



MATTHEW 6

The Lilies of The Valley

VAYISHLACH (And He Sent)

Jacob facing the prospect of finally meeting up with his brother, Esau. The big day has come. What will happen when Jacob meets Esau after all these years? Has Esau's anger waned? Has he forgiven Jacob?

Before we continue, we must acknowledge that the story of Jacob and Esau has a far broader outcome that also is a life lesson to us.

Each of us must ask ourselves the question: Is my 'Jacob' ready to meet and make peace with my 'Esau'? Is my material life aligned with my spiritual one? Have I integrated what I do with who I am?

Keeping in mind Jacob had received Isaac's blessing intended for Esau. Fearing for his life, Jacob had fled to Charan, to the house of his uncle Laban. Jacob flourished., despite the many challenges he faced .

It is understandably, that Jacob seemed a bit tense and nervous and most certainly unsure how this meeting with his brother Esau will end up.

It was clear that Jacob didn't actually believe Esau had a change of heart. The question remained, was Esau still upset and his motive to attack him.

What happens when Esau and Jacob finally confront each other? What does it teach us about dealing with our own challenges, our own version of the Jacob/Esau confrontation? Can peace be achieved between matter and spirit, body and soul – G-d and the universe?

This week's Shabbat lesson is a critical one being that in it we learn about this momentous confrontation, which teaches us about all confrontations we experience in our life.

Jacob had courage and he decided to go forth and meet with Esau. Jacob certainly faced several challenges and hardships while he discovered deeper inner parts of himself. Jacobs changed being a resilient and strong person. With this he was equipped enough to finally meet up with his brother. Jacob was well prepared for the impending confrontation.

Before confronting Esau, Jacob first sends messengers to scout out what lies ahead and to meet Esau. The first step in facing an adversary is to understand their intentions, assess their strengths and review all your options.

Jacob is returning to Israel, twenty years previously he fled from his brother Esau who, furious at the fact that Jacob took his birthright and blessings from him.

Jacob and Esau represent “two nations” in a perpetual struggle, the battle between matter and spirit. This battle that will end up later as "Jacob's trouble"

The seeds have been planted for the confrontations to come. Many lessons can be derived from this week’s story in dealing with and conquering adversity.

During his years in exile, Jacob built a strong home and large family. He matured extensively during his twenty year tenure under his complex and cunning uncle and father-in-law, Laban.

Jacob was anticipating with great joy his return to his homeland of Canaan; however, in order to do so, he had to first pass through Edom, the territory of Esau, his estranged brother.

Genesis 32:4

“And Jacob sent [vayishlach וַיִּשְׁלַח] messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.”

Jacob left his unjust father-in-law, Laban, while he was off shearing his sheep. Fearing that Laban would keep his daughters, Leah and Rachel, Jacob stole away with all he

had: his sons, his two wives, and all of his livestock, heading for the mountains of Gilead.

After all these years in Haran, Jacob had to free himself from Laban's wicked manipulation and control, and fully succeeded.

Genesis 32:6–7

“Then the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, ‘We came to your brother Esau, and he also is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.’ So Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed.”

The time had come for Jacob to confront his past. More than two decades had passed since Jacob had posed as his brother Esau and received the first-born blessing from their father.

The last time Jacob had seen Esau, he was filled with murderous rage, vowing to kill him; therefore, it is no wonder that Jacob felt anxiety at the prospect of seeing Esau again, especially upon learning that his brother was headed his way with 400 men!

Had Esau held a grudge against Jacob all these years? Or had time eased the pain of betrayal and brought forgiveness? Could the generous gifts of livestock sent ahead to Esau somehow appease his anger?

Jacob was about to find out.

Jacob was a man of strategy: he divided his family and the people with him, along with his flock, herds and camels, into two camps. That way, if Esau attacked one camp, the other would survive.

You must be well prepared. Jacob's message to Esau was: "I have lived with Laban, and have delayed my return until now." Even while living with the corrupt Laban "I remained committed to the 613 mitzvahs," and maintained my relationship with YHVH.

Jacob's words teach us that before facing the harsh realities of life we must build a secure home base, firmly standing on the pillars and foundations of faith, spirit and a strong value system and ideals.

The only way to complete the transformation of the material world is by imbuing others with energy to carry the spirit further. Our work in refining the "Esau's" and "Edom's" of our life includes inspiring others to become 'messengers' that carry the power.

It is not enough to do the work alone; the barometer of our own success is our ability to affect and influence others in the same spirit. We are social creatures; our lives affect and are affected by other people. In life you have two and only two choices: Either you influence others or they influence you. Jacob teaches us that our work must not only consist of the 'big things' in life, it must include all aspects, even the 'small jars.' Nothing should remain neglected.

In preparation for encountering Esau the following day, Jacob ferries his family across the Yabbok stream, but he remains behind “alone,” to retrieve some “small jars” of his that were left behind. There, “a man wrestled with him until dawn.”

The “small jars” represent the last ‘containers’ that we need to elevate and refine in fulfilling our Divine mission in spiritualizing the material world. Each person is allocated an allotment of ‘Divine ‘sparks’ (spiritual energy) that is embedded – as energy in ‘containers’ – in our material possessions and property.

Everything that comes your way in life contains these ‘sparks’ – your home, relationships, furniture, work, car, food, entertainment, activities, travel destinations. You are charged with the responsibility to discover and reveal these sparks by directing all your activities to a higher, spiritual purpose.

Every part of our lives can and needs to be redeemed. Jacob prepares to face Esau by covering all his bases: He prays to YHVH; he prepares gifts to appease him; and he prepares for battle.

Genesis 33:12-13

Esau told Jacob: I will travel alongside you. My lord you know that the children are weak and I have responsibility for the nursing sheep and cattle. If they are driven hard for even one day, they will die...Please go ahead of me... I will lead my group slowly, following the pace of the work ahead of me,

and the pace of the children. I will eventually come to you, my lord, in Seir [Edom]

Witnessing their reunion, Esau suggests to Jacob that they come together and join forces. However Jacob wisely recognizes that their reunion was only a good beginning.

Jacob is telling Esau and all of us that there is much work to be done in resolving the inherent tension between the material and the spiritual. And this work must be done with complete focus. Jacob rejects even Esau's offer to help by putting "*some of my people at your disposal,*" even that poses too great of a risk. "*Just let me remain on friendly terms with you,*" Jacob tells Esau.

This is the first time that the Scriptures refer to those who are with Jacob as a nation or people group (ha'am אַמְּ).

"Jacob divided the people [ha'am, אַמְּ] who were with him into two groups." (*Genesis 32:7*)

That night, after separating everyone and everything into two camps, Jacob stays behind. While alone, he encounters an angel with whom he wrestles until daybreak, insisting, "I will not let you go until you bless me." (*Genesis 32:26*)

Jacob refuses to settle for anything less than a full physical and spiritual inheritance, and his tenacity is commendable; even the angel takes note of it.

But the angel's response is puzzling at first. The angel asks Jacob, “What is your name?’ He said, ‘Jacob (Yaacov יַעֲקֹב).”
(*Genesis 32:27*)

Why did the angel ask about Jacob’s name? In Hebrew, his name (Yaacov) can mean the heel of the foot (because he grasped Esau’s heel when coming out of the womb), but it can also carry a connotation of deceiver or supplanted.

The "angel" knew that for Jacob to embark on his divine destiny, he first needed to face the truth about himself. By stating his name, Jacob announced his character.

The angel then changed his name to Israel (Yisrael יִשְׂרָאֵל) because he had struggled (sarah שָׂרָה) with God and with men, and had overcome. (*Genesis 32:28*)

The name of Israel comes from two Hebrew words: strive (sar שָׂר) and Elohim (אל לֵאלֹהִים). Since the word sar also means prince, there is a connotation of princely power. In this sense, Israel can also mean Prince with Elohim.

A lesson is in this for everyone. To become the overcomers we are called to be and to experience full victory in our lives, there are times when we must be tenacious in our faith and times when we must prevail in prayer.

The Scriptures identifies Jacob’s mysterious wrestling partner only as an eesh (man); nevertheless, it becomes obvious that he was much more than just a man.

Jacob recognized this and, therefore, called the place Peniel (פְּנִיֵאל), which means Face of God, because He had seen God face to face (panim el panim).

“In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his manhood he strove with God. He strove with the angel and prevailed.” (*Hosea 12:3–4*)

This intense encounter left Jacob with a permanent limp from a dislocated hip.

“And the sun rose upon him as he passed over Peniel, and he limped upon his thigh.” (*Genesis 32:31*)

On his way to meet Esau, Jacob prepared for the worst to happen.

Positioning his family behind him, Jacob "went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother.

"But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept."
(*Genesis 33:3–4*)

While there is obvious merit in being prepared for the worst, the Bible teaches us that worrying about the future is pointless, since much of what we waste time worrying about never comes to pass.

It's not that we should deliberately fail to recognize the pitfalls before us and go ahead blindly.

The point is that we can put all of our cares and concerns into YHVH's hands, trusting Him to take care of us in any and all situations, even those that could cause us to be fearful or distressed.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to YHVH.” (*Philippians 4:6*)

Like Jacob, some of us have relationships that have been strained perhaps family members are angry over some past offense.

We may even have committed a great wrong toward someone close to us. In time and with YHVH's leading, even these estranged relationships can be healed.

Each of us has been given the ministry of reconciliation and should do whatever we can to bring healing and restoration to our relationships with one another, especially our brothers and sisters in the Body of Messiah.

“Now all things are of YHVH, who has reconciled us to Himself through Yeshua the Messiah, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.” (*2 Corinthians 5:18*)

Although Esau eventually reconciled with his brother, his

descendants the Edomites continued to harbor hatred against Jacob's descendants. It is an ancient hatred, the spirit of which continues to this very day.

We know that YHVH severely judges such violence.

In the Prophetic portion for this week, in the book of Obadiah, YHVH warns that because of their violence against the children of Jacob (Israel), there will be no survivors of the house of Esau, and they will be cut off forever.

“Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever . . . and there shall be no survivor for the house of Esau, for YHVH has spoken.” (*Obadiah 1:10, 18*)

This week's Scripture portion records the rape of Dinah, Jacob's only daughter. When Dinah goes out to see the women in the town of Shechem, the son of Hamor the Hivite (also named Shechem) takes her by force and lays with her; afterward, he wishes to marry her.

Interestingly, the Hebrew meaning of the name Hamor is donkey, a herd animal renowned for its strength, intelligence, keen sense of curiosity, and stubbornness, which arises from an instinct for self-preservation.

Shechem turns to his father Hamor for help in securing Dinah's hand in a marriage covenant.

The Hebrew in this passage of Scripture may hint that Dinah is responsible for her actions, though not her misfortune. In Hebrew, a male youth is called a na'ar נער and a female youth is a na'arah נערה.

In describing Dinah's adventure to see the daughters of the land, the Torah calls her a na'ar and not a na'arah.

True, it is only the difference of one letter, but this letter is the letter hey (ה), which can be used as an abbreviation for the name of YHVH, and it is the suffix that generally makes words feminine in Hebrew, which is a gender-based language.

“His heart was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob; he loved the young woman [han-na-‘ă-rā, הַנַּעֲרָה] and spoke tenderly to her.” (*Genesis 34:3*)

It perhaps suggests that Dinah's solo jaunt into the city was made without awareness of her vulnerability.

Dinah went into the city only to visit the women of the land, not the men.

As the sister of 12 brothers, the longing for female company her own age could be considered quite natural.

She may have felt safe in the land, as well, since her family lived in the area in peace, having bought the land they dwelled on from the sons of Hamor.

We do not know the exact circumstances. Yet, it seems that Dinah went out with the confidence of a young man, not conscious of the dangers of entering the city alone as a young woman.

Even today, women need to recognize their vulnerabilities and walk in wisdom, not putting themselves in situations where purity or sanctity of mind, soul, and/or body could be endangered.

Of course, parents, both spiritual and legal, have a responsibility to teach, warn, and advise their children about these realities before they put themselves in danger.

Whatever her reasoning was, Dinah bears some responsibility for venturing out alone, while Shechem carries the full responsibility for his criminal and violent act toward a defenseless woman.

Jacob's sons, Dinah's brothers, were outraged at the defilement and dishonoring of their sister. But Hamor spoke with Jacob, asking that through a marriage of their son and daughter, their two people groups could come into covenantal relationship.

The sons of Jacob dealt treacherously with Hamor, telling him that they would agree to his proposal on the condition that all the males be circumcised, since this was the sign of the covenant.

Hamor and Shechem, in good faith, agreed, and all the males were circumcised. On the third day, when they were immobilized with pain, Simeon and Levi killed every man as vengeance for Shechem defiling their sister. They even took all the spoil – their flocks, riches, wives, and little ones.

Simeon and Levi took revenge for a terrible crime committed against their sister, even though the entire city tried to make amends.

Rage can cause people to do terrible things. A bad temper is a character weakness that needs to be overcome if we are ever to be the people of YHVH, He desires us to be.

The word of YHVH tells us that the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of YHVH, and that anger rests in the bosom of fools.

It is natural to feel anger at times, but we must not allow anger to control us. The enemy wants to use our anger against us to cause much destruction.

In the way of Yeshua, we are not to return evil for evil, but to overcome evil with good.

Yes, we may become angry over injustice and the wrongs that people do against us or others, especially our loved ones, but this does not justify our sinning by committing ugly acts of vengeance.

“Be angry and sin not.” (*Ephesians 4:26*)

Did Simeon and Levi act righteously? Not in their father's eyes.

Although Jacob did not deny that his daughter should have been avenged in some way, to his dying day he did not forgive them for acting in rage.

Rather than blessing them on his deathbed, he cursed their anger and cruelty.

“Simeon and Levi are brothers; instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place. Let not my soul enter their council . . . cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.”
(*Genesis 49:5–7*)

And by the time they entered the Promised Land, the tribe of Simeon was the smallest and weakest (see the second census of Moses *Numbers 26:14*), and they were left out of Moses' final blessing before he died (*Deuteronomy 33*).

In addition, their small inheritance lies within the larger inheritance of the tribe of Judah — so they were somewhat scattered among Judah (*Joshua 19:1–9*).

The tribe of Levi is the only tribe of the twelve who did not receive an inheritance of land; yet, through their obedience to YHVH in later generations (*Exodus 32*)

By His grace, they did receive the privilege and responsibility of the priestly duties in Israel, to this day.

The word of God has so much to say about anger. YHVH Himself is called gracious and slow to anger (*Psalms 103:8*), and He asks us to imitate him in this.

“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.” (*Proverbs 16:32*)

This lesson concludes on a sad note, as Rachel dies giving birth to her second son, whose name is changed by his father from Ben-oni (son of my sorrow) to Ben-yamin (son at my right hand).

Jacob returns to his father, Isaac, who lives to an old age of 180, but Jacob never sees his mother again, since she died while he was away in Haran. Jacob's life shows us that we may go through many trials and difficulties, but through tenacity and prayer, we can overcome.

Yeshua told us that in this life we will have many troubles, but we can be of good cheer for He has overcome the world (*John 16:33*).

To this very day, the descendants of Jacob (Israel) still struggle with this Divine Man who is Yeshua HaMashiach (the Messiah).

Please pray that they will come to know the Messiah and to a knowledge of the truth, encountering Him in a personal way, and receiving their full inheritance of eternal life through faith by grace.

"You will again have compassion on us; You will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea." (*Micah 7:19*)

Speak to YHVH and implore Him to help you. Faith and prayer connect you to your higher purpose. This connection to above gives you the fortitude and persistence to face any challenge, the confidence to face any adversary.

As a last resort you must prepare to fight the enemy. The ultimate objective is not to destroy but to transform the enemy. Not to annihilate the material world but to shape it into a channel for the spiritual.

To do so effectively, you need to begin with prayer, to access YHVH's strength to succeed in facing your challenges. Then you need to assess the challenge and find a way to win it over, to speak to and persuade it on its own terms to reconcile with you. Finally, if all else fails you must be ready to go to war and confront your enemy.

At times you may feel that you are all alone in your work of redeeming the 'small jars.' People around you may be involved in all types of glamorous pursuits, and you could feel isolated in your spiritual search.

Your search may pale in comparison to what's 'happening' out there. Even then you must remain steadfast in your mission. Your integrity is at stake even when its unpopular.

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The spiritual journey is often a lonely one. It includes many challenges and battles. Standing alone you will encounter forces with which you must wrestle. And this wrestling will occur during the night, when it is dark and desolate, as Jacob wrestles with Esau's angel. This "wrestling" represents the cosmic struggle between matter and spirit, and Jacob's victory empowers us to prevail over any adversary we face.

In truth, you are never really alone. It only appears that way especially in the cover of night. When you wrestle with an adversary and don't run away, you realize that you have power. Sometimes that power is just enough to make it through the night, to see it through difficult times. But then when dawn breaks, you see that you have prevailed.

Indeed, the next day when Jacob finally meets Esau, Esau's heart opens to his brother.

“Esau ran to meet him. He hugged [Jacob] and throwing himself on his shoulders, kissed him. They [both] wept.”

After all Jacob’s work and preparation for this encounter with Esau – his 20 years with Laban, building his home and family, his prayer and gifts, his angel wrestling – he is able to face him and reconcile. The two nations and worlds, the two cosmic forces that are Esau and Jacob, have both matured to the point where they can begin to coexist with each other.

Today, after several years of work, the world has become refined and the reconciliation can be completed.

Jacob can finally fulfill his promise to Esau, *“I will eventually come to you,”* and the world can be united under one YHVH, with each nation serving in its own unique way.

The final frontier is upon us. As Esau, Jacob, Ishmael confront each other, they are challenged to embrace the Elohim of their father Abraham a Elohim who wants to be at peace with the universe. A peace that can only be achieved when we do our part in revealing the Godliness in everything we do.

Be blessed and stay blessed 🌷