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Parashat Vayishlach (Genesis 32:4–36:43)

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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*.

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?

Maybe he brought 400 men with him to make *Yaakov* worried. Maybe he was even planning to attack *Yaakov*. Or maybe *Yaakov* just sees *Esav* with these men and gets nervous because he doesn't know these men, so he *thinks* *Esav* is going to attack him. Maybe *Esav* just wants to introduce *Yaakov* to all of these people so they can meet and become friends.

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?

Maybe *Yaakov* realizes that he misses *Esav* so much and he hopes these gifts will show *Esav* how much *Yaakov* loves him so that *Esav* won't want to hurt him.

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?

I think it means that *Yaakov* loves his brother so much he thinks his brother is holy like G!d--true and kind and sweet and someone he can trust. He must have missed him so much.

