



Parasha Vayishlach

November 20, 2021

Torah: Genesis 32:3-36:43

Haftarah: Hosea 11:7-12:12; Obadiah 1:1-21

Ketuvim Shlichim: Ephesians 4:1-7

Shabbat shalom mishpacha! Our *parasha* this week is *Vayishlach*, meaning “and he sent.” Jacob sent messengers to his brother Esau. He was worried that he might try to harm him and he became even more worried when the messengers returned with the message that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men. But, it turned out fine in the end. Jacob had placed a gift of animals ahead of his group, 220 goats, 220 sheep, 30 camels with their young, 50 cattle and 30 donkeys. 550 animals was a large gift. Initially Esau did not accept, saying that he had plenty, but when Jacob pressed him, he accepted. Esau, saying that he had plenty makes us wonder how he got it. Jacob was to receive the birthright which would have been a double portion of his father’s estate including the authority to manage the remainder. But, there is no record of his ever receiving it. Maybe Esau got it in the end. It had to go somewhere. But, all’s well that ends well. Jacob and Esau made peace and ADONAI had already made Jacob a rich man.

Many people would consider the most important event in this *parasha* to be Jacob’s wrestling with a man. At least, it is the event with the most questions. Different people have questions regarding Scripture for different reasons. Why do we want to know? Sir Francis Bacon stated that “knowledge itself is power,” meaning that being able to share it enhances reputation and influence. But that should not be our reason for seeking Scripture knowledge. And, then we have the Greek word “gnosis,” meaning knowledge. The seeking of knowledge led to a movement in early Christianity known as “Gnosticism.” It taught that the world was created and ruled by a lesser divinity, the demiurge, and that Christ was an emissary of that supreme divine being. They taught that it was knowledge, or gnosis, that enabled the redemption of the human spirit, in other words, being saved is determined by what you know. That theology has carried over into some modern denominations. We would again say, that is not our reason for seeking knowledge, answers to questions. Our reasons for seeking Scriptural knowledge must be spiritual. We don’t seek it to impress and we don’t seek it for financial gain. We seek it to better understand ADONAI’s overall plan and purpose which He has communicated to us through the Scriptures.

What should we understand about these verses? *25 So Jacob remained all by himself. Then a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn.* (Genesis 32:25 TLV). What is the key point in this verse? It is that a man, Hebrew, *ish*, *ישׁ*, wrestled with Jacob. *26 When He saw that He had not overcome him, He struck the socket of his hip, so He dislocated the socket of Jacob’s hip when He wrestled with him.* (Genesis 32:26 TLV). They seemed to be almost evenly matched, but Jacob seemed to be a little stronger. Although the “man” had not overcome him, he was able to dislocate his hip. *27 Then He said, “Let Me go, for the dawn has broken.” But he said, “I won’t let You go unless You bless me.”* (Genesis 32:27 TLV). The

“man” said let me go, but Jacob said that he would not unless he blessed him. Jacob apparently had the power to continue holding the “man.”

28 *Then He said to him, “What is your name?” “Jacob,” he said.* (Genesis 32:28 TLV). This question reminds us of when Jacob sought his father’s blessing. He lied and said his name was Esau. But, now, also seeking a blessing, he was truthful. 29 *Then He said, “Your name will no longer be Jacob, but rather Israel, for you have struggled with God and with men, and you have overcome.”* (Genesis 32:29 TLV). Jacob has changed. He is no longer a supplanter, a heel grabber, and he is deserving of a new name. His new name was related to what he had done, struggled. The “man” said “you have overcome in your struggles with G-d and men. Struggling with G-d could mean both physically and spiritually. Was the “man” saying that “I am G-d and you have struggled with me?” I don’t think we can go that far. We don’t have enough evidence. But, I believe it’s likely that the “man” was referring to Jacob’s spiritual struggles with G-d. The Hebrew word from which struggled is translated, *sarita*, סָרִיטָה, does not mean a physical struggle. According to the rabbis, it means striving toward becoming a leader. We see within it both *sarah*, to rule and also *sar*, prince. *Yisrael*, יִשְׂרָאֵל, most likely means “struggled with El, G-d, but it is not beyond possibility that it also means “prince of G-d.” We know that Jacob struggled with men, both his brother Esau and his uncle Laban and prevailed against each of them, Esau in the birthright and blessing and Laban in his business dealings.

30 *Then Jacob asked and said, “Please tell me Your name.” But He said, “What’s this—you are asking My name?” Then He blessed him there.* (Genesis 32:30 TLV). Refusing to answer Jacob’s question, the “man” blessed him. We are not told what the blessing was. 31 *So Jacob named the place Peniel, “for I’ve seen God face to face, and my life has been spared.”* (Genesis 32:31 TLV). We said earlier that “Scripture says” that the individual that Jacob wrestled with was a “man.” But, in this verse, it’s not Scripture telling us that this individual is G-d, but Jacob. He thought “that he had seen G-d face to face.” But, had he? Can we rely upon what Jacob said? He thought so, but was it so?

That his name was changed is very significant. He has gone from being Jacob, a supplanter, to Israel, a prince of G-d, soon to become the father of a nation. But, how important is it that we know who it was that changed his name? Without any doubt, it was done by ADONAI’s authority. But, evidence does not prove that the “man” was G-d, for several reasons. One, because Jacob prevailed physically and two, because there was no requirement made that the “man” be worshipped. But, he most certainly was a representative of G-d.

I have heard several people say that they believe that this individual was the pre-incarnate Messiah Yeshua. In what we have just read, is there any evidence that this “man” was Yeshua? Does ADONAI wish us to know more about this man? I don’t believe so. And, there is no evidence that the “man” is Yeshua. But, we do have evidence that the “man” was an angel. In our *Haftarah* today, referring to Jacob, it says: 4 *“In the womb he grasped his brother’s heel, and in his vigor he strove with God. 5 Yes, he wrestled with the angel and won; he wept and sought his favor.”* (Hosea 12:4-5a TLV). The Hebrew says that “he strove with *Elohim*, אֱלֹהִים, and “he wrestled with the *malakh*,” the messenger, מַלְאָךְ. Based on the evidence, there is no reason to believe that the “man” was Yeshua or that the “man” was G-d. He didn’t tell Jacob to take off his sandals or to worship him. Jacob did the opposite, he wrestled with him. Based on the evidence that we have, we have to conclude that this “man” was a *malakh*, a messenger of ADONAI sent as His emissary to deal with Jacob. It was

ADONAI who said that he was a *malakh* by inspiring Hosea to write these words. What He meant by saying that this was His messenger, we are not certain, but accept it with the information which we have. Context is important and does not support this being the pre-incarnate Messiah.

Getting back to our discussion of knowledge, we ask ourselves this question. What is our purpose for understanding these verses? Our purpose should be to find truth and not for the sake of proving our personal theology. It should be to understand what ADONAI's message is to us. His message in these verses is that Jacob who stole his brother's birthright and blessing has now been accepted by G-d as a man who seeks Him with a changed heart. And, in this, ADONAI, through His representative, the *malakh*, the messenger, has changed his name to reflect his new character. He was no longer Jacob the supplanter, but Israel, G-d's prince.

My personal belief is that the pre-incarnate Messiah Himself does not appear in the *Tanakh*. He is there, but behind the scenes. Types and shadow of Yeshua do appear and are many. Recently in *Parasha Vayetze*, we read of Phillip saying to Nathaniel: 45 ..., "*We've found the One that Moses in the Torah, and also the prophets, wrote about—Yeshua of Natzeret, the son of Joseph!*" (John 1:45b TLV). According to Phillip, Yeshua was written about throughout the *Tanakh*. Yeshua, Himself, said it as He spoke to His disciples after His resurrection: 44 *Then He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you—everything written concerning Me in the Torah of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."* (Luke 24:44 TLV). (also Luke 24:27, John 5:39, 46 and Hebrews 10:7)

Sha'ul in his letter to the Romans spoke of his desire for Israel to be saved, but recognized that their use of *Torah* was not correct. He implied that they used obedience to *Torah* as a means of salvation. And, then he said: 4 "*For Messiah is the goal of the Torah as a means to righteousness for everyone who keeps trusting.*" (Romans 10:4 TLV). We understand this to mean that the purpose of the *Torah* is to show that righteousness comes through the Messiah who is pictured in it. The Greek word *telos* translated goal in the TLV can mean an end, an event or issue or the principal end, aim or purpose. Many have learned from the King James Version. It translates verse four as: 4 "*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*" (Romans 10:4 KJV). This Bible version translates *telos* as "end," or in other words, "Christ ended the purpose of the law as a means of righteousness." This is not correct. The Law has never been a means of righteousness, before or after Yeshua. According to *Sha'ul*, Israel thought that keeping *Torah* was a means of righteousness, but it never was. No one has ever attained righteousness by keeping Laws. You couldn't do it then and we can't do it now. Salvation only comes by trusting in Yeshua as Messiah, Him who is revealed through types and shadows throughout the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible.

Yeshua is pictured throughout the *Tanakh* by types and shadows. He is pictured in Deuteronomy 18:15 as "the prophet like Moses." He is pictured in Exodus 12:3 and 7 as the Passover lamb. In John 3, Yeshua spoke of the Bronze Serpent in Numbers 21:5-9 as a picture of Him being lifted up on the stake. (John 3:14) In John 6, Yeshua implied that the manna, the bread from heaven in Exodus 16, was a picture of Him, the true bread from heaven. (John 6:32-33) In Matthew 12:40, Jonah is a picture of Yeshua who would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. In Romans 5:14 *Sha'ul* compares Yeshua with Adam with Adam being a type of Him who was to come. In 1Corinthians 5:7, *Sha'ul*

compares Yeshua with the Passover Lamb. In 1Corinthians 10:4, *Sha'ul* pictures Yeshua as the spiritual rock which followed Israel in the wilderness. Hebrews 6:18 compares Yeshua with the six cities of refuge depicted in Deuteronomy, cities to which a killer by accident could flee for protection. Hebrews 10:20 compares Yeshua's body with the veil in the Temple that when "torn" on the stake revealed the access which believers have to the Father. Hebrews 11:17-19 compares Isaac bound on the altar for sacrifice with Yeshua. (Genesis 22) And, there are others, but this is a good representation. These are all types and shadows of Messiah in the *Tanakh*. It is the goal of the *Torah* to reveal Him. Two thousand years ago, each of His twelve disciples saw him in it. As Phillip said: He is "*the One that Moses in the Torah, and also the prophets, wrote about.*"

What should we learn from Genesis 32: 29 *Then He said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but rather Israel, for you have struggled with God and with men, and you have overcome."* (Genesis 32:29 TLV). Jacob overcame his old nature as a supplanter, one who takes what is another's. He overcame that way of life in Haran when he worked for what he received, but with ADONAI's help. Jacob is a witness to us. We all have been supplanters at some time in our lives. He is a positive picture of what trusting in ADONAI can do. The name given to Jacob by G-d would become the very name of G-d's people. The nation will be called *Israel*. It's no coincidence that this nation of people has struggled with G-d throughout the centuries just as their ancestor Jacob did. But we know that ADONAI has not abandoned them and that in the end that "all Israel shall be saved." They will all know their Messiah whom Abraham saw from afar.

31 *So Jacob named the place Peniel, "for I've seen God face to face, and my life has been spared."* (Genesis 32:31 TLV). *Paneh* in Hebrew is face. Today we understand and use the phrase, *panim el panim*, meaning face to face. When Jacob named the place Peniel, he was saying, "I saw G-d face to face." Whether Jacob saw G-d or G-d's representative, for him, he saw G-d. It was a very spiritual encounter. And, it changed his life.

That's the way that we must see Yeshua; *panim el panim*, face to face. Our relationship with Him is intended to be that way. A few have seen Yeshua *panim el panim* with their eyes on this side of the veil. We have heard testimonies of it. But, most of us see Him through the *Ruach Kodesh* in our hearts. But, even in our hearts, it's *panim el panim*, face to face. Hebrews 12 says: 14 *"Pursue shalom with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord."* (Hebrews 12:14 TLV). Pursuing *shalom* with everyone is something that most of us think we can do. But, holiness? That's more difficult. *Shimon Kefa* encourages us: 13 *"So brace your minds for action. Keep your balance. And set your hope completely on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Yeshua the Messiah. 14 Like obedient children, do not be shaped by the cravings you had formerly in your ignorance. 15 Instead, just like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in everything you do."* (1Peter 1:13-15 TLV). We are called to be holy. We must be holy, set apart, for Yeshua. Our eternal reward is that we will be like Yeshua. It's not too early to begin looking for it and longing for it. *Yochanan* said: 2 *"Loved ones, now we are God's children; and it has not yet been revealed what we will be. But we do know that when it's revealed, we shall be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3 Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."* (1John 3:2-3 TLV). We purify ourselves because we have that hope knowing that when we see Him just as He is, it will be *panim el panim*. Every true follower of Yeshua has implanted within them the desire to grow spiritually. Something is wrong if our profession of faith in Yeshua does not include an intense longing to become like Him. And, within this desire to be like Him is the desire to be with Him and to see Him face to face. Seeing Yeshua

panim el panim is going to happen literally someday, but it can happen today spiritually. Yeshua, Himself, exhorts us: 33 “*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*” (Matthew 6:33 TLV). **<21>** *Shabbat shalom!*