

וַיִּשְׁלַח

VAYISHLACH/AND HE SENT Bereshith/Genesis 32:3(4) - 36:43

In **Jacob's life**, we encounter both **tragedies** and **triumphs**. **Both** are necessary for him to be able to take **12 sons** with **distinct personalities** and **separate goals** and **mold** them into the **fledgling nation** of **Israel**. There **never** seems to be a **let-up** in the **challenges** and **dangers** that face them. All of their **experiences** will **teach** them the importance of **constantly clinging to the promise** that He will **never leave them nor forsake them**.

Bereshith 28:15 "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."

Devarim/Deuteronomy 31:8 "And יהוה (Yahweh), He is the one who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed."

Matthew 28:20 "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

The **events** of the **life of Jacob** **stare us** in the **face** as if we are **looking in a mirror**. Why? Because they **chart our own course** in **life** as well. We also must have **faith** and the **will to persevere** while we are being **restored** to a **proper relationship** with the **Father**. **Jeremiah** equates this **future time** of **"Jacob's Trouble"** with the **restoration of His people, Israel**:

*Jeremiah 30:1 The word that came to Jeremiah from יהוה, saying, ² "Thus speaks יהוה Elohim of Israel, saying: 'Write in a book for yourself all the words that I have spoken to you. ³ 'For behold, the days are coming,' says יהוה, 'that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,' says יהוה. 'And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.' "⁴ Now these are the words that יהוה spoke concerning Israel and Judah. ⁵ "For thus says יהוה: 'We have heard a voice of trembling, Of fear, and not of peace. ⁶ Ask now, and see, Whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins Like a woman in labor, And all faces turned pale? ⁷ Alas! For that day is great, So that none is like it; And it is the time of Jacob's trouble, **But he shall be saved out of it.***

The **first verse** of our Torah reading gives us **clues** that we are **returning** to the subject of the **selling of the birthright**:

Bereshith 32:3 Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir (שֵׁעִיר), the field (שָׂדֵה) of Edom (עֲדוֹם).

- **Seir** – (שֵׁעִיר) means “shaggy” or “hairy” and refers back to **Esau's appearance** upon birth (**Bereshith 25:25**)
- **Field** – (sadeh - שָׂדֵה) **Esau** was described as a “**man of the field**” (**Bereshith 25:27**) and **Isaac** sent **Esau** out to the “**field**” to get **venison** (**Bereshith 27:3**)
- **Edom** – (עֲדוֹם) means “**red**” and brings to mind the “**red, red**” stew (הָאֶדְמָה הָאֶדְמָה) that **Jacob** used to **purchase the birthright** (**Bereshith 25:30-32**)

Jacob is **fearful** of a **confrontation with his brother** and **confesses** that **fear** to the **Almighty** in a **plea** for **deliverance**:

*Bereshith 32:9 Then Jacob said, "O Elohim of my father Abraham and Elohim of my father Isaac, אלהים" who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you':¹⁰ "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies."¹¹ **"Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children.***

Over **20 years ago**, **Jacob** **deceived** his **brother**. As a result, **Esau** had **expressed his intent to kill** him. **Jacob** had **fled the scene of disloyalty** and gone **to the country of his mother**. There he **met his match in deceit** in the **person of Laban**. Many of the **lessons** that **Jacob** **learned** in **Haran** came as a result of being the **victim of Laban's deceit**. After **physically and emotionally separating** from **Laban**, **Jacob** is now **forced to face his fear of Esau**.

Jacob hears that **Esau** is **coming to meet him** with a **force of 400 men**. He is **understandably afraid** and according to the sages, **proceeds with three tactics**:

1. **Diplomacy** – he prepares **lavish gifts** of herds and flocks (Bereshith 32:13-15)
2. **Prayer** – (Bereshith 32:11)
3. **Readiness for war** – divides his household into two camps so at least one would survive (Bereshith 32:7-8)

Before the meeting occurs, however, **Jacob** finds himself in a **wrestling match**. Of course the age old question is – **who is Jacob wrestling with?** Our first **clue** from the **Torah** is that **he wrestled** with an **“ish”** (אִישׁ), i.e., a **“man”**:

Bereshith 32:24 Then Jacob was left alone; and a man (אִישׁ) wrestled with him until the breaking of day.

A few verses later, it implies that the **“man”** is **divine**:

Bereshith 32:30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "For I have seen Elohim face to face, and my life is preserved."

This is **not** the **first time** that **Jacob** has found himself **wrestling**. His **mother** was **first aware** of the **brothers wrestling** in her **womb**:

Bereshith 25:21 ... Rebekah his wife conceived.²² But the children struggled together within her...

Jacob also **wrestled for years** with his father-in-law, **Laban**. After **20 years** he was able to **part** from him as an **overcomer**, with both his **family** and his **possessions intact**.

Our parasha tells us that **Jacob** is **alone** (32:24). Yet, in the dark, he is **wrestling with a man**. Could **Jacob** be **wrestling with himself**? **Jacob** **wronged** his **brother** and felt **guilt** which gave **birth to fear**. Thus we could say that **Jacob's fleshly nature (ish – man)** is **wrestling** with the **Spirit** within **him**.

Now **sin's desire** is always to have **mastery** over our **flesh**, as pictured by **Elohim's warning** to **Cain**:

Bereshith 4:7 "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

As we know, **Cain did not master his sin**. He ended up **killing his brother, Abel**, and being **exiled** from his **family**. Now it is **Jacob's turn** to finally **master his sin** from **20 years ago**. We see him do this by **confession** through **his name**:

Bereshith 32:27 So He said to him, "What is your name?" He said, "Jacob."

One of the meanings of **Jacob's name** (יַעֲקֹב) is **"he will deceive"**. By **speaking his name**, he is **accepting the truth about who he really is**. He answers, **"I am a deceiver. I deceived my brother and took his birthright** by selling him a bowl of lentil soup. **I deceived our father and stole my brother's blessing."** This **confession** is the **turning point** of victory for Jacob.

The **result** of **Jacob's confession** is a **name change** from **"deceiver"** to **"the straight of El"**:

יָשָׁר (yashar) means **straight** + אֱל (El) = יִשְׂרָאֵל Israel

The verse tells us that **Jacob** has **prevailed** in his **spiritual** and **fleshly struggle** against **deception**:

*Bereshith 32:28 And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל); for you have **striven with Elohim** and with **men**, and have **prevailed**."*

The **wrestling match** has **prepared Jacob** for his **actual encounter with Esau**. When the **brothers meet**, all of **Jacob's fears** appear to be **unfounded**. There is **nothing in Esau's behavior** that speaks of **anger, revenge, or hatred**:

Bereshith 33:4 But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

Whether **Esau** was being **genuine** or not is **not the focus** of this study. Far more **interesting** is **Jacob's behavior** and his **words** during their encounter:

Bereshith 33:3 ... and (Jacob) bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

Jacob bows seven times, fully **prostrating himself** to the **ground**, and this is followed by his **wives** and **their children** also **bowing before Esau**. Next we are told that **four times, Jacob** will call **Esau, "my adonai"** (33:8,13,14,15). **Twice** he will call himself **"Esau's servant"** (33:5,14). What's up with this **apparent reversal** of **Jacob's blessing** (*Bereshith 27:29 – be master over your brothers and may your mother's sons bow down to you*), and can we **connect** these **details** with the **wrestling match** of the **night before**?

A **logical conclusion** after the **wrestling match** would be that **Jacob** was now in a **position** to **overcome whatever situation** he may be in with his **brother, Esau**. **Why** then, do we not see him **asserting the authority** he was **given over his brother**? Are we **disappointed** that we are not seeing a **"new and confident" Jacob**? Then to top it all off, catch this **exchange of words** when **Jacob** is **presenting Esau** with the **gifts** he has prepared for him:

Bereshith 33:8 Then Esau said, "What do you mean by all this company which I met?" And he said, "These are to find favor in the sight of my adonai."⁹ But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself."¹⁰ And Jacob said, "No, please, if I have now found favor in your sight, then receive my present (mincha - מִנְחָה) from my hand, inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of Elohim, and you were pleased with me.¹¹ "Please, take my blessing (bracha - בְּרָכָה) that is brought to you, because Elohim has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough." So he urged him, and he took it.

Whoa! There's a **subtle change** here, and I don't want you to miss it. **Jacob** suddenly goes from **asking Esau to accept his present** (mentioned **5 times** in the story as a **mincha** - מִנְחָה), to **asking him to take "his blessing"** (bracha - בְּרָכָה)! There are other **strange things** being said here. Why would seeing Esau be "as though I had seen the face of Elohim"?

Whether you've noticed or not, the word "face" and its many **Hebrew variants** have made many **appearances** in our parasha. Here are a few:

Bereshith 32:30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel (face of El - פְּנֵי־אֵל): "For I have seen Elohim face (panim - פָּנִים) to face (panim - פָּנִים), and my life is preserved."

Bereshith 32:20 "and also say, 'Behold, your servant Jacob is behind us.' "For he said, "I will appease (cover the anger from his face - פָּנָיו אֶכַּפְּרֶה) him with the present that goes before me (before my face - לְפָנַי), and afterward I will see his face (פָּנָיו); perhaps he will accept me (lift up my face - יָשָׁא פָּנָי)." "

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks writes that the **clue** to this "faces" drama is in the word "blessing" (33:11). From our study a couple of weeks ago in **Toldot**, let's remind ourselves of what the **blessing** (bracha - בְּרָכָה) was that **Jacob stole** when he became an **imposter** of his **brother**:

Bereshith 27:28 Therefore may Elohim give you *Of the dew of heaven, Of the fatness of the earth, And plenty of grain and wine.*²⁹ **Let peoples serve you, And nations bow down to you. Be master over your brothers, And let your mother's sons bow down to you...**

Rabbi Sacks teaches that **this blessing** is about **wealth and power**. Also do you remember from **Toldot** when we **differentiated** between the **covenantal blessing of the birthright** (bechira - בְּכִרָה) and a **father's blessing** (bracha - בְּרָכָה) which was a **prophecy for personal destiny**? **Jacob's stolen blessing** was a (bracha - בְּרָכָה). The **birthright blessing**, the (bechira - בְּכִרָה) was given to **Jacob** before he left for Haran:

Bereshith 28:3 "May El Shaddai bless you, And make you **fruitful and multiply you**, That you may be an **assembly of peoples**;⁴ And give you the **blessing of Abraham**, To you and your **descendants with you**, That you may **inherit the land** In which you are a stranger, Which Elohim gave to Abraham."

This **second blessing** given to **Jacob** is the **covenantal blessing** which was **first given to Abraham**. It focuses on **descendants** and the **land**. It has nothing to do with **WEALTH OR POWER**. **יהוה** never **promised Abraham** "the dew of heaven" or the "fatness of the earth" (27:28).

Now, **Rabbi Sacks** also points out **another significant fact**. We know that at the **time of the blessings, Isaac was blind**. This is the **only reason** why **Jacob was able to pull off the impersonation**. Because he could **not see**, **Isaac was forced to trust his other senses**: he **“tasted”** the food, he **“touched”** Jacob’s hands, he **“smelled”** his clothes. He also **“heard”** his voice which he said **“sounds like the voice of Jacob”**, and then **replied** that the **hands “are the hands of Esau.”** Therefore, after some **doubt, Isaac trusted his other senses** over that of what he **“heard”** (shema) and **gives Jacob the blessing (bracha - בְּרָכָה)**. Now remember all of this has **happened because “he cannot see Jacob’s face”**.

The **sages teach** that each of the **patriarchs were role models** for us to **learn how to handle challenges**. From **Abraham we learn the strength of conviction** and **how to stand apart** in an **ungodly culture**. **Isaac was the picture of sacrifice** and as **believers**, we also must **identify with the sacrifice of our Messiah**. And now **Jacob becomes our role model of learning our identity**. **Micah speaks** of what will be **given to Jacob**:

Micah 7:20 You will give truth to Jacob ...

“Truth” is what Jacob wrestled for. It was a **“truth” about identity**. **Jacob needed to come “face to face”** with that **reality**. He needed to **look in a mirror**. **James (Ya’acov/Jacob)** says the **“mirror”** is the **Torah, the “perfect law of liberty”**. **Yeshua is the “Word made flesh”** and thus **by reading יהוה’s Torah** (instructions), we can see **“His face”**, and **we can see ourselves in the mirror as well**:

James 1:22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. ²⁵ But he who looks into the perfect Torah of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

In his **wrestling, Jacob came “face to face”** (like **looking in a mirror**) with this **Torah of liberty**, whom we know as **Yeshua the Messiah**. He came away from it with a **new identity reflected** in his **new name**. He also received a **blessing of destiny**.

Now I hope that you can begin to **understand Jacob’s reasoning behind his actions when he met up with Esau in our parasha**. He was **attempting to give back the blessing (bracha - בְּרָכָה)** he had **taken from Esau 20 years prior**. Not the **birthright blessing (bechira - בְּכֹרֶת)** which was rightfully his, but the **blessing (bracha - בְּרָכָה)** which he had **deceitfully stolen**. The **herds and flocks** he set apart for Esau **represented wealth (dew of heaven and the richness of the earth)**. The **7-fold bowing, calling Esau “my adonai”, and himself “your servant”** represented the **hand-over of power (be master over your brethren and let your mother’s sons bow down to you)**. **Jacob understood** that the **sustenance of the Almighty was sufficient** and wanted to **make things right with Esau**. He expresses his **newly found truth** in these **words** to his **brother**:

Bereshith 33:11 "Please, take my blessing (bracha - בְּרָכָה) that is brought to you, because Elohim has dealt graciously with me, and because I have all (kol - כֹּל)." So he urged him, and he took it.

Jacob understands that he is **complete** in **all** (kol - כָּל) he has. He **wants Esau** to take not only the **gift of his animals**, but the **blessing** (bracha - בְּרָכָה) that was **never meant for him**. In order to **“have it all”**, he must **“give away”**. These are the **“truths”** that **Jacob learned** in the **wrestling match**.

The **wrestling match** was the **birth of “Israel”**. **Jacob learned** that his **“wealth”** and **“power”** came not from the **earth**, but **from the One who transcends this earth**. **Jacob struggled** and **prevailed** to **gain this “truth”**; and **in the same way**, we also must **strive** to be **“overcomers”**. **Like Jacob**, we must **learn** that **no matter what the odds are**, **no matter how much it hurts**, we **cannot let go of the “man”** that has **so much power** in our lives. **Yeshua “overcame”** the world, and **through faith**, we can **follow** in His **footsteps**:

John 16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

1 John 5:4 For everyone born of Adonai overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world -- our faith.

There's even a **special position** promised to those who **“overcome”**:

Revelation 3:12 "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My Adonai...²¹ "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

We all **long** to see **“His face”**. In fact the **last chapter** of the **Bible** gives us a picture of **eternity** when we will see the **“face”** of the **Almighty** and **“His Name”** will be **written on our foreheads**:

Revelation 22:4 They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.

There is a **very disturbing incident** in our parasha this week concerning **Jacob's daughter Dinah**. I am going to pass on to you many of the **insights** of **Rav Ammon Bazak** from his commentary on **Vayishlach**.

Rav Bazak makes a **comparison** between the **episode at Shechem** and the **city commanded to be destroyed** in **Devarim** (Deuteronomy):

Devarim 13:12 "If you hear someone in one of your cities, which יייה your Elohim gives you to dwell in, saying,¹³ 'Corrupt men have gone out from among you and enticed the inhabitants of their city, saying, "Let us go and serve other gods" ' -- which you have not known --¹⁴ "then you shall inquire, search out, and ask diligently. And if it is indeed true and certain that such an abomination was committed among you,¹⁵ "you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword -- utterly destroying it, all that is in it and its livestock, with the edge of the sword."¹⁶ "And you shall gather all its plunder into the middle of the street, and completely burn with fire the city and all its plunder, for יייה your Elohim. It shall be a heap forever; it shall not be built again."¹⁷ "So none of the accursed things shall remain in your hand, that יייה may turn from the fierceness of His anger and show you mercy, have compassion on you and multiply you, just as He swore to your fathers,¹⁸ "because you have listened to the voice of יייה your Elohim, to keep all His commandments which I command you today, to do what is right in the eyes of יייה your Elohim.

Now let's list the **parallels** between the **two cities**:

- **Both** concern someone who **set out to convince the people of their city...**
 - *Bereshith 34:20* **And Hamor and Shechem his son came to the gate of their city, and spoke with the men of their city, saying...**
 - *Devarim 13:13* **'Corrupt men have gone out from among you and enticed the inhabitants of their city, saying...**
- **Both** describe a **serious act** that takes place in the **city**
 - *Bereshith 34:7* **And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved and very angry, because he had done a *disgraceful thing* in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, a thing which ought not to be done.**
 - *Devarim 13:14* **"then you shall inquire, search out, and ask diligently. And if it is indeed true and certain that such an *abomination* was committed among you,**
- In **both** cases, the **people of the city** are **put to death by the sword** for their **abominations**:
 - *Bereshith 34:25* **... Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males.²⁶ And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword....**
 - *Devarim 13:15* **"you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword -- utterly destroying it, all that is in it and its livestock, with the edge of the sword.**

Rav Bazak points out one **obvious difference** between the stories **concerning the spoils**. First, let's take a look at the **conclusion** of the **brothers' mission to save Dina**:

Bereshith 34:25 **Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males.²⁶ And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went out.**

The **mission is completed, right?** **Dinah** has been **rescued** and **taken home**. Yet, there is **more** to the story. **Jacob's sons return** to the city and **help themselves** to the **plunder**:

Bereshith 34:27 **The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled.²⁸ They took their sheep, their oxen, and their donkeys, what was in the city and what was in the field,²⁹ and all their wealth. All their little ones and their wives they took captive; and they plundered even all that was in the houses.**

Now read and contrast that with what happens with the **condemned city of Devarim** and note the **warning**:

Devarim 13:15 **"you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword -- utterly destroying it, all that is in it and its livestock, with the edge of the sword.¹⁶ "And you shall gather all its plunder into the middle of the street, and completely burn with fire the city and all its plunder, for **וְיָדָע** your Elohim. It shall be a heap forever; it shall not be built again.**

¹⁷ **"So none of the accursed things shall remain in your hand, that **וְיָדָע** may turn from the fierceness of His anger and show you mercy, have compassion on you and multiply you, just as He swore to your fathers**

Putting to death all the **inhabitants** of a **city** was a very **difficult mission**. It has been observed that this sort of an act **dulls the senses of a person's moral sensibilities**. Hence the **reason** for יהוה's **promise** in the Torah...that **"He will turn from the fierceness of His anger and show mercy, and have compassion"** on the **hearts** of those **who were asked to carry out this destruction**. He will **wipe away the moral damage caused by their acts of killing**. The **heart** is the **key** here. The **destruction** in **Devarim** is to be **performed purely** as an act of **obedience** to **"יהוה your Elohim"** (Devarim 13:16). **THERE IS TO BE NO PERSONAL GAIN** in the mission.

So....now we are **able to see the act of Jacob's sons** in a **new light**. If, in יהוה's **eyes**, the **killing of the residents of Shechem** was **justified**, the **plundering of the city** was **certainly NOT justified**. Now it would be seen as **outright murder done out of anger**, along with **satisfying their own personal interests**. There is **no promise of mercy** for those who **killed out of anger and greed**.

This also helps us to **understand the rebuke given** to the **brothers** at the **end of Jacob's life**:

Bereshith 49:5 "Simeon and Levi are brothers; Instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place. ⁶ Let not my soul enter their council; Let not my honor be united to their assembly; For in their anger they slew a man, And in their self-will they hamstrung an ox. ⁷ Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel!..."

Still we are left with the **question** as to **why Jacob remained silent** when he **initially found out** about **Dinah's disgrace**. And **his response to his sons** seems **self-centered**:

Bereshith 34:30 Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have troubled me by making me obnoxious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and since I am few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and kill me. I shall be destroyed, my household and I."

Jacob encounters **one trial after another**. He had **only recently prevailed** in his **wrestling match** with the **reward of receiving a new name**. The **following morning** he had a **successful meeting** with his brother, **Esau**. That **experience** must have put him in the **"peace" mode**. **Why** was he facing **another trial**? **What lesson had he not learned yet**? **Jacob** is now **fearful of the inhabitants of the land** and that they might **gather against him and kill him**. Perhaps what he **still had to recognize** was the **primary threat to him and his family**....that of **assimilation**. We sometimes call it the **"mixing of the seed"**. The **Torah** will **strictly forbid Israel's daughters** to play the **whore** lest the **entire people** become **polluted**. Perhaps **Simeon and Levi understood this danger**, however they **wrongly operated out of anger**.

Vayikra/Leviticus 19:29 ' Do not prostitute your daughter, to cause her to be a harlot, lest the land fall into harlotry, and the land become full of wickedness.

Devarim 22:21 "then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she has done a disgraceful thing in Israel, to play the harlot in her father's house. So you shall put away the evil from among you.

I would like to end with a look at the **covenantal, birthright blessings** from **Abraham to Jacob**. **Abraham** was **promised** that he would **become the father of "goy" (גוי)**, that is a **nation**:

***Bereshith 12:2** I will make you a great nation (goy - גוי); I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.*

Later he is told that he will become the “**father of many nations**” (goyim - גוים). The **covenant** is also declared to be **everlasting**:

***Bereshith 17:5** "No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations (goyim - גוים) ⁶"I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷ "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be Elohim to you and your descendants after you.*

The **blessing** is passed down to **Isaac**. In his **blessing** we also see the **promise of the seed (Messiah)** through whom all the **nations** of the earth would be **blessed**:

***Bereshith 26:4** "And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations (goyim - גוים) of the earth shall be **blessed**;*

Initially, **Jacob** receives the **covenantal blessing** from his **father, Isaac**, when he left for Haran:

***Bereshith 28:3** "May El Shaddai bless you, And make you fruitful and multiply you, That you may be an assembly of peoples (קהל עמים);*

Jacob is told he will **multiply** and become a “**kahal amim**” (קהל עמים). “**Kahal**” (קהל) is commonly translated as “**congregation**”. **Jacob** is **promised** that he will become a “**congregation of peoples**”...a **homogenous group, united in purpose as opposed to a variety of nations**.

Elohim makes an **appearance to bless Jacob** when he **returns to the land**:

***Bereshith 35:11** Also Elohim said to him: "I am El Shaddai. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation (goy - גוי) and an assembly of nations (kahal goyim - גוים ל קהל) shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body.*

Let's summarize the **birthright, covenantal blessings** concerning **descendants**:

- **Abraham**
 - a **great nation** (goy - גוי) - *Bereshith 12:2*
 - Father of **many nations** (goyim - גוים) - *Bereshith 17:5*
- **Isaac**
 - promise of the **seed** (points to **Messiah**) to bless all the **nations** (goyim - גוים)- *Bereshith 26:4*
- **Jacob**
 - an **assembly of peoples** (**kahal amim** - קהל עמים) – *Bereshith 28:3*

- a nation (goy - גוֹי) and an assembly of nations (kahal goyim - קְהָל גּוֹיִם) – *Bereshith* 35:11

Now **concerning Jacob**, what I want you to see is that this “**kahal**” is sometimes linked with the “**nations**” and sometimes linked with the “**peoples**”. And “**kahal**” designates an **organized, religious body** that has **come together with purpose**. Usually “**kahal**” is translated as “**ekklesia**” in the **Greek Septuagint**. Then in the **Brit Chadashah**, “**ekklesia**” is generally translated as “**church**”. I hope that helps you to better **understand** the **prophecy** given to **Jacob**. We could maybe **expand** on it a bit and say the **prophecy** included a “**nation**” and a “**church of peoples**” (**from the nations**). That is the **definition** of the “**identity of Jacob**”, also now known as “**Israel**”.

It has all been a **process** for **Jacob**. Only after **purging his heart of sin**, in the form of **deceit, pride, idolatry, and selfishness** was he able to **experience intimacy** with the **Holy One of Israel at Beth El (House of El)**. The **different aspects** of his **personality** will be **lived out** through his sons. They will **all** indeed **struggle** with their own **personal ascent** to meet with the **Almighty**. But no matter what, the **nation of Israel will live on**. Its story is beset with **trials** and **tribulations**. But **ultimately, prophecy** indicates **restoration**. And our Torah parasha tells us of a “**congregation of peoples**” (kahal ammim - קְהָל עַמִּים) from the **nations** (goyim - גּוֹיִם) who will also seek out their **identity** as “**Israel**”. The **struggle** is part of the **process**. But we can **learn** from these stories and perhaps **lessen** the **pain**. Remember, **Jacob** was **promised** “**truth**” (Micah 7:20) and the “**truth**” led him to his “**identity**” as “**Israel**”.

Our Precious Heavenly Father:

Open our eyes, that we may see wondrous things from Your Torah. Psalm 119:18

Shabbat Shalom!

Ardelle