to the Parsha though, he notes that we should learn from Yaakov to  prepare with prayer, gifts and Hatzala. So which is it – preparation for battle or for Hatzalah**? Rav Simcha Zissel Broide ztl.** explains that when Ramban is explaining Yaakov’s actions, he speaks of preparing for the eventuality of war. However in learning our lessons, we are told to focus on Hatzalah. The reason is that we have been made to promise (Kesubos 111a) not to conduct an offensive based on the rules of לא יעלו בחומה. If one does not have that option, one may/must conduct the offensive.

**קָטֹ֜נְתִּי מִכֹּ֤ל הַֽחֲסָדִים֙ וּמִכָּל־הָ֣אֱמֶ֔ת  I am undeserving of all of the Chessed and the Emes (32:11) – Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** pointed out that the land of Israel is the land of Chessed because without it, the land becomes filled with hatred. At the same time, it needs to be a place of Emes because otherwise it would be a land filled with Tumah. Thus, the land of Israel is a land that mimics the raison d’Etra of the Jewish people – to maximize the elements of truth and Chessed.

**קָטֹ֜נְתִּי מִכֹּ֤ל הַֽחֲסָדִים֙ וּמִכָּל־הָ֣אֱמֶ֔ת  I have been humbled from all the Chessed and all the Emes** (32:11) – Chessed is relative. One can have some, a lot or all of Chessed (hence the concept of chessed Shel Emes). Thus the use of the term “Mikol” is releant. But what is Mikol HaEmes? Either Emes is true or it is not**? Rav Hoschander Shlita (former Rav of Shaarei Shomayim in Toronto)** explains that there are two truths in life – empirical truth and relative truth. Yaakov was the one who was able to achieve it all and live within the world of objective, empirical truth.

**And he took from what came to his hand (32:14)** – The **Yalkut Reuveni** notes that he sent Esav an Eagle. However, the **Mattesdorfer Rav** ztl. notes that he sent Noshros (fallen from mizbeiach) . He adds that this is consistent with the comment of the Baal Haturim that the korbanos all end with mem --- as all were Baalei mum. Why? He explains, citing a famous Midrash (Tanchuma, Maasei) which says that the eigel that Eliyahu wanted used on Har HaCarmel for the Nivei HaBaal refused to go. Hashem told Bnei Yisroel for kavod Shomayim he wouldn’t budge and we shouldn’t either. Here too, none of Yaakov’s livestock wanted to go if it meant to be brought as a korban for Avodah Zara. Ergo, once Baalei Mum, problem solved.

**לְעַבְדְּךָ֣ לְיַֽעֲקֹ֔ב מִנְחָ֥ה הִוא֙ שְׁלוּחָ֔ה It is a Mincha sent to my master (32:19)** – When one tends flocks, it is common to use the assistance of dogs – sheep dogs, in order to keep the flocks in line. In sending his gift to Esav, Yaakov must have used sheep dogs as well. Why did he not mention the dogs? **Rav Mordechai Eliyahu ztl**. answers with a reference to a famous story told by the Ben Ish Chai concerning a certain Shul that was waiting for a tenth man for a minyan. As the Shamash waited for the tenth man and the sun began to set, in a distance he saw a man. The shamash called to him “Mincha, Mincha” and the man took off – in the OTHER direction! The Shamash ran after him and eventually caught up to the man. He thanked the man noting that now he understood why the dogs aren’t mentioned with the gift sent to Esav – for when the Dogs heard “Mincha, Mincha – they ran away.”!

**מִנְחָ֥ה הִוא֙ שְׁלוּחָ֔ה לַֽאדֹנִ֖י לְעֵשָׂ֑ו It is a present to my master Eisav (32:19)** – The Gemara (Sotah  41) notes that the Chachamim were wrong for patting a Rasha on a back. When it came to Agrippas it was the cause for a destruction against the Jews. **Rav Schachter Shlita** explained that Chanifa means when you praise a Rasha as a Tzaddik when the Rasha too knows that he is not the Tzaddik you are painting him out to be (consider **Rav Moshe Feinstein**’s Teshuva about honoring Michallelei Shabbos at dinners). The gemara adds that in this world one can give Chanifa to a Rasha as Yaakov does here because it is a Safek Sakanas Nefashos, However one should avoid it if it is not a Safeik Sakana.

**וְאֶת־אַחַ֥ד עָשָׂ֖ר יְלָדָ֑יו וַיַּֽעֲבֹ֕ר אֵ֖ת מַֽעֲבַ֥ר יַבֹּֽק: He took his 11 sons and crossed Maavar Yabok (32:23) - Rashi** notes that Yaakov hid Dinah in the box. He should have had her dress shabbily but to put her in the box was an act of being over cautious and hence he was punished with the episode in Sechem. **Rav Schachter Shlita** used to cite this as proof that parents should develop some degree of openness with their children. If we are too strong with them, then they will rebel. He added that a similar style is found at the beginning of the Parsha where the Midrash condemns Yaakov for confronting Eisav with a gift. He did not need to give a gift for this alerted Eisav to Yaakov’s presence. He should have just come back and not been overly cautious. He should have just ignored him and the same is true with Midinas Yisrael today. We need to strike a balance between reaching out to our neighbors and bowing down to them (See Haamek Davar here as well) .

**וְאֶת־אַחַ֥ד עָשָׂ֖ר יְלָדָ֑יו וַיַּֽעֲבֹ֕ר אֵ֖ת מַֽעֲבַ֥ר יַבֹּֽק: And he took his 11 children (32:23)- Rashi** notes that Yaakov hid Dinah in a box so that Eisav should not take her and marry her. **Rashi**adds that Yaakov was punished for this with the episode that happened with Dinah thereafter. **Rav Dovid Povarsky ztl**. asks why this was a punishable offense if, after all, one is not permitted to marry his daughter to an Am HaA’retz (Pesachim 49b) He answers based on the comment of the Alter of Kelm that the punishment was not for not marrying her off to Eisav but rather for locking her in the box with a force. In other words, it should have bothered him that he could not share his family with his brother instead of being comfortable with the concept.

**ויותר יעקב לבדו  And Yaakov remained alone (32:25)** – Simply put, the Possuk is telling us that since he was alone therefore he had to fight Eisav’s Malach. The Midrash provides a deeper lesson (Berashis Rabbah 77) based on the Possuk in Yeshaya – ונשגב ה' לבדו and its connection to our possuk. **Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel ztl.** explained that the name Yisrael speaks to the idea of שלימות. It is through that Sheleimus that one gets to experience the ונשגב ה' לבדו. How did Yaakov get that chance? Because he was alone. Rav Nosson Tzvi added that he didn’t understand how one could satisfy his Gemara learning with a Daf when he could learn two, or to learn for 8 hours when he could handle 12. He begged people not to compare to the Tzibbur or cultural norms and to set individual goals for themselves. Yaakov looked at himself alone, and even when attacked from a threat of the common man, he stayed himself and was successful.

**וַיֹּ֨אמֶר֙ לֹ֣א אֲשַׁלֵּֽחֲךָ֔ כִּ֖י אִם־בֵּֽרַכְתָּֽנִי: I will not send you (32:27)** - Why did Yaakov hold the Malach back? As soon as he let the Malach go, he would be the undisputed winner of the battle? And why wait for a Beracha? **Rav Avrohom Rivlin Shlita** explained that when we deal with Eisav there is no stalemate. Tumah and Kedusha cannot comfortably co-exist. Therefore Yaakov would not let the angel go until he blessed Yaakov.

**לֹ֤א יַֽעֲקֹב֙ יֵֽאָמֵ֥ר עוֹד֙ שִׁמְךָ֔ כִּ֖י אִם־יִשְׂרָאֵ֑ל Your name shall no longer be Yaakov rather Yisrael because you have fought with people and been successful (32:29)** – Why is the Jewish name Yisrael a stress on the battle and not on the success? **Rav Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi Shlita** explains that the greatness of Yaakov was the battle. He stood his ground and did not allow the Sar of Eisav in. He remained alone in that quest but he still did not give in. The idea of VaTuchal is based on Siyata D’Shmiya  -- not on the person. The name needs to speak to the person – the person of Yisrael must be ready to stand his ground and allow room for Yishuas Hashem.

**לֹ֤א יַֽעֲקֹב֙ יֵֽאָמֵ֥ר עוֹד֙ שִׁמְךָ֔ כִּ֖י אִם־יִשְׂרָאֵ֑ל Your name shall no longer be known as Yaakov rather Yisrael (32:29)** – What was the basis for the change in the name? **Rav  Kanatopsky ztl.** explained that the name Yaakov referred to one who avoided conflict and tried to be submissive if it was possible. Yisrael reflects the idea that when necessary, Yaakov was able to contend and hold his own both with man and Malach. Later, Hashem too, repeats the name change – says **Rav Asher Weiss Shlita** – because the Malach only comprehended the external attribute of leadership, what he did not recognize was the fact that Hashem’s name was added to Yaakov’s – guaranteeing that the Jewish people would never falter.

**לֹ֤א יַֽעֲקֹב֙ יֵֽאָמֵ֥ר עוֹד֙ שִׁמְךָ֔ כִּ֖י אִם־יִשְׂרָאֵ֑ל No longer will your name be Yaakov rather Yisrael (32:29) -** We find that Yaakov is still referred to as Yaakov so what was the big deal in the name change? **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks ztl**. explained thatthe malach and ultimately Hashem, hallenged Yaakov  to, “Let your name no longer be Jacob but Israel,” meaning, “Act in such a way that this is what people call you. Be a prince. Be royalty. Be upright. Be yourself. Don’t long to be someone else. This would turn out to be a challenge not just then but many times in the Jewish future.” Because often, Jews have been content to be who they are born to be. But from time to time, they have come into contact with a civilization whose intellectual, cultural and even spiritual sophistication was undeniable. It made them feel awkward, inferior, like a villager who comes to a city for the first time. At these times Jews lapsed into the condition of Jacob. They wanted to be someone else. Rabbi Sacks explained that the challenge issued by the angel still echoes today. Are we Jacob, embarrassed by who we are? Or are we Israel, with the courage to stand upright and walk tall in the path of faith? We have both titles but we do not need to be stuck being Yaakov -- sidekick to Eisav.

**כִּֽי־שָׂרִ֧יתָ For you fought with angels and men (32:29) – Rav Haim Sabato Shlita** points out that Yaakov is the role model among the Avos that speaks to those of us with internal tests and come through those tests on top. Using Yaakov as a model, those who deal with struggles (and I do not know anyone who does not) tend to grow from the experience and this often opens the path to better Avodas Hashem. **Rav Kook ztl.** notes that this is why we bow at the beginning of Shmoneh Esrai. At that moment we are tying to break free from our Yetzer HaRa and thus, we submit to Hashem and rise on His name. Thus, although Yaakov emerges from this experience as Yisrael, the winner, he is also still Yaakov, the one who claws from challenge to challenge.

**לָ֥מָּה זֶּ֖ה תִּשְׁאַ֣ל לִשְׁמִ֑י Why are you asking my name (32:30) - Rav Simcha Zissel Broide ztl** highlighted an important message here. Yaakov tries to quantify and classify the Yetzer HaRa in order to beat him. The Yetzer HaRa fights back by trying to be elusive. However, Yaakov teaches us not to give in. In order to beat the Yetzer HaRa we need to know who he is and where and when he is operating. The **Or HaChaim** notes that although Yaakov had seen angels many times, when it came to the Satan, he needed to see him face to face in order to beat him. Milchama with the Satan is a face to face undertaking.

**לָ֥מָּה זֶּ֖ה תִּשְׁאַ֣ל לִשְׁמִ֑י  Why do you ask my name? (32:30) - The Kotzker Rebbe** explained that this is the style of the Yetzer Hara. It messes with the head of Bnei Yisrael. The letter of Yisrael are also the letters in the words “Lee Rosh” -- that I have a head. The Yetzer HaRa messes with the heads of Bnei Yisrael by asking why we should bother thinking about things.

**עַל־כֵּ֡ן לֹא־יֹֽאכְל֨וּ בְנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵ֜ל אֶת־גִּ֣יד הַנָּשֶׁ֗ה Therefore Bnei Yisrael do not eat Gid HaNasheh (32:33)** - What is the reason we do not eat the Gid HaNashe? **Rav Avigdor Nebenzahl Shlita** explained that Gid HaNashe represents the Yetzer HaRa and that Hashem is demonstrating to us that even with all of its enticements, the Yetzer Hara is flavorless...it is nothing more than a piece of wood!

**וישם את השפחות ואת ילדיהן ראשונה וכו'And he placed the handmaidens and their children first, Leah and her kids last and Rachel and Yosef last (33:2) – Rashi** adds that אחרון אחרון חביב. This is odd. When it comes to Pikuach Nefesh, one is not allowed to place his own interests first. Why then would it be acceptable here? **Rav Elimelech Biderman Shlita** quotes the Shinover **Divrei Yechezkel**who notes that האלקים יבקש את נרדף seemingly suggests that Hashem gives better protection to those who are downtrodden and shamed. Thus, although being appreciated more than Bilha and Zilpa, Leah knew that she was in the middle. Thus, Yaakov set up the order in reverse order of who needed the most protection – not based on favor.

**עַד־גִּשְׁתּ֖וֹ עַד־אָחִֽיו: He bowed 7 times until he reached his brother (33:3) – Rav Yisrael Reisman Shlita** noted that Yaakov realized that in order to defeat Eisav, he needed to recognize that he had no hatred toward him. Quoting **Rav Mordechai Schwab ztl,** Rav Reisman explained that the 7 bows brought him into contact not with Achicha Eisav but rather only until he approached his brother. The warrior enemy Eisav was gone.

**וַיִּפֹּ֥ל עַל־צַוָּארָ֖יו (כתיב צוארו ) וַֹיִֹשָֹׁקֵֹ֑הֹוֹּ וַיִּבְכּֽוּ: And he kissed him and they cried (33:4) – Rashi** cites the Sifri that notes that it is a well documented Halacha that Eisav hates Yaakov but that at that moment his mercy was aroused and he kissed him fully. The **Netziv** adds that Yaakov too, had his love aroused at that time. **Rav Moshe Tzvi Neriah ztl**. learns a critical lesson here: He notes that there are moments in history that there is love between the individual descendants of Eisav and Yaakov. At those moments there are tears between them. But do not mistake the tears for a change in the relationship because the relationship is as clear as Halacha – Eisav ultimately hates Yaakov. Yaakov does not live with Eisav in the end – he moves on to Sukkot because that is the natural next stage in his life’s mission.

**וַיִּפֹּ֥ל עַל־צַוָּארָ֖יו (כתיב צוארו ) וַֹיִֹשָֹׁקֵֹ֑הֹוֹּ וַיִּבְכּֽוּ: And Eisav rushed to greet him and he hugged him and he fell on his face and he kissed him and they cried (33:4)** – Why Eisav cried is understood. However, the Torah’s use of the word “They” implies that  both Yaakov and Eisav cried for the same reason. How is that supposed to make sense? **Rav Shimon Schwab ztl.** explained that when Eisav saw that nature had changed course and that he, who was supposed to evermore hate Yaakov did not, he recognized how low he had sunk and how he really could have achieved what Yaakov did and would not. For this, he cried. Yaakov too, upon realizing that Eisav had really given up, cried as well, for the loss of the opportunity for Avraham’s grandson and Yitzchak’s son.

**יֶשׁ־לִ֣י רָ֑ב I have much (33:9)** — It is interesting that Eisav notes that he had “much” while Yaakov notes that he had it “all”. **Rav Nissan Alpert ztl.** pointed out that Eisav uses his hands as his primary means of connecting with the world. When it comes to the hands, you can have much but there is always more to have (similar to *Yadav Rav Lo*). However, one who is B’Shalom, whose interactions with the world rise and fall on Shalom, can have it all. Hence we find that Yaakov comes Shalem to Shechem — complete with everything in mind, body and spirit.

**כִּֽי־חַנַּ֥נִי אֱלֹהִ֖ים וְכִ֣י יֶשׁ־לִי־כֹ֑ל  I have it all (33:11)** – Eisav notes that he has much while Yaakov learns that he has it all. What did Yaakov mean when he said he had it all? He did not relate to physical items and when can one say he has all the spirituality he needs? Perhaps Yaakov wanted to make it clear that he had his priorities set straight and this was all he needed to guarantee success in life.

**לָ֣מָּה זֶּ֔ה אֶמְצָא־חֵ֖ן בְּעֵינֵ֥י אֲדֹנִֽי: For what purpose? Let me find favor in my lord’s eyes (33:15)** - Why does the Torah want me to know that Yaakov and Eisav debated the idea of traveling? Why does Yaakov tell him that he will meet Eisav in Seir and then go to a totally different place? **Rav Shmuel Goldin Shlita** suggested that an analysis of the simple storyline shows Eisav’s distrust of Yaakov and his desire to have Yaakov’s small camp assimilated into his. Thus he tried to get Yaakov to stay within his sight. When Yaakov tries to slip out, Eisav tries to put agents into the camp of Yaakov in order to keep Yaakov in his sights. Yaakov tries to keep everyone happy but eventually tries to keep everyone happy — at a distance.

**וַיָּבֹא֩ יַֽעֲקֹ֨ב שָׁלֵ֜ם עִ֣יר שְׁכֶ֗ם Yaakov came to Shechem Shalem (33:18)** - The Talmud (Shabbos 33b) notes that he was Shalem in body, material wealth and Torah. **The Satmar Rebbe ztl (VaYoel Moshe**) noted that if one’s Torah is complete then everything will work out. This is the Maalah of Yaakov who didn’t forget his Torah even when facing challenge. Yosef did note that he forgot (hence the name of Menashe).

**וַיִּ֖חַן אֶת־פְּנֵ֥י הָעִֽיר And he camped at the base of the city (33:18)** – The Talmud (Shabbos 33) identifies a number of possibilities as to what Yaakov did in order to improve the quality of life of the people of Shechem**.  Rav Schachter Shlita**noted that we Jews always seem to understand that when we get the gifts of the world, we cannot just hide in our Battei Medrashos and Battei Knessiyos – we need to offer thanks to improve the world.  This is part of the Hakaras HaTov that we owe to the Ribbono Shel Olam for Hatzalah.

**ויקרא לו קא-ל אלקי ישראלAnd he called him קא-ל, the God of Yisrael (33:20) – Rashi** explains that Hashem called Yaakov קא-ל. Nowhere is this seen as a חטא. Yet, the Midrash Rabba offers a different position, suggesting that Yaakov was saying that Hashem rules in the Heavens and I, on earth. For this statement, the Midr ash says that Yaakov was punished. How could it be that the Gemara and Rashi see no sin on Yaakov’s behalf here and the Midrash finds this episode the prelude to the one with Dinah? **Rav Shach ztl.** explains that the 2 positions actually do not contradict. Hashem raised Yaakov not to think of himself as less than the other people – he needed to value his position among men. However, he also needed to know that he was not done growing and that as far as his relationship with Hashem was concerned he would need to know that he certainly had further to go. If Yaakov did not see himself as valuable, he would likely not bother to see his uniqueness in front of people but if he was too haughty, he would not appreciate how much further he needed to go.

 **ותצא דינה בת לאהDinah the daughter of Leah went out (34:1)**– The Midrash tells us that Yaakov was punished for hiding Dinah from Eisav. However wasn’t he correct? Isn’t one supposed to be careful not to marry his daughter off to an עם הארץ? **Rav Yerucham Levovitz quotes the Alter of Kelm ztl.** who says that it was not the action itself but rather the way it was done that led to the stringency of punishment against Yaakov Aveinu. Sometimes it is not the action that we choose but the reasoning behind it that Hashem will judge in its totality.

**וַתִּדְבַּ֣ק נַפְשׁ֔וֹ בְּדִינָ֖ה בַּת־יַֽעֲקֹ֑ב  His soul cleaved to Dinah (34:3)** - There are three distinct descriptions of the type of dedication that Shechem describes with Dinah — Deveikus Cheshka, and Cheifetz. **Rav Mattisyahu Solomon Shlita** quotes **Rav Elya Lopian ztl** who notes that the same experience of desire needs to exist with us and the Shechina. If Shechem needed to convince the townspeople to have a Bris and didn’t have the deep-rooted desire to get the job done, he could never have even gotten the attempt out of his mouth. It was only because of his strong feelings that he pushed beyond obvious limitations to see himself get his way. The same needs to be true of our dedication and desire to the will of Hashem and our experience with the Shechina.

**כִּ֣י נְבָלָ֞ה עָשָׂ֣ה בְיִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל לִשְׁכַּב֙ אֶת־בַּת־יַֽעֲקֹ֔ב וְכֵ֖ן לֹ֥א יֵֽעָשֶֽׂה And so it should not be done (34:7)** – What was added with this phrase? **Rav Pinkus ztl.** explained that it is bad enough when something horrific happens. When it happens and it is extraordinary in the place it happens that is a double damning thing. When one slaps his Chavrusa in the Beis HaMedrash, it is a horrific thing – not only is the slap an embarrassment, the public shaming too, needs to be contended with. Here, the fact that Dinah was taken and abused and the people said nothing despite this being not ok, was reason for the city too, to be deserving of death.

א**ִ֚ם תִּֽהְי֣וּ כָמֹ֔נוּ לְהִמֹּ֥ל לָכֶ֖ם כָּל־זָכָֽר: If you will be like them as they have a Bris Milah (34:15) – The Sanz-Klausenberg Rebbe ztl.** once noted that unity is achieved within Klal Yisrael when people seek ideological common grounds. The ideological common ground we share with Jewish brethren needs to be with Torah standards – for without it, we cannot allow our standards to be “watered down.”

**עֲכַרְתֶּ֣ם אֹתִי֒ לְהַבְאִישֵׁ֨נִי֙ בְּישֵׁ֣ב הָאָ֔רֶץ בַּכְּנַֽעֲנִ֖י וּבַפְּרִזִּ֑י  You have embarrassed me (34:30)** – What kind of answer do Shimon and Levi provide to Yaakov’s concern? And why was Yaakov so worried about what everyone thought of him anyway? **Sforno**notes that Yaakov thought that although the brothers may have been justified in their action, the way that they appeared to be disingenuous in demanding that the men receive a Bris, was a problem because they would be accused of being dishonest and ruthless. Therefore, he felt, they should have been more thoughtful before they acted. **Rav Elya Svei ztl.** explained that in their eyes, Shimon and Levi responded from the perspective of what would be said in the Shuls and Battei Midrash (See **Targum Yirushalmi**) where the Chilul Hashem would be most apparent. Thus, Yaakov and his sons differed on where the focus of the Chilul Hashem was to be – and to seek to minimize it at all costs.

**עֲכַרְתֶּ֣ם אֹתִי֒ You have embarrassed me (34:30)-** Why did Yaakov care so much about his standing with the nations of the world? **Rav Hillel Lieberman ztl HyD** explained based upon the gemara (Shabbos 33b) that notes that wherever Yaakov went, he contributed to the social welfare of the place. He added that **Rav Kook ztl.** notes that this is part of our job as Ohr L’Goyim. Rav Lieberman explains that when we say Eichartem Osi – it happens when the nations of the world think that Bnei Torah are NOT a beacon of light to the world. Shimon and Levi’s actions gave pause to the outsiders to think that Bnei Torah only think about themselves.

**הַֽכְזוֹנָ֕ה יַֽעֲשֶׂ֖ה אֶת־אֲחוֹתֵֽנוּ Are they going to make our sister like a Zonah? (34:31)** - We do not find Yaakov’s answer to them but **Ramban** suggests that it was not that he agreed. Rather, he was upset with them because they engaged in trickery. The people of the city agreed to take the steps to become acceptable and Shimon and Levi changed the rules. However, **Rav Yonasan Sacks Shlita quotes from the Lekach Tov** who disagrees and maintains that Shimon and Levi’s argument defeated Yaakov’s point. In fact, the author of the **Tzror HaMor** goes further — even suggesting that Yaakov was happy or at least content with their reasoning and actions.

**הַֽכְזוֹנָ֕ה יַֽעֲשֶׂ֖ה אֶת־אֲחוֹתֵֽנוּ And they said “Are they going to make our sister into a Harlot? (34:31)** - Shimon and Levi seem to get the last word in, on the Dinah affair**. Rav Samson Refael Hirsch** ztl opines that the difference of opinion between Yaakov and his two sons concerned a values dispute. Shimon and Levi thought it critical to stand up against evil while Yaakov saw it more important to value life. Shimon and Levi note that had this been any other family, the city of Shechem and Shechem himself would not have DARED to start up. The response was a message that Jews are not Hefker. Yaakov still felt that the method was part of Yadayim Yidei Esav which never is successful in the end. The Jewish strength is in the Ruach, in the spirit and that is what always endures. The opposite raises a big Sakana.

**וַתָּ֤מָת דְּבֹרָה֙ מֵינֶ֣קֶת רִבְקָ֔ה And Deborah the nursemaid of Yaakov died (35:8) - Rashi** comments that Yaakov heard that Riva died at this time as well. If that is true, why doesn’t the Torah tell us THAT? Rashi adds that the Torah hid this detail so that the people would not curse the woman who gave birth to Eisav. **Rav Elya Svei ztl** added that the Torah wanted to teach us that we need to shed tears for an Adam Kasher (See Shabbos 105b). Had the Torah also highlighted the death of Rivka then Yaakov’s tears for Deborah would have been lost within his own mourning for his own mother. Sharing this thought during the Yom Kippur war, Rav Elya added that even when in America, we need to join in the Tzaros of the soldiers in Israel and the Tzaros of the Jews world-wide. But it was not enough to feel FOR the soldiers. Rav Elya encouraged each Yeshiva Talmud to feel like a soldier — not the ones on the battlefield but rather like the ones in the other half of the Elef L’Matteh — those who joined by being the partners who prayed and learned for the safety of others.

**וַתָּ֤מָת דְּבֹרָה֙ מֵינֶ֣קֶת רִבְקָ֔ה And Deborah the nursemaid of Yaakov died (35:8)** - Who was Devorah**? Ramban** explains that when  Rivka was growing up, who trained her to have Yiras Shomayim? It must have been Devorah who recognized the value of monotheism and had Yiras Shomayim. She is the one who died and is buried here. The **Paneiach Raza** adds that she is the namesake of Tomer Devorah -- the palm tree that Devorah HaNeviah lived under. **Rav Schachter Shlita** noted that there are many characters in Tanach whom we do not know much about but were major influencers on Judaism. Devorah is one of them.

**וַיֵּ֣לֶךְ רְאוּבֵ֔ן וַיִּשְׁכַּ֕ב֙ אֶת־בִּלְהָ֖ה֙ פִּילֶ֣גֶשׁ אָבִ֑֔יו וַיִּשְׁמַ֖ע יִשְׂרָאֵֽ֑ל And Reuven went and he removed the beds from the tent of Bilha the Pilegesh of his father (based on Rashi to 35:22)** – The interpretation and result of the actions of Reuven versus that of his intentions seems to be a major discussion among all Torah commentaries. **Rav Dr. Benny Lau Shlita** explains that Reuven is actually a complex character in Tanach. On the one hand he is the quintessential oldest child who stands in for the parent and is the locus of what is right or wrong to think and do (hence the story with the dudaim and the offer to take Binyamin with the counter offer of Es Shnei Banai Tamis) in order to demonstrate his responsibility. But at the same time his actions show an impulsiveness in carrying out the responsibility that is not always sound. Hence Yaakov blesses him Pachaz KaMayim. We can learn a sense of Achrayus from Reuven and the emotional pull but we need to put it into context when responding.

**וישמע ישראלAnd Yaakov heard (35:22) – Rav Haim Sabato Shlita** notes that throughout the Parsha we find Yaakov learning things – about Reuven here, about Shimon and Levi and about Dinah wherein he was capable of remaining calm. It was only at the time of his death that he reacts the way that he does and addresses these episodes. Why then? Rav Sabato explains that Yaakov led a life – a life that he calls מעט ורעים –  with many challenges. Challenges present both negativity and trauma but also opportunity to see Hashgacha. Yaakov chooses to see the Hashgacha. In all of the tough moments, before reacting, Yaakov attempts to figure out what Hashem wants of him in the situation.  Even when declaring מעט ורעים, he uses the phrase later to explain המלאך הגואל אותי מכל רע. For the Jew in Galus – for whom Yaakov serves as model – has the choices to make as to how to look at his history – as one of trauma that cannot be overcome or as one of a series of steps toward Divine destiny.

**וַיֵּ֣לֶךְ אֶל־אֶ֔רֶץ מִפְּנֵ֖י יַֽעֲקֹ֥ב אָחִֽיו: Eisav took his wives and his family and went to a different land (36:6)** – Rashi explains that he was embarrassed so he ran away. **Rav Gershon Leibman ztl**. explained that Eisav realized that as the son of Yitzchak and grandson of Yaakov he thought he should have achieved more in life. However, in the end, it was the “Battlan” who was the “Chacham”. That very embarrassment which led him to be known as the “Red” for his selling of the Bechora for red lentils , made him want to run away. However, rest assured that while one thinks s/he can run away in this world, one cannot run away in the world of truth. There Yaakov and his style will forever dominate.

**כִּֽי־הָיָ֧ה רְכוּשָׁ֛ם רָ֖ב מִשֶּׁ֣בֶת יַחְדָּ֑ו Because they had too much wealth and thus were unable to live together because of their cattle (36:7) – Rav Yerucham Soloveitchik ztl.** explained that the Beracha of Eretz Yisrael being Eretz HaTzvi – that the land like the skin of the deer always fits its inhabitants (See Gittin 57a) is true only for the inhabitants. However, once the inhabitants push one another around because of pursuit of wealth, then there is no room for the inhabitants.

**וְאֵ֛לֶּה תֹּֽלְד֥וֹת עֵשָׂ֖ו אֲבִ֣י אֱד֑וֹם בְּהַ֖ר שֵׂעִֽיר: These are the multitudes of the family of Esav based on their names in their places (36:9) – Rashi** notes that they were referenced by their countries**. Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl** notes that this is significant because there was no “self” to the children of Esav. They derived their sense of importance from where they were. However, places change – our job in life is to achieve permanence.

***Haftara***

**הנה קטון נתתיך בגוים בזוי אתה מאד  Behold you are the smallest of the nations and very much despised (Ovadiah 1:2**) – Why is Eisav called most despised? **Rav Aharon Kotler ztl.** explained that when Eisav turned away from having a relationship with Hashem,  he gave up on a raison d’etre for living. Someone who sees no purpose in existence is quite small-minded and despised.

**אֵיךְ נֶחְפְּשׂ֣וּ עֵשָׂ֔ו** **How Esav was searched out, how his hidden things were revealed”** (Ovadiah 1:6) – The Haftorah highlights the fact that Esav, as a thief tends to leave nothing overturned as he searches for treasure. However**, Rav Avraham Rivlin Shlita** notes that there is a deeper level of interpretation here. The Zohar notes that from the youngest ages, Esav was able to be sneaking around. The Zohar notes in detail how Esav would fool his father in Torah study which he skipped by being in the field and then later fooling his father into thinking that he too, participated in prayers. Moreover, Esav will later also try to appear as if he will be righteous. The Yirushalmi notes that in the future his act will be so good that it will even fool the righteous in Gan Eden. However, the Navi tells us that there is one whom you cannot fool. In the end, the internal intent of Esav will be searched out and revealed by Hashem.

: **מֵֽחֲמַ֛ס אָחִ֥יךָ יַֽעֲקֹ֖ב תְּכַסְּךָ֣ בוּשָׁ֑ה From the violence of your brother Yaakov you will be covered in embarrassment (Ovadiah 1:10)** - **Rav Alexander Zushia Friedman ztl** explained that this is similar to the situation where a young child comes home and tells his parent about a normally docile classmate who exploded on another friend. The parent realizes that if the docile was driven to act, and act loudly, the other person must have really provoked him. Similarly, Bnei Yaakov are not known for acting in this manner. If WE were provoked to violence, it must be indicative of the environment we found ourselves in.

**אַל־תָּב֚וֹא בְשַֽׁעַר־עַמִּי֙ בְּי֣וֹם אֵידָ֔ם  Don’t stand by your brother on the day he is made strange, do not rejoice when Yehuda is defeated  (Ovadiah 1:12)** – **Yalkut Shimoni** notes that when Nevuchadnetzer went to battle Yirushalayim, the children of Eisav set out on the roads to fence sit and support the victor in persecuting the refugees – be they retreating soldiers or potential captives. **Ibn Ezra** notes this prophesy spoke of the time of Churban Bayis Rishon. However**, Abarbanel** notes that the entire Nevuah of Ovadiah turns to a future based focus and speaks to the religious challenges we still face from the descendants of Eisav and Edom today. In the end the victors of Har Tzion will judge the mountain of Eisav.

**וּבְהַ֥ר צִיּ֛וֹן תִּֽהְיֶ֥ה פְלֵיטָ֖ה  And on Har Tzion there will be a refuge (Ovadiah 1:17) - Rav Dov Lior Shlita**explained that one needs to recall that with all of the antisemitism throughout the world and even post-Holocaust and with the founding of the State of Israel, one needs to simply open his or her eyes to see the incredible Hashgacha of Hashem in the world. S/he who can “get it” will be Zocheh to see the Yeshuos of Hashem which include the great consolations our prophets speak of.

**וְעָל֚וּ מֽוֹשִׁעִים֙ בְּהַ֣ר צִיּ֔וֹן לִשְׁפֹּ֖ט אֶת־הַ֣ר עֵשָׂ֑ו  The victors shall of Har Tzion shall go to judge the mountain of Eisav (Ovadiah 1:21)** - Ovadiah refers to the nations of Eisav as Bazui, despised. Why? **Rav Aharon Kotler ztl** explained that Eisav was so distressed when he didn’t get the Berachos that he gave up any and all connection with Hashem. This is a foolish mistake. For we are to use whatever we have in serving Hashem in this world and only then can we begin to worry about tomorrow. **Rav Dov Lior Shlita** added that when we see world events, we have also seen that Hashem is behind these events. If we recognize that and appreciate it, we will be Zocheh to Yeshuas Hashem.