

Parashat Vayishlach

Genesis 32:4–36:43

DECEMBER 13, 2019



SUMMARY

When *Ya'akov* and his family leave *Lavan's* home, *Ya'akov* sends messengers to tell his brother *Esav* that he is returning home and that he wants to make peace with him. The messengers return and tell *Ya'akov* that *Esav* is coming toward him with four hundred men. *Ya'akov* has not seen *Esav* in twenty years, and he is feeling scared because when he last saw him, *Esav* threatened to kill him for stealing his blessing.

Ya'akov divides up his camp in case *Esav* attacks. He sends gifts ahead to his brother *Esav*. He separates himself from his family, animals, and servants and is left alone. He then spends the night wrestling with a mysterious man. *Ya'akov* only lets him go when the man agrees to bless him. The man blesses him by giving him a different name--calling him "*Yisrael*." When *Ya'akov* and *Esav* see each other, *Ya'akov* offers *Esav* a blessing and they hug. Still, they go their own ways after their reunion.

Rachel later dies along the road while giving birth to *Binyamin*. *Yitzhak* dies, and *Ya'akov* and *Esav* come together again to bury him in the Cave of *Mahpelah*--with ancestors *Avraham* and *Sarah*.

From Our Commentators:

Rashi

וישקהו. נקוד עליו; ויש חולקין בדבר הזה
בברייתא דספרי, יש שדרשו נקודה זו שלא
נשקו בכל לבו, אמר רבי שמעון בן יוחאי,
הלכה היא בידוע שעשו שונא ליעקב, אלא
שנבמרו רחמיו באותה שעה ונשקו בכל לבו
ספרי במדבר

AND HE KISSED HIM — Dots are placed above the letters of this word, and a difference of opinion is expressed in the Baraita of Sifré (בהעלותך) as to what these dots are intended to suggest: some explain the dotting as meaning that he did not kiss him with his whole heart, whereas R Shimon the son of Yoḥai said: Is it not well-known that Esau hated Jacob? But at that moment his pity was really aroused and he kissed him with his whole heart. *Sifrei Bamidbar* 69.2

FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1) When *Yaakov's* messengers went ahead of him to meet *Esav* and to tell *Esav* that *Yaakov* has been successful and is coming to meet him, they return to *Yaakov* to report that *Esav* has left his home and is heading *Yaakov's* way to meet him. *Esav* is bringing 400 men with him. Why might *Esav* have brought 400 men with him?
- 2) When *Yaakov* hears that *Esav* is heading his way he immediately divides his people into two different camps and prays to G!d for protection. Then he sends his brother *Esav* hundreds of animals as gifts. Why do you think *Yaakov* sent his brother *Esav* so many presents?
- 3) When they do meet, the brothers hug and kiss and cry. *Yaakov* tells *Esav* that seeing him is like seeing the face of G!d. What do you think that might mean?

