

Parsha Q&A



Parshas Vayishlach

For the week ending 16 Kislev 5759
4 & 5 December 1998

Parsha Questions

1. What sort of messengers did Yaakov send to Esav?
2. Why was Yaakov both "afraid" and "distressed?"
3. In what three ways did Yaakov prepare for his encounter with Esav?
4. Where did Dina 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 Esav embrace Yaakov?
9. Why did Yosef stand between Esav and Rachel?
10. Give an exact translation of the word "nisa" in verse 33:12.
11. What happened to the 400 men who accompanied Esav?
12. Why does the Torah refer to Dina as the "daughter of Leah" and not the "daughter of Yaakov?"
13. Whom should Shimon and Levi have consulted concerning their plan to kill the people of Shechem?
14. Who was born along with Binyamin?
15. What does the name *Binyamin* mean? Why did Yaakov call him that?
16. In verse 35:22 the Torah states "The sons of Yaakov were twelve." Why?
17. How old was Yaakov when Yosef was sold?
18. Esav changed the name of his wife, Ahalivamah, to Yehudis. Why?
19. Which three categories of people have their sins pardoned?
20. What is the connection between the Egyptian oppression of the Jewish people and Esav's decision to leave the land of Canaan?

Sherlox and the Miracle Mystery

"I don't understand," said Watstein. "The verse says: I have been diminished by all the kindnesses and truth You have done for Your servant; for with my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps." (Bereishis 32:11)

"Yaakov was thankful. He left Canaan penniless and returned wealthy," said world famous detective Sherlox Holmes. "Is that hard to understand?"

"My question exactly!" said Watstein. "The phrase 'with my stick' means 'penniless.' Why, then, does Rashi need to bring a midrash? The midrash says that Yaakov put his staff into the Jordan and the waters of the Jordan split."

"Dr. Watstein, if the Torah had only meant 'penniless,' don't you suppose the Torah would have said so?" said Sherlox.

"No! The Torah is replete with idioms! Example: 'With his shirt-tails' (Shemos 21:3) means 'all alone.' Rashi doesn't comment there. Why does he here?"

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel

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Parshas **Vayishlach** — 16 Kislev 5759, 4 & 5 December 1998

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Answer

“Yaakov said his merits were ‘diminished by all the kindness.’ What specifically diminished his merits?” asked Sherlock.

“The Divine kindness, as Yaakov himself says,” said Watstein.

“But what specific type of kindness?” asked Sherlock.

“I don’t see what you’re getting at” said Watstein.

“Let me ask you a different question. Where else do we see an instance of someone fearing that his merits had been diminished?”

“Hmm...” said Watstein. “How about Avraham? (Bereishis 15:1 & Rashi) He feared that he had used up his merit in the battle against the four kings.”

“And how did Avraham defeat them?” asked Sherlock.

“How? By virtue of ... a miracle! (Rashi Ibid.) Aha! I see what you’re getting at. You’re suggesting that the diminishing of a person’s merit occurs when he receives Divine kindness above the ordinary, such as a miracle.”

“Yes, I am suggesting that. My theory is that diminishing merit is tied specifically to the occurrence of a miracle. (see Shabbos 32a) Yet, Yaakov mentions no explicit miracle. Rashi, therefore, cites a midrash which explains that Yaakov was indeed referring to a miracle: The miraculous splitting of the Jordan.”

(Sherlock” is by Reuven Subar, inspired by Dr. Avigdor Bonchek’s “What’s Bothering Rashi”)

I Did Not Know That!

“Thus say to my master, to Esav...” (32:5)

Yaakov calls Esav “my master” eight times in this week’s Parsha. Because of this, Esav merits that eight kings emerge from his descendants before any king emerges from Yaakov’s descendants.

Chizkuni

Recommended Reading List

Ramban

32:4	Yaakov’s Error
32:9	Sign for the Future
32:26	The <i>Gid Hanashe</i>
33:14	The Journey to <i>Seir</i>
34:12	Dina
35:8	Rivka’s Death
35:16	Rachel’s Tomb

Sefer HaChinuch

3	The <i>Gid Hanashe</i>
Sforno	
32:19	Strategy of the Gifts
32:25	The Wrestling Match
32:26	Yaakov’s Injury
32:33	The <i>Gid Hanashe</i>
33:4	Surviving Esav
34:27	The Guilt of Shechem
35:10	The Meaning of Yaakov’s Name
35:23	The Power of Repentance

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 that Esav 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. 33:7 - To stop Esav from gazing at her.
10. 33:12 - It means "travel." (It does not mean "we will travel.") This is because the letter "nun" is part of the word and does not mean "we" as it sometimes does.
11. 33:16 - They slipped away one by one.
12. 34:1 - Because she was outgoing like her mother, Leah.
13. 34:25 - Their father, Yaakov.
14. 35:17 - His two twin sisters.
15. 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.
16. 35:22 - To stress that all of them — including Reuven — were righteous.
17. 35:29 - One hundred and eight.
18. 36:2 - To fool Yitzchak into thinking that she had abandoned idolatry.
19. 36:3 - One who converts to Judaism, one who is elevated to a position of leadership, and one who marries.
20. 36:6 - Esav knew that the privilege of living in the Land of Israel was accompanied by the prophecy that the Jews would be "foreigners in a land not their own." Therefore Esav said, "I'm getting out of here — I don't want the Land if it means I have to 'pay the bill' of subjugation in Egypt."