



Parshas Vayishlach 2021, pardon G-d's interruption

This week's Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia.

This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna and Shaul Ben Berta. May they have a quick and complete recovery!

Our Parsha begins with Ya'akov Avinu returning home to Cana'an after more than twenty years of absence. Still fearful of Esav, Ya'akov sent messengers a message of reconciliation to him. However, they returned with a grim report; Esav was preparing to **"greet him"** with 400 men.

In response, Ya'akov sent him an extravagant gift of hundreds of cattle, donkeys, and camels. He split his family into two camps so if one was attacked, the other would be able to escape, and then he turned to G-d to pray.

The night before he came face to face with Esav, he moved his family and belongings across the Yabok River. After everyone had crossed except for him, Ya'akov met an angel; they started to wrestle and fought until dawn, when the angel wanted to go. But Ya'akov refused to let him go until he blessed him, so the angel gave Ya'akov a new name, **Yisrael, the prince of G-d.**

After 20 years apart, Ya'akov and Esav finally meet once again. Ya'akov bowed seven times, then embraced Esav as they cried together. Esav asked Ya'akov, *"who are all these people with you"?* He replied, *"these are the children whom G-d has gifted your servant."*

Esav then asked, what were all the herds of cattle I saw before we met? Ya'akov answered they were all gifts for you. Esav responded *I don't need them; I have more than enough!* But Ya'akov pleaded with him, and Esav eventually accepted the gifts.

However, a question comes to mind: The Parsha interrupts the account of how Ya'akov was preparing to meet his brother to tell us that he fought an angel. But why does the Torah describe the story of how Ya'akov battled the angel for an entire night? What does this add to the overall narrative of Ya'akov meeting Esav?!

Rashi (*Rav Shlomo Yitzchaki, the leading commentary on the Torah*) writes that this was no ordinary angel, but it was Esav's personal guardian angel. **Therefore, Ya'akov had to overcome him before meeting his brother**, making this fight a crucial part of the story.

However, the Rashbam (*Rav Shmuel Ben Meir, one of Rashi's grandsons*) gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He answers this question by explaining Ya'akov's real plan when crossing the Yabok river. He writes that **Ya'akov's intention when crossing the river was to run the other way not to meet his evil brother, Esav**. So G-d sent an angel to block and stop Ya'akov from fleeing Esav.

The Rashbam continues that this was done so G-d could keep His promise to Ya'akov that he would return home safely. As the Pasuk writes at the beginning of last week's Parsha (28:15), *"Remember, I am with you: I will protect you wherever you go and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."*

Ya'akov thought he could maneuver and bypass Esav, **but G-d interrupted that plan so that Ya'akov could fulfill his destiny**. G-d wanted Ya'akov to earn his new name, Yisroel, so G-d could give him the power to overcome Esav physically and spiritually.

This power and strength were passed on to the Jewish people to keep our beliefs in the face of adversity. Therefore, the fight between Ya'akov and the angel is not just an interruption of his plans and part of his journey. But rather, this fight is a core component of our story as Beni Yisroel - the children of Israel.

This lesson is ever more prevalent as we quickly approach Chanukah, the holiday of light. Because the days are getting shorter and the nights longer, symbolizing the darkness potentially ruling our life.

But Chanukah represents G-d's holy light pushing away the darkness and interrupting our lives with His holiness and blessings.

In our daily life, we must be mindful and open to the unique opportunities that G-d places in our lives. This means not placing ourselves in a box and restricting ourselves to what we think our potential is. Rather, constantly strive for growth and improvement, enabling us to take advantage of G-d seemingly interrupting our lives.

***“Opportunities are usually disguised as hard work,
so most people don't recognize them.”***

Have an inspirational Shabbos!

Rabbi Sholom Yemini