

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

PARSHA INSIGHTS

ALL AND NOTHING AT ALL

[Eisav:] “I have plenty...” [Yaakov:] “I have everything” (33:9,11)

What’s the difference between someone who says he has plenty and someone who says he has everything? Someone who says he has plenty is telling you that although he has plenty, he *could have a lot more!* And someone who says that he has everything is saying that he is happy with what he has, though he may have but little.

“Plenty” and “All” symbolize the world/historical conflict of Eisav and Yaakov.

The nature of Eisav/Rome and their current cultural heirs is the desire to increase. More and More. Proliferation. Expansion. More money, more possessions. More. MORE. What’s the biggest? What’s the tallest? The fastest? More and More.

Can there be a more apt symbol of the More of modern culture than the InterNet? What is the boast of cyberculture? A billion home pages. Trillions of bytes More and More and More. More can never have enough. It has an insatiable appetite which mocks the food it feeds on.

On the other hand, “All” symbolizes the aspiration to return everything to unity, to the center. To the Center of Creation. To the Creator of “All.” That’s the purpose of Yaakov, of the Jewish People: To unify all the *plenty*, and to place it under the dominion of the One. To unify the great and vast “more” of the world so that it becomes “one.” For “on that day He will be One, and His name One.”

YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE

“And Yaakov was left alone...” (32:25)

There are some people who are so attached to their money that their money is more important to them than their bodies.

Some people even have their bodies deep-frozen in cryogenic suspension, hoping that one day they’ll be able to carry on enjoying their money

“That’s the purpose of Yaakov, of the Jewish People: To unify all the plenty, and to place it under the dominion of the One.”

where they left off.

What makes it all the more surprising is that our Sages teach us that us that **tzaddikim (righteous people) value their money more than their bodies.** (Chullin 91a)

We learn this from an incident in this week’s Parsha. Yaakov Avinu went back to collect some objects of minimal value that he had forgotten, even though by doing so he put himself in a dangerous situation.

Really, you would think that the more a person is immersed in the materialism of this world, the more careful he would be with his money. And the *more* spiritual, the less concerned.

However the reason materialistic

people are careful with money, is not for the money itself, but for what they can do with it: Pamper their bodies, gain acceptance and status...

So really, it’s their *bodies* which are important to them. The money is only a means to an end.

Tzaddikim, on the other hand, value their money more than their bodies only because of the spirituality that they can create with their wealth.

With your body alone, maybe you could build one room in an orphanage — which would probably fall down after not too long a time!

But with your money, you could hire the best architects and contractors, and build a whole orphanage... **and** put a plaque on the wall that your grandchildren will be able to look up to.

• Heard from Rabbi Mordechai Becher in the name of Rabbi Berel Eichenstein

THE FACE OF AN ANGEL

“And Yaakov sent ‘malachim’ before him to Eisav” (32:4)

The word in Hebrew *malach* can mean a human messenger or a supernatural one — an angel. Rashi teaches us here that these messengers were *angels*. How did Rashi know that?

It’s a disappointing fact that angels don’t walk around in this world with circular florescent tubes floating over their heads. If they did, they’d be much easier to identify. Rather, in this world, they clothe themselves in human bodies, and to most of us they are un-recognizable as anything more than flesh and blood.

That’s to most of us. Yaakov wasn’t most of us. He had the eyes to see who they really were. *continued on page four*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Returning home, Yaakov sends angelic messengers to appease his brother Eisav. The messengers return, telling Yaakov that Eisav is approaching him with an army of 400 men. Yaakov takes the strategic precautions of dividing the camps, praying for assistance, and sending a tribute to mollify Eisav. That night, Yaakov is left alone, and wrestles with the angel of Eisav. Although Yaakov emerges victorious, he is left with an injured sinew in his thigh (which is the reason that it is forbidden to eat the sciatic nerve of a kosher animal). The angel tells him that his name in the future will be "Yisrael," signifying that he has prevailed against man (Lavan) and the supernatural realm (the angel). The brothers, Yaakov and Eisav, meet and are reconciled, but Yaakov, still fearful of his brother, rejects Eisav's offer that they should dwell together. Shechem, a Canaanite prince, abducts and violates Dinah, Yaakov's daughter. In return for Dinah's hand in marriage, the prince and his father suggest that

Yaakov and his family intermarry and enjoy the fruits of Canaanite prosperity. Yaakov's sons trick Shechem and his father by feigning agreement — however, they stipulate that all the males of the city must undergo *bris mila*. While weakened by the circumcision, Shimon and Levi, two of Dinah's brothers, enter the town and execute all the males. This action is justified by the city's tacit complicity in the abduction of their sister. Hashem commands Yaakov to go to Beis-El and build an altar there. His mother Rivka's nurse, Devorah, dies and is buried below Beis-El. Hashem appears again to Yaakov, blesses him and changes his name to Yisrael. While traveling, Rachel goes into labor and gives birth to Binyamin, the twelfth of the tribes of Yisrael. She dies in childbirth and is buried on the Beis Lechem Road. Yaakov builds a monument to her, which is still there today. Yitzchak passes away at the age of 180, and is buried by his sons. The Parsha concludes by listing Eisav's descendants.

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General Editor:
Rabbi Moshe Newman
Editorial & Web Advisor:
Rabbi Reuven Lauffer
Web Production:
Lev Seltzer - Michael Treblow

Contributing Editors:
Weekly Daf, Sing My Soul:
Rav Mendel Weinbach
Ask the Rabbi:
Rabbi Moshe Lazerus,
Rabbi Avrohom Lefkowitz,
Rabbi Reuven Subar
Insights, Overview, Haftorah:
Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

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SING My SOUL INSIGHTS INTO THE SHABBOS ZEMIRO

KOL MEKADESH "WHOEVER KEEPS SHABBOS..."

"His reward is very great according to his action"

The reward for Sabbath observance varies according to the effort one invests in sanctifying the day. Careful avoidance of any form of forbidden activity and leisure hours spent in Torah study will certainly reap greater reward than minimal observance. The "very great"

reward refers to the credit one gets from the results of his mitzvah. The cosmic effect of a mitzvah, whose impact reaches the highest heavens, and the influence it exerts upon its performer and those around him, are rewarded by Hashem, along with the reward for doing the mitzvah itself. Sabbath observance is therefore an opportunity for gaining a "very great" reward.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What sort of messengers did Yaakov send to Eisav?
2. Why was Yaakov both 'afraid' and 'distressed'?
3. In what three ways did Yaakov prepare for his encounter with Eisav?
4. Where did Dinah hide and why?
5. After helping his family across the river, Yaakov remained alone on the other side. Why?
6. What was the angel forced to do before Yaakov agreed to release him?
7. What was it that healed Yaakov's leg?
8. Why did Eisav embrace Yaakov?
9. Why did Yoseph stand between Eisav and Rachel?
10. What happened to the 400 men who accompanied Eisav?
11. On what day of the week did Yaakov encamp near Shechem?
12. What did Shimon and Levi do wrong when they killed the people of Shechem?
13. What does the name *Binyamin* mean? Why did Yaakov call him that?
14. Who was born along with Binyamin?
15. In verse 35:22 the Torah states "The sons of Yaakov were twelve." Why?
16. How old was Yaakov when Yoseph was sold?
17. Eisav changed the name of his wife, Ahalivamah, to Yehudis. Why?
18. Which three categories of people have their sins pardoned?
19. Why did Eisav leave the land of Canaan?
20. By what other name was Magdiel known?

BONUS QUESTION?

"And Yaakov said to Shimon and Levi "You have besmirched me, giving me a bad reputation amongst those who dwell in the land..." (34:31)

Yaakov never had any intention of letting his daughter marry a Canaanite. He knew all along that the agreement with Shechem was no more than a ruse. So why was Yaakov suddenly angry at Shimon and Levi?

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

"And Hashem said to him: "...No longer will you be called Yaakov, rather *Yisrael* will be your name..." (35:10)

The word *Yisrael* combines the first letter from the names of all the Patriarchs and Matriarchs: **Y**ud - Yitzchak & Yaakov (i) **S**in - Sarah **R**eish - Rivka & Rachel **A**leph - Avraham (e) **L**amed - Leah.

HAFTORAH: OVADIAH 1:1-21

The entire Book of Ovadiah, the shortest in all of the *Tanach*, is this week's Haftorah. Ovadiah was a convert to Judaism from the nation of Edom. Eisav lived among two *tzaddikim*, Yitzchak and Rivka, and failed to learn from them — Ovadiah lived among two of the wickedest people, Achav and Jezabel, yet he remained a *tzaddik*. His prophecy follows Eisav/Edom through various periods of history until its eventual downfall in the times of the *Mashiach*.

THE EAGLE HAS LANDED

"If he will rise up like an eagle and if he will make his nest among the stars — even from there I will bring him down" (1:4).

In last week's Parsha, Yaakov has a dream of angels ascending and descending a ladder. The *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer* explains that these angels represent the four nations who will exile the Jewish People.

At first, Yaakov saw the guardian angels of Babylon, Persia and Greece ascend and descend in

succession. Finally, the protecting angel of Rome/Edom climbed up the ladder, but *he didn't come down*. Yaakov feared that this final exile would never end, until Hashem said "*If he will rise up like an eagle and if he will make his nest among the stars — even from there I will bring him down.*"

We have still not emerged from that that final exile.

If a single moment in recent history epitomizes the over-confidence of our age, it is arguably the 'Moon Landing' in 1969. It seemed at the time that "we have the technology — we can do anything!" (Since then there has been the rude awakening of unimaginable mindless violence, urban poverty and pandemic disease, to knock the gloss off that arrogant assumption).

The first words broadcast from the moon were "*Houston, this is Tranquillity Base. The Eagle has landed.*"

Nearly 2,000 years ago, Ovadiah predicted: "*If he will rise up like an eagle and if he will make his nest among the stars — even from there I will bring him down.*"

WEEKLY DAF

CHULLIN 96 - 102

WHEN DID IT ALL BEGIN?

When Yaakov Avinu suffered thigh injury in his struggle with the Angel of Eisav, the Torah tells us:

“The Children of Israel will therefore not eat the *gid hanasheh* — the sinew of the vein — to this very day for he impaired the thigh of Yaakov...” (Bereishis 32:33)

When did the Children of Israel begin observing this mitzva?

Rabbi Yehuda contends that it was in effect from Yaakov's time, because it is mentioned in the Torah at that point of history. The majority view of the Sages, however, is that the mitzva was commanded at Sinai along with all the other mitzvos, and Moshe was merely instructed to write it in that part of the Torah to explain its historical significance.

Rambam (*Hilchos Melachim* 9:1) writes that Yaakov observed the mitzva of *gid hanasheh*. Since this seems to be in conflict with the accepted majority opinion the commentaries explain that Rambam is careful to note that Yaakov voluntarily practiced this mitzva, but that it became obligatory only at Sinai.

The practical ramification of the two aforementioned opinions as to when the mitzva was commanded is whether the ban on *gid hanasheh* applies to non-kosher animals as well as to kosher ones. According to Rabbi Yehuda it also applies to non-kosher ones, because if it came into effect in the days of Yaakov, all animals were permissible to eat at that time, so the prohibition would apply equally to all of them. If, howev-

er, the mitzva began only at Sinai, it was limited to those animals whose flesh is kosher.

An interesting sidelight is the question of the *gid hanasheh* of a human. Whether this will be forbidden by Torah Law will depend on whether the ban on human flesh is of Torah origin (Rambam) or only of rabbinic origin (Rashba).

• *Chullin 100b*

THE YOM KIPPUR THAT WASN'T

A cryptic message was received by the Sages in Babylon from Rabbi Yitzchak in *Eretz Yisrael*. He quoted Rabbi Yochanan's ruling in a situation when Yom Kippur was on Shabbos and someone did some form of work forbidden on those holy days. If he was aware that it was Yom Kippur but unaware that it was Shabbos, he is obligated to bring the *chatass* sin offering, which the Torah provided as an atonement for an unintentional sin.

But, if he was aware that it was Shabbos but unaware that it was Yom Kippur, he will not be required to bring any sacrifice at all. (There is no sacrifice for intentional sin.)

After an effort by the Sage Abaye to explain why it is possible for the Shabbos ban to be in effect when that day coincides with Yom Kippur but not so for the Yom Kippur ban which is blocked from taking effect by the Shabbos one, the Sage Rava presents this fascinating explanation of Rabbi

Yitzchak's message:

A decree by an oppressive government had prevented Jews from observing Yom Kippur that year. In order to avoid the danger of Jews forgetting about the existence of Yom Kippur, the Sages decreed that the following Shabbos would be observed as Yom Kippur as well. Their oppressors would not be aware of their action because Jews never worked on Shabbos in any case. Rabbi Yochanan's ruling related to work done on that day, and limited the possibility of a sacrifice to an unintentional violation of Shabbos — which that day was in reality — but ruled out any sacrifice for unintentional violation of Yom Kippur since that day was not Yom Kippur in reality.

But why would we have ever assumed that there could be a need for a sacrifice for a Yom Kippur sin on a day which was not really Yom Kippur?

The Torah delegated to the Sages the absolute power to determine the dates of all holidays, including Yom Kippur, based on when they declared the beginning of the month, and even if they made an error in their calculations or were duped by false witnesses, their determination is binding. There is even a case in *Mesechta Rosh Hashana* (21a) of Yom Kippur being on a different date in *Eretz Yisrael* and in Babylon because of this subjective authority. Rabbi Yochanan ruled, however, that this is not relevant to our case because Yom Kippur had already been designated on another day and could not be shifted in reality to Shabbos.

• *Chullin 101b*

PARSHA INSIGHTS

continued from page one

Ostensibly, the words “**before him**” in this verse are redundant. Obviously if Yaakov sent messengers to Eisav, they went before him.

Rather, in front of Eisav these messengers would appear as mere flesh and blood, but “**before him**” — i.e., before Yaakov — they were clearly supernatural.

• *Based on Degel Machane Ephraim*

TRUNK CALL

“**But he [Yaakov] got up that night and took with him... his eleven children.**” (32:23)

Rashi tells us that only 11 of Yaakov's

children are accounted for here, and that Yaakov had put Dinah in a trunk so that Eisav wouldn't lay eyes on her.

How did Rashi know that it was Dinah that wasn't present? Maybe she was among the 11 children numbered here, and it was one of Yaakov's sons who did not attend this tense meeting with their uncle Eisav.

The Talmud tells us that the reason that the *Beis Hamikdash* (Holy Temple) was built in Binyamin's part of the Land of Israel was because he didn't bow down to his uncle Eisav. This was because he hadn't been born at the time of this above incident.

If so, according to this, if it had been one of Yaakov's other **sons** who was not present at the meeting with Eisav, and therefore did not bow to him, why wasn't the *Beis Hamikdash* built on that son's territory instead of on Binyamin's?

Thus, it must have been that all the tribes of Israel had been there with Yaakov, and they all bowed to Eisav except for Binyamin who was yet unborn. It was only Dinah who could have been absent from their number.

• *The Vilna Gaon in Kol Eliyahu*

ASK ANY SWORDFISH YOU HAPPEN TO SEE

David Notowitz

<notowitz@leonardo.net>

wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
Is swordfish kosher? Are there differing opinions on this?
Dave

Nisso Khobie at

<H.H.M.I.@hhmi.od.nih.gov>

wrote:

Hi, I had a quick kashrut question. I was wondering about swordfish, because I have heard from different people that some say it is kosher and some say it is not. I am not very familiar with the fish itself and whether or not it has fins and scales but it seems that it does. If you can give me an answer and explanation I would be very appreciative.

Jeff Selik

<hillside@ix.netcom.com>

wrote:

I would like a final ruling if in fact swordfish is kosher? There seems to be so much confusion as to it being a fish available to eat for those of us that keep Kosher. Please advise.

Dear Dave, Nisso and Jeff,

A fish is kosher only if it has scales which can be removed from the skin. If the scales are not removable, the fish is not kosher.

Take sturgeon, for example. Sturgeon is often smoked and its eggs used for caviar. But it's not kosher,

because its scales can't be removed without ripping the skin.

The swordfish is highly regarded as a game-fish and for its flavor. But in the adult stage the swordfish is totally lacking in scales.

Although at birth it has scales, these scales are attached in such a manner that they are not readily removable without destroying the underlying skin.

Hence, the swordfish does not qualify as kosher. So next time you see a swordfish, be *en garde*.

Sources:

- Leviticus 11:12
- Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg, Responsa Tzitz Eliezer, 11:54

FLOOD FIGURES

Joe Schoemann

<joeschoe@actcom.co.il> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Concerning the flood of Noah, Rashi writes (Bereishit 8:4) it took four days to reduce one cubit of water because it took sixty days to go down 15 cubits. My question is, scientifically, this is not necessarily true, being that that the earth is round, so as you get higher off the ground the circumference gets larger — i.e., more water per cubit of height. So how can Rashi assume that it took each cubit the same amount of time?

Dear Joe Schoemann,

You're absolutely right! If a ball of water loses water at a constant rate, so the smaller it gets, the faster the outside layer shrinks. Why, then, does Rashi seem to assume that the

water's height went down at a constant rate? That's a good question.

But let's think. How big would a ball of water be if it circled the earth? Well, it's about 4,000 miles from the earth's center to the mountaintops, so a ball of water around the earth would be 4,000 miles from center to surface.

Now, Rashi bases his calculations on a period when the water went down 15 cubits — approximately 23 feet. Compared to 4000 miles, 23 feet is about *one ten-thousandth of one percent!*

So, you're absolutely right! Rashi's figures are not exact. They are off by a miniscule amount. Obviously, this rough approximation could be made less rough by calculating the relative volume of water absorbed during each four-day period during the sixty days, using the formula $V = \frac{4}{3} \pi R^3$.

By the way:

Q: Where was Noach when the lights went out?

A: In d'ark.

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Yoel Aharon Weinstein

<yoelahrn@ix.netcom.com>

wrote:

I was reading *Midrash Says* and came across the following as a possible Yiddle Riddle:

"On one historic Yom Kippur, the entire Jewish people ate and drank and were praised for it by Hashem." When did this occur?

Answer Next Week...

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PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 32:4 - Angels.
2. 32:8 - He was afraid he would be killed. He was distressed that he would have to kill.
3. 32:9 - He sent gifts, he prayed, and he prepared for war.
4. 32:23 - Yaakov hid her in a chest so Eisav wouldn't see her and want to marry her.
5. 32:25 - He went back to get some small containers he had forgotten.
6. 32:27 - Admit that the blessings given by Yitzchak rightfully belong to Yaakov.
7. 32:32 - The shining of the sun.
8. 33:4 - His pity was aroused when he saw Yaakov bowing to him so many times.
9. 34:7 - To stop Eisav from gazing at her.
10. 34:16 - They slipped away one by one.
11. 34:18 - Friday afternoon.
12. 34:25 - They acted without consulting their father.
13. 35:18 - *Ben-Yemin* means 'Son of the South.' He was the only son born in the Land of Israel, which is south of Aram Naharaim.
14. 35:17 - His two twin sisters.
15. 35:22 - To stress that all of them including Reuven, were righteous.
16. 35:29 - One hundred and eight.
17. 35:2 - To fool Yitzchak into thinking that she had abandoned idolatry.
18. 36:3 - One who converts, one who is elevated to a position of leadership, and one who marries.
19. 36:7 - He was ashamed for having sold his birthright.
20. 36:43 - Romi (Rome).

BONUS ANSWER!

Yaakov knew that the brothers wanted to rescue Dinah while the people of Shechem were weak from the circumcision. But he didn't know that they were going to kill all of the people.

• Ramban

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

	RAMBAN	35:16	Rachel's Tomb	33:4	Surviving Eisav
32:4	Yaakov's Error			34:27	The Guilt of Shechem
32:9	Sign for the Future		SFORNO	35:10	The Meaning of Yaakov's Name
32:26	The <i>Gid Hanashe</i>	32:19	Strategy of the Gifts	35:23	The Power of Repentance
33:14	The Journey to Seir	32:25	The Wrestling Match		SEFER HACHINUCH
34:12	Dinah	32:26	Yaakov's Injury	3	The <i>Gid Hanashe</i>
35:8	Rivka's Death	32:33	The <i>Gid Hanashe</i>		

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