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*Shabbat Vayishlach*

*December 5, 2009*

*18 Kislev 5770*

## News

### STUDY CENTERS MEETING IN VANCOUVER

This week was very busy, After my Sabbath in the area of Seattle, I travelled to Vancouver, BC, Canada, to attend the Global Mission Study Centers' Directors meeting. This meeting is organized every year in December by the General Conference, Office of Adventist Mission. Thus I was pleased to meet again, the directors of the office Gary Krause, Ganoune Diop, Rick kajura. Mike Ryan, GC General Vice Presidents, Homer Tracartin and G. T. Ng, from the GC Secretariat Office. The Study Centers' Directors (Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism...) and the members of the Mission Institute from Andrews University. Since we are meeting every year to share news, experiences, and projects, I can say that we became very good friends and this week of work is always in a very good spirit.

It is always interesting to hear reports from all over the world (Muslims, Jews, buddhists, Hindus), how the work progresses and how people from everywhere continue to give their heart and life to Yeshua.

One of our tasks during this meeting is to prepare the Global Mission Issues Committee, which is meeting in March at the General Conference, and which is composed of the World leaders of the SDAs. Let's remember that last year, one of the topics presented was "The Replacement Theology". This year the focus will be on Mission. How to channel the "Mission Energy" of our members and to simplify the process of being involved in Mission in their own country or overseas. (pictures are on Picasa website)

### HANUKA

December is the month of the feast of Hanuka, it is time to think about your special

activities for this special week.

This year Hanuka will be from December 12 to 19. I will be very happy to publish the timing of your celebration in this news. Just send them to me.

Alan Reinach, sent me this information and I am happy to publish it here.

Hanukah is upon us! December 13th, Sunday, at 4:00 p.m. Hanukah Party!

#### Adventist Church

**480 Gainsborough Road,  
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360**

Please note the change of date from Sabbath to Sunday.

Hanukah does not play second fiddle to Christmas!

They have lights, we have a miracle of lights!

They have fun and games, we have dreidels.

They have good food, we have latkes! I wait all year long for Hanukah latkes!

They have gifts. We will do a gift exchange!

If you have never been to a Hanukah party, you should definitely come. One reason we changed the date is because our Hanukah party is just that - it is not a worship service. We will sing some songs, and tell the story of the Hanukah miracle, but it is not a formal Sabbath worship. Here's the deal:

Here's the deal:

**You need to RSVP, by return e.mail or by calling 805.413.7396 so we get an accurate head count.**

\$10 payable when you come, to cover the costs of food, etc.

A gift exchange, please bring a gift valued at \$10 or less. We will play the dreidel game to select gifts, and everyone will go home with a gift.

# Overview

## Vayishlach

### Genesis 32:4-36:43

Returning home, Yaakov sends angelic messengers to appease his brother Esav. The messengers return, telling Yaakov that Esav is approaching with an army of 400. Yaakov takes the strategic precautions of dividing the camps, praying for assistance, and sending tribute to mollify Esav.

That night Yaakov is left alone and wrestles with the Angel of Esav. Yaakov emerges victorious but is left with an injured sinew in his thigh (which is the reason why 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 and the supernatural.

Yaakov and Esav meet and are reconciled, but Yaakov, still fearful of his brother, rejects Esav's offer that they should dwell together.

Shechem, a Caananite prince, abducts and violates Dina, Yaakov's daughter. In return for Dina's hand in marriage, the prince and his father suggest that Yaakov and his family intermarry and enjoy the fruits of Caananite prosperity. Yaakov's sons trick Shechem and his father by feigning agreement; however, they stipulate that all the males of the city must undergo brit mila. Shimon and Levi, two of Dina's brothers, enter the town and execute all the males who were weakened by the circumcision. This action is justified by the city's tacit complicity in the abduction of their sister.

G-d commands Yaakov to go to Beit-El and build an altar. His mother Rivka's nurse, Devorah, dies and is buried below Beit-El.

G-d 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 Israel. She dies in childbirth and is buried on the BeitLechem road.

Yaakov builds a monument to her. Yitzchak passes away at the age of 180 and is buried by his sons. The Parsha concludes by listing Esav's descendants.

## Yaakov and the Evening Prayer

The three daily prayers were established by Abraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov; Abraham set the morning prayer, Yitzchak the afternoon prayer and Yaakov is associated with the evening prayer.

Why is Yaakov associated with the evening prayer? Evening is a time of darkness, so too, Yaakov's life was full of trials and tribulations: 1) he has to flee his brother who wants to kill him. 2) for twenty years, he suffers from his father-in-law. 3) When he finally returns home, he again encounters Esau who wants to kill him and his family. 4) His daughter Dina is forcibly taken away by Shchem. 5) The Torah tells us how the brothers sell Joseph into slavery.

Thus, Yaakov's life story was full of misery and darkness. Thus, the evening service, through which we connect to G-d and pray for G-d's help at the time of darkness symbolizes the prayer of Yaakov.

Our sages in Pirkei Avot state, "The world stands on three things; on the Torah; the service of G-d; and deeds of kindness." Service of G-d refers to the daily prayers.

Some people ask: "If G-d knows everything why doesn't He give us what we need without prayer? Also, why do we have to pray each day?"

The Hebrew word for prayer is "Tefilah." One interpretation of "Tefilah" is "connection." Our prayers connect us to G-d. Praying each day is not to make G-d aware of our needs, but rather to make us aware that whatever we need comes from G-d and thus we become connected to G-d.

## Two Names for One Man

Yaakov is the only one of our forefathers who has two names. At times, the Torah calls him Yaakov and at times, Israel. The two names represent two stages of the Jewish people. "Israel" represents the times of greatness and glory. "Yaakov" relates to times of suffering and exile.

## Honoring Parents

G-d promised Yaakov (twenty years earlier), "I will bring you back to this land." Now G-d told Yaakov, "Return to the land of your father and I will be with you." So why was Yaakov afraid of Esau?

Yaakov knew that his brother Esau performed the mitzvah of honoring his father all these years, while Yaakov, who was away from his parents over twenty years, couldn't observe this mitzvah.

In the Talmud, Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel said, "All my life I tried to honor my father to the fullest, yet I have not reached one hundredth of the honor which Esau gave to his father." Rabbi Shimon explained that, although Yitzchak was blind, Esau would dress in his most expensive garments, whenever he served his father, even for the most ordinary chores. Yaakov was afraid that G-d would reward Esau for this mitzvah in this world, while keeping His promises to Yaakov in the World-to-Come."

### Do all that is in your Power

**B**efore encountering his evil brother, Esau, Jacob divided all that he had into two camps. The Torah states: **"And (Jacob) said 'If Esau will come to one camp and smite it, the remaining camp will be saved' "** (Genesis 32:9). What lesson do we learn from Jacob's action?

Rashi, the great commentator, tells us that Jacob had three strategies to deal with the threat from his brother: (1) he sent gifts to appease him, (2) he prayed for Divine assistance, and (3) he prepared for war.

Rabbi Yeruchem Levovitz points out that Jacob did not rely on his righteousness; he made every humanly effort possible. The forefathers kept to natural laws in dealing with life situations. After all, the laws of nature are the Almighty's laws (He did set up the universe!). This is our goal - to do all that is in our power, but to realize that our success ultimately depends upon the Almighty..

### Yaakov and Esau

**T**he Torah States: "Save me, please, from the hand of my brother, from Eisav..." (Genesis 32:12). According to Rabbi Zvi Belovski, the formulation of this verse is interesting. Why does Yaakov describe Eisav first as "my brother" and only then use his name? The commentators explain that Yaakov was more frightened of Eisav as a brother and friend than as Eisav. For Yaakov was concerned lest Eisav become close to him and, in so doing, defile him with his vile life philosophy

and twisted ways. This was potentially far more dangerous to Yaakov and his family than a mere physical attack from his brother. Drawing near to Eisav and his wickedness could spell the end for the mission to which Yaakov had committed his life. Hence we are told that Yaakov primarily feared his brother and only then Eisav.

The relationship between Jacob and Esau has exactly the same dynamics as the relationship between good and evil. As this Talmudic analogy between the cities of Jerusalem and Caesarea, the seat of the Roman government in the Second Temple period, shows, in the end only one can survive.

Caesarea and Jerusalem, if anyone tells you they are both in ruins, don't believe it. If anyone tells you that they are both thriving, don't believe it. But if they say that Caesarea is in ruins and Jerusalem is thriving, or that Jerusalem is in ruins while Caesarea thrives, you can believe it, as it is written, I will fill the ruins (Ezekiel 26) if this one is built, it is on the ruins of the other.

Rabbi Nachmon bar Yitzchak says this is written in the Torah: **Two nations are in your womb, two regimes from your insides shall be separated; the might shall pass from one regime to another.** (Genesis 25,23) (Talmud, Megilah, 6a)

Esau is the evil darkness that God set up before the emergence of Jacob into the world. He is the older twin. He is the foil against which Jacob must always test himself, the force of evil he must always overcome to survive.

Like all evil, Esau does not come directly under God's management. His might increases and decreases according to the fluctuation of the strength of the light brought into the world through the medium of Jacob's relationship with God.

Only believers in G-d, who have brought themselves to a state of great spiritual level that they are no longer a mixture of good and evil but only good, have nothing to fear from the force of evil. Evil cannot penetrate a habitat that is filled with the light of good. In his humility, Jacob did not feel that he or his family had attained such levels of spiritual perfection. Unless they enjoyed God's protection, they were vulnerable to Esau's evil power.



## UNLIMITED G-D'S LOVE

**A** Chasid once came to Rabbi Meir of Premishlan and complained that someone in town opened the same business as his. "I am very worried!" the Chasid said.

"Did you ever see when a horse drinks water from a river, he kicks his hoof in the water. Do you know why?" the Rebbe asked. "No," replied the Chasid.

"I will tell you why," said Rabbi Meir. "When the horse looks in the water and he sees his own reflection, he thinks there is another horse there.

Now he is afraid that the other horse will drink up all the water, so he tries to frighten him away by kicking his hoofs!"

"It is the same with you!" the Rebbe went on. "You think that if someone else is trying to make a living, it will take away from you. That is not so. Whatever is Bashert (destined) for the other person will not diminish that which is destined for you!"

## COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS...

**T**he Midrash tells the following story: Once Emperor Hadrian and his troops were on their way to battle. On the road they encountered an old man who was planting fig saplings. Hadrian asked him, "How old are you?" The man replied, "one hundred years old." "You are a hundred years old, yet you go through all this trouble to plant fig saplings! Do you really expect to eat from them?"

The old man replied, "My King, If I shall be worthy and G-d will grant me years, I will eat the fruit of my plantings; and if not, then just like my forefathers have labored before me, so I labor for my children."

After three years of war, on his way home, Hadrian passed by the same place. To his amazement, he found the old man attending to his field. The old man filled a basket with beautiful first-ripe figs and presented it to Hadrian, saying, "My King, please accept these figs from your servant. I am the same old man whom you found planting fig saplings. G-d granted me the privilege of eating the fruit of my saplings. The figs in the basket are from that tree." Hadrian thanked the old man for the gift and ordered his servants to fill the basket with gold coins and return it to the old man.

His neighbor's wife, who heard the story, was jealous. She said to her husband: "Didn't you hear the good fortune of our neighbor. Bring the Emperor a basket full of fruits, so we too, will be rewarded with a basket full of golden coins. The man took a

basket of figs and brought it to the emperor. He said, "My lord, I hear that you are fond of fruit so I came to present you with these figs."

Hadrian said to his officers, "Take the figs and pelt the man with them."

Now, instead of a basket full of golden coins, he came home bruised and battered, blaming his wife for all that happened. She said to him, "Count your blessings that they were figs not Etrogim (citrons) and that the figs were ripe and soft not green and hard.

## REWARD OR PUNISHMENT

**A** sage passed away, all his students and all the townspeople followed the funeral procession to give him his well-deserved last respects. At the same time, there was another funeral for a wicked person where only a few relatives participated. Near the cemetery, a band of robbers appeared. Everyone ran to hide leaving the two bodies unattended. When it was again safe to continue, a terrible mistake happened. The family of the wicked person took the sage's body and the townspeople took the wicked man's body and buried him with much honor.

One student realized the mistake and tried to make everyone aware of it but no one listened to him. The student agonized over this very much. "Where is justice?" he wondered.

Finally the sage came to him in a dream and explained. He said, "This wicked person had one mitzvah for he once helped someone in need, while I once sinned by being disrespectful to someone. The heavenly court decided to reward the wicked person in this world by having him buried with great honor. The Court also decreed that I would be punished in this world with a simple burial, rather than being punished in the World-to-Come."

## EDITOR

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## Haftara Obadiah 1:1-21

**PARASHA:** We continue to read in this parasha about the conflict between Yaakov and Esau. “Now Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two maids.” (Genesis 33:1). Esau, became the father of the Edomites, and Jacob the father of Israel.

**HAFTARAH:** The book of Obadiah is about the Edomites and the Israelites. The Edomites and the Israelites have been in conflict since they were conceived in their mother’s womb “The children struggled together within her; and she said, “If it is to be this way, why do I live?” (Ge 25:21-23).

The Lord is very strong against Edom and their ancestor Esau. “On that day, says the LORD, I will destroy the wise out of Edom, and understanding out of Mount Esau. Your warriors shall be shattered, O Teman, so that everyone from Mount Esau will be cut off. (Obadiah 8,9). Some people can think that it is not fair, but we have to remember what happened in history.

1. Edom’s refusal to allow Israel to pass through their territory on the way to Canaan. (Nu 20:14-21)
2. Doeg, the Edomite’s conspiracy against David before Saul who was on a mission to destroy him. (1Sa 21; 22)
3. The confederacy of Edomites and the Ishmaelites against Israel (Ps 83)
4. The confederacy of Edom, Moab and Ammon against King Jehoshaphat and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. (2Ch 20)
5. The attack on Judah by the Edomites during the reign of King Ahaz. (2Ch 28:17)
6. The desecration of Jerusalem (and the inhabitants thereof) by the Edomites as Jerusalem was being leveled by the Chaldeans. (Ob 1:10-16)
7. A near obliteration of the Jews in exile at the hands of Haman who was an Agagite who was Edomite. (Est 3:5-6);
8. The destruction of Bethlehemite male children two years old and under by Herod the Great (half Edomite) (Mt 2:16).

## Besorat Yeshua

### Mark 12:6-17

**PARASHA:** In the book of Genesis from where the parasha is taken we have the opposition between Yaakov and Esau and in the Haftara we have the opposition between Edom and Israel “Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau said to himself, “The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob.” (Genesis 27:41).

**BESORAH:** We are approaching Pessah, the time of salvation through the death of the Messiah. Now it become more and more clear that the leaders were not happy with the ministry and the teaching of Yeshua HaMashiach “When they realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to arrest him,” (Mark 12:12)

**PARASHA:** Esau, became the father of the Edomites, and Jacob the father of Israel. Then very soon the book of Genesis and the rest of the bible will be almost exclusively the story of the children of Yaakov who are God’s people in conflict with the children of Esau who are the symbol of the opposition to God’s people. “These are the descendants of Esau, ancestor of the Edomites, in the hill country of Seir.” (Gen. 36:9). Edom became in the biblical tradition the representative of Rome.

**BESORAH:** This part of the Besorah, is painful because we see progressively that the leaders are taking position against Yeshua. Then it seems that the leaders like Esau who wanted to kill Israel, took position against Yeshua. Israel as the symbol of the Mashiach is a very biblical idea. “Then they sent to him some Pharisees and some Herodians to trap him in what he said.” (Mark 12:13).

Yaakov has been tested by the Lord, by the angel of the Lord it is normal then in this portion of the Besorah that Yeshua is tested. But he avoided the trap and answer rightly: “Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they were utterly amazed at him.” (Mark 12:17).

