

Vayishlach 5780

BS"D Parashat Vayishlach 5780

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Parashat Vayishlach and Preparation for Chanuka

Excerpt from my forthcoming book "Reflections from Yerushalayim"

THE STRANGER WHO WRESTLED WITH YA'AKOV

Following his wrestling match with the stranger (Bereishiet 32), Ya'akov returned home enjoying a sense of victory, "intact physically, emotionally, and with his wealth" (as Rashi comments). Yet a heavy cloud darkened his joy, for his brother Esav was waiting for him with 400 men.

The unavoidable encounter would not just be between two quarreling brothers, but would be a conflict between two worldviews destined to influence the entire course of history. Ya'akov prepared a gift for Esav, prayed and, as a last recourse, readied for war. He also divided his family and property into two camps so that should Esav smite one, the other could escape.

Dividing the family into two camps was an appropriate step. So, it is puzzling that at the last moment, prior to the

encounter, Ya'akov reunited the two camps. (The Torah even informs us how the family was arranged: Bilhah and Zilpah and their children were in the first row, behind them were Leah and her children, and last came Rachel and Yosef.) Why had Ya'akov changed his mind? Wasn't he still anxious and troubled?

The answer is concealed in that mysterious struggle that occurred the night before the encounter with Esav. The Torah states (Bereishiet 32:25), "Ya'akov remained alone. A man appeared and wrestled with him." But if Ya'akov "remained alone," does that not imply that there was no "man" present?

I suggest:

Ya'akov did in fact remain alone. The "man" who wrestled with him was none other than the inner spirit of Ya'akov himself. Ya'akov was still very afraid of his brother, yet had HaShem not promised to return him safely to his father's house? So Ya'akov was emotionally torn. If he believed in HaShem, then why should he be afraid? And if he was afraid nonetheless, does it mean that his faith in HaShem was tainted? Because of these uncertainties, Ya'akov was alarmed that he, too, might be tainted with his twin brother's wickedness and heresy. All that night, Ya'akov struggled with himself to clarify who he really was.

By dawn, Ya'akov had rid himself of all doubts and resolved that he was Ya'akov, son of Yitzchak and Rivka, grandson of Avraham and Sarah, and that he had nothing at all in common with his brother Esav. "I am a believing Jew," he decided. No more fear, no more compromise, no more divided camps. There would just be faith in HaShem's promise to protect him in desperate situations.

Ya'akov returned and united the two camps and, with a brave heart, let the whole family know that they must not worry because HaShem was with them.

Ya'akov stood tall as Esav drew near with his 400 men. But, at this fateful moment, Ya'akov did another about-face. Suddenly, he prostrated himself in absolute surrender with his face to the ground. He and his family bowed seven times before Esav.

Previously, Ya'akov had been told that his name would be changed to Israel, because he had triumphed in the harshest struggle of his life. At this encounter with his brother, Israel reverted back to Ya'akov – the same Ya'akov who, during birth, had grabbed onto Esav's heels. These evil heels were destined to trample on Ya'akov's future generations until such time that the Jewish people will rise up and proclaim that, despite all, they believe totally in HaShem.

We, Ya'akov's sons and daughters, survived the darkness of the exile, in which our status as the Chosen People was put to the test countless times. In the new dawn of Jewish history, HaShem opened up the gates of the land so we could recover from the wounds caused by Esav's descendants.

We succeeded within a few years in establishing one of the smartest and strongest armies in the world. We number almost seven million Jews in the Land of Israel and can count unfathomable victories over all of our enemies, achieved with the blessings of HaShem.

Our lives reflect the advanced stages of the coming Final Redemption. Ya'akov's true, authentic descendants know that following HaShem's path means advancing proudly towards victory.

On Mount Zion will be deliverance

Ya'avov understood and relayed the message to his children that their future survival in galut would force them to bow before Esav's savage offspring, until the time when HaShem

will give the order "NEVER AGAIN".

This occurred on the fifth of Iyar 5708-1948 C.E., when the God of Yisrael spoke through the mouth of David ben Gurion and announced the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz Yisrael "to be called Medinat Yisrael".

The establishment of the State was not intended to dispose or even diminish Esav's hatred towards Ya'akov, just the opposite, European Esavism viewed Ya'akov's return to Eretz Yisrael in 1948 as a personal challenge; and they are to this day covertly, stealthy, furtively, surreptitious planning the elimination of the Jewish state.

However, the prophetic words of Ovadia precede all their intentions and attempts:

וְיָשָׁב עֲשָׂו בְּאֶרֶץ עֵשָׂו

:וְיָשָׁב עֲשָׂו בְּאֶרֶץ עֵשָׂו וְיָשָׁב עֲשָׂו בְּאֶרֶץ עֵשָׂו וְיָשָׁב עֲשָׂו בְּאֶרֶץ עֵשָׂו (וְיָשָׁב)

וְיָשָׁב עֲשָׂו בְּאֶרֶץ עֵשָׂו וְיָשָׁב עֲשָׂו בְּאֶרֶץ עֵשָׂו וְיָשָׁב עֲשָׂו בְּאֶרֶץ עֵשָׂו (וְיָשָׁב)

:וְיָשָׁב 'וּ בְּאֶרֶץ עֵשָׂו וְיָשָׁב עֲשָׂו בְּאֶרֶץ עֵשָׂו וְיָשָׁב עֲשָׂו בְּאֶרֶץ עֵשָׂו

17 But on Mount Zion will be deliverance; it will be holy, and Ya'akov will possess his inheritance.

18 Ya'akov will be a fire and Joseph a flame; Esav will be stubble, and they will set him on fire and destroy him.

There will be no survivors from Esav." The Lord has spoken.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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