

# Shabbat Vayishlach

## November 20, 2010

### 13 Kislev 5771

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## News

### ISRAEL FIELD'S ELECTIONS

**A**s I announced last week, we are in the period of the End-Year Meetings of the Divisions. The Trans-European Division is holding its meetings in Montenegro where I am right now. The particularity of these meetings is that they run a nominating committee for some elections, not only for the staff who has not yet been elected in Atlanta, but also the officers of the Attached Field to the Division who are elected for a new period of five years.

The Israel Field is attached to the Trans-European Division. The President and the Secretary-Treasurer of the Israel Field were in the agenda of the nominating committee. I am happy to announce that I, Richard Elofer, have been reelected as the President of the Israel Field, and Julio Mendez has been reelected as the Secretary-Treasurer.

### IMMERSION SERVICES IN ISRAEL

**S**habbat 13th was a day of Joy for the Ethiopian community of Rehovot. They were in Yardenit, Jordan River for an immersion service. As I have said, next Shabbat, I will be in the Jordan River with Pastor Oleg for a new immersion service of 6 people who are ready to give their heart to Yeshua.



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### BETH SHALOM - THOUSAND OAKS, CALIFORNIA

**R**av Paul Lippi who is working now in Thousand Oaks, Cal. sends us a news with his upcoming date for the year 5771.

They will have a special service for Chanukah in their congregation on the 4th of December..

He added "We're hoping those who'd like to be with us for special events can adjust their schedules accordingly. It goes without saying, Shabbat is also a Jewish holiday! You're welcome to join us any Shabbat afternoon at 5:00 pm."

Rav Paul informs us saying "Further details will be forthcoming, but these dates can already be marked on your calendar Photos of Rosh Hashana banquet and Sukkot campout have been posted on our website <[www.bethshalomsda.org](http://www.bethshalomsda.org)> Fresh content is frequently posted. For instance, under "essays" read "What We Are All About." This essay addresses the question of what we Seventh-day Adventist Christians are doing praying Israel's prayers, commemorating the events of Israel's salvation, and internalizing Israel's scripture."

### BETH BNEI SHALOM - BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

**D**avid sent us a report for the concert they held last week. He said: "last week was published a news about the concert given in our house of worship. Result:

40 people visited the temple to attend the concert. We have in our program three more concerts by January. We ask G-d for strength to see fruit in his work."



## OVERVIEW

### VAYISHLACH - וַיִּשְׁלַח GENESIS 32:4-36:43

Parasha

2

Newsletter

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

That night, Jacob is left alone and wrestles with the Angel of God. Jacob emerges victorious but is left with an injured sinew in his thigh (which is the reason that it is forbidden to eat the sciatic nerve of a kosher animal). The angel tells him that his name in the future will be Israel, signifying that he has prevailed against man (Lavan) and God (El).

Jacob and Esau meet and are reconciled, but Jacob, still fearful of his brother, rejects Esau's offer that they should dwell together. Shechem, a Caananite prince, abducts and violates Dina, Jacob's daughter. In return for Dina's hand in marriage, the prince and his father suggest that Jacob and his family intermarry and enjoy the fruits of Caananite prosperity. Jacob's sons trick Shechem and his father by feigning agreement; however, they stipulate that all the males of the city must undergo brit mila (circumcision). 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 Jacob 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 Jacob, blesses him and changes his name to Israel. 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 Beit Lechem Road. Jacob builds a monument to her. Yitzchak passes away at the age of 180 and is buried by his sons. The Parasha concludes by listing Esau's descendants.

## MAKING PEACE...

Esau learns that Jacob is returning to the Land of Israel. He sets out with an army to kill Jacob. Jacob prays to the Almighty, "Save me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau" (Genesis 32:12). Jacob has only one brother. Why did the Torah specify "from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau"?

The Torah is telling us by the repetition that when a brother turns into an enemy, he becomes a much more dangerous enemy than a stranger.

Tosafot, a commentary on the Talmud, adds that just as a one-time beloved friend is the worst enemy, so too when two enemies become friends it is the strongest of friendships.

When you have difficulties in getting along with someone, don't think that just because at present you do not like each other it must last. On the contrary, if you will be able to overcome the animosity between you, the former negative feelings can be transformed into extremely positive feelings. We have seen countries which have fought bitter wars against each other finally make peace and become close allies. This should serve as a lesson for us in making peace with individuals who have quarreled with us in the past.

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai says it is a given law - it is known that Esau hates Jacob. But at this time his mercy was aroused and he kissed him with all his whole heart.

The Netziv (Naftali Tzvi Berlin - late 19th century) points out that all the verbs in this verse are in the first person and refer to Esau. "He ran, he embraced him; he fell upon his neck, he kissed him and they cried." All the verbs are in the first person, except the last one "they cried." Both Jacob and Esau cried, says the Netziv, because the day will come when Esau will truly embrace his brother Jacob in honest unadulterated compassion, then both brothers will cry in happiness. That day, hopefully not too far off, is the Messianic day. May we all live to see it!

## DINAH IS RAPED

One of the most shocking incidents recorded in the Bible, the destruction of the city of Shechem by Shimon and Levi, is in our Parasha. The issues raised by this story are plastered on the front pages of the newspapers of the world

these past months, and we can shed some light on them by studying them from a Torah perspective in the light of our Parasha.

Maimonides offers the following rationale for the killings. (Laws of Kings, 9,14) One of the seven Noachide laws mandates the establishment of law and order. Human societies are held responsible for the creation of a legal system to administer the Noachide laws. Laws that are not enforceable aren't worth the paper they are inscribed on. The failure to set up such a system is a social rather than an individual crime.

The inhabitants of Shechem were in violation of their duty to set up such a system. The rapist/kidnapper Shechem continued to circulate freely among them with no apparent loss of stature or esteem. Indeed, so much was he honored, that he was able to persuade the entire population of Shechem to accept circumcision and enter into a confederation with the Jewish people. The high esteem retained by a rapist/kidnapper is symptomatic of a lawless society. As Shechem was a lawless society, it deserved to be annihilated under the Noachide laws.

The Sforno (Genesis 34,27) adds some depth. Shechem didn't rape just anyone; he selected his victim carefully. Dinah was a child of a foreign tribe and must have been considered fair game. People rarely do the unacceptable, even when they have power. Even leaders worry about their popularity and are always looking ahead to the next election or to its counterpart in those times. The fact that Shechem raped Dinah and kept her prisoner by force after the rape without shame, while he attempted to blackmail her family into reconciling themselves to the situation, is demonstrative of the fact that he was engaged in what was considered acceptable behavior in the eyes of his city.

Rabbi Rabbi Weisz asks this question: Does not this smell of collective punishment, one of the most abhorrent tools of evil tyrants?

His answer is: "To understand the answer to this question we have to appreciate how confusing labels can be. Historically the abhorrent examples of collective punishment have invariably arisen in the context of situations that were unjust to begin with.

For example, the Nazis employed collective punishment as a means of crushing resistance. If one unidentified concentration camp victim did

something out of line under the camp rules, fifty inmates would be executed. But concentration camps were an outrage to begin with. Such abhorrent phenomena necessarily survive only on the strength of the terror they manage to inspire in their victims. The same can be said for all the horrendous applications of this vicious policy that come to mind.

In fact collective punishment is so abhorrent primarily because it is a sub-branch of punishment; a system that is intolerable in its entirety. Punishment for its own sake is a valueless process that corrects nothing and merely vents the pent up rage of the person or people inflicting it. Jewish tradition teaches that all Divine punishment is therapeutic and all human punishment is defensive.

## JACOB OBTAINS FORGIVENESS

**T**he error that had led to Jacob's sin in obtaining the birthright by fraud was now clearly set before him. He had not trusted God's promises, but had sought by his own efforts to bring about that which God would have accomplished in His own time and way. As an evidence that he had been forgiven, his name was changed from one that was a reminder of his sin, to one that commemorated his victory. **"Thy name," said the Angel, "shall be called no more Jacob [the supplanter], but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed."**

Jacob had received the blessing for which his soul had longed. His sin as a supplanter and deceiver had been pardoned. The crisis in his life was past. Doubt, perplexity, and remorse had embittered his existence, but now all was changed; and sweet was the peace of reconciliation with God. Jacob no longer feared to meet his brother. God, who had forgiven his sin, could move the heart of Esau also to accept his humiliation and repentance.

While Jacob was wrestling with the Angel, another heavenly messenger was sent to Esau. In a dream, Esau beheld his brother for twenty years an exile from his father's house; he witnessed his grief at finding his mother dead; he saw him encompassed by the hosts of God. This dream was related by Esau to his soldiers, with the charge not to harm Jacob, for the God of his father was with him. (PP 197-198)

## HOW TORAH AND ITS INTERPRETATION CAME TO US

**T**he first halacha (law) in the Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish law) is “Place the Almighty in front of you always” — view life in a manner that you are always asking yourself, “What does the Almighty want me to do or respond in this situation?” For that one needs to learn Torah. You can’t do what you don’t know.

When one speaks of learning Torah, what does it mean? The word “Torah” has two usages. One is to the Chumash (the Five Books of Moses, the Pentateuch). The second usage refers to the totality of traditional literature — Mishna and Talmud (Oral teachings), Midrash (allegorical teachings), Halacha (law), Mussar (ethics).

The Chumash is called the Written Law because it was dictated by the Almighty to Moses who wrote it down letter for letter, word for word. It is terse and exact — each word and letter is significant. It is meant to be read with a focused and questioning mind. The Sages divided it into 54 parashot (sections) with the whole Torah being completed each year from beginning to end. The Torah is read in synagogue on Monday, Thursday, Holidays and Shabbat. In addition, we are instructed in the Code of Jewish law to review the weekly Torah portion twice each week and once to read the translation.

It is amazing. The same book that is studied by first graders is being studied by our greatest and oldest scholars. There is tremendous depth and wisdom in its words. Our Sages tell us that there are 70 levels of understanding to the Chumash.

Along with the Written Law the Almighty gave the Oral Law — the explanation for the words of the Chumash. It was given orally to ensure the accuracy of transmission. A father or teacher would make sure that his son or student correctly understood the meaning of the verse. This worked well until the Jewish people were almost destroyed 2,000 years ago. Then Rebbie Yehuda HaNasi compiled the Mishnah, the Oral Teachings. He organized 63 tractates in the Six Orders of Mishnah: 1. Zeraim (Seeds), agricultural laws and prayers 2. Moed (Festival), Jewish holidays and Sabbath 3. Nashim (Women), marriage and divorce 4. Nezikin (Damages), civil and criminal law 5. Kodashim (Holy Things), sacrificial rites, the

Temple, dietary laws 6. Tohorot (Purities), laws of purity and impurity.”

## FULFILLING OUR PURPOSE

**I**n one of his travels a wealthy nobleman passed by a field and saw a peasant pitching hay. Fascinated by the peasants skill and the rhythmic motions of his arms, he offered the peasant more money than he was getting, if he would come work for him. The peasant agreed and returned with the nobleman to his estate.

He showed him into one of the rooms of the castle and told him to proceed with his masterful hay pitching technique. The peasant worked a full day and was rewarded handsomely. However, after collecting his pay he declared that he was quitting.

“I don’t understand,” said the nobleman puzzled, “Isn’t it better and easier for you to just make the motions of pitching hay than actually working outside in the cold or heat? In addition, your reward is so much greater?”

The worker replied, “I’d rather work much harder in the field even for less pay, because there, I see the fruits of my work and feel accomplished!”

The same is with Torah and mitzvot. Reward for doing nothing is meaningless. G-d gave us the Torah and mitzvot in order to accomplish and fulfill our purpose in this world.

## ABRAHAM’S INFLUENCE

**A**braham established an inn where he cared for his guests in every conceivable way. He influenced the world to believe in G-d, not by logical proofs or lectures but by demonstrating through his own example that G-d’s kindness extends down through all the worlds to this, the lowliest.

## 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 he 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).

## John 4:3-26

**T**his story of Yeshua meeting a Samaritan woman is interesting and strange at the same time. This text can be read in parallel with the parasha of this week because it takes place in the exact location where Dinah was raped and where Shimon and Levy revenged her. Shechem, called in the Brit Hachadasha Sychar. Strange story, because it is written that it was the sixth hour, at that time the first hour of the day was 6:00 AM, so the sixth hour was the hottest

# BRIT HACHADASHA

hour of the day, 12:00 noon. Everyone who has been in Israel and especially in Samaria, knows that it is a very hot part of the country and the noon time is so hot that people are at home until 16:00 PM.

Strange story because if this woman came to draw water at an unusual time it is because she was certainly not a honest woman but considered by the population as a harlot, when Yeshua asked her about her husband she answered “I have no husband,” she replied. Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. (John 4:17-18).

Strange story because Jesus accepts to be alone with a woman, and to speak with her. It is not a Middle Eastern custom. Not today, and not 2,000 years ago.

Strange story because Jesus was strong enough to draw water from the dwell, but he asked the woman to give him some water to drink.

Strange story because a Jew does not speak to a Samaritan, the woman was very surprised and said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.” (9) Interesting text because Yeshua knew that his mission was not only for the Jewish people but everyone who would like to love and to serve God. For Jesus it was an imperative to go through Samaria, the Bible says “Now he had to go through Samaria” (4). He went there and met this lady who claims the same ancestor of Yeshua, Jacob, she said to Yeshua “Are you greater than our father Jacob...” She is aware that she is not fully Jew, Samaritans were descendants of a mixture between Babylonian and Jews, however, she was humble enough to know that she has to learn from Jews: “Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.” She had proof that Yeshua was a true prophet, He was ready to give her a special water that gives Eternal life. He knew her life and her matrimonial situation. Yeshua is going to reveal to this “foreign” woman the greatest truth that he never revealed to anyone before and after, he revealed to this lady that he was the Mashiach. “The woman said, ‘I know that Messiah is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.’ Then Jesus declared, “I who speak to you am he.” (25-26)

