

Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

THIRD EDITION / ISSUE 8

November 28th 2015

VAYISHLACH

16th Kislev 5775

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 32, verses 4 - 13

- ✚ Not wanting to enter the land of Edom unannounced, Yaacov sends out emissaries to Esav who was dwelling in Seir seeking permission to pass through on his way back home.
- ✚ Upon delivering the message that Yaacov had been sojourning with Lavan until now and had acquired much wealth; the emissaries returned informing Yaacov that Esav had gathered four hundred men and was now making their way out to meet him.
- ✚ Fearing the worst Yaacov divides up his entourage, herds, flocks and camels into two camps; so that if Esav attacked one camp the other camp would survive. He then prayed to Hashem to come to his aid once more and help him

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 32, verses 14 - 30

- ✚ Yaacov sends out his servants laden with gifts to try and appease Esav.
- ✚ In order to keep his family safe, Yaacov takes them across the Yabok River.
- ✚ Once alone, an angel of Esav came and wrestled with Yaacov but as both of their defences were strong the fight lasted all night.
- ✚ The angel injures Yaacov's thigh, but still Yaacov does not yield. Admitting defeat the Angel sends Yaacov on his way, but Yaacov refuses to go until the Angel blesses him.
- ✚ The Angel changes Yaacov's name to Israel.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 32, verse 31 - Chapter 33, verse 5

- ✚ In recognition of Yaacov's bravery, despite his injured thigh, we are commanded not eat the 'gid hanasheh' (the hind quarter's) of any animal.
- ✚ Looking up Yaacov sees Esav in the distance, approaching with four hundred men.
- ✚ Yaacov then arranges his family so that Bilha and Zilpah along with their children lead the field, with Leah and her children following behind, leaving Rachel and Yoseph a short distance behind in the rear.
- ✚ Yaacov then prostrates himself in front of his brother seven times, before Esav rushes up and embraces him kindly.

R'Vi'i - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 33, verses 6 - 20

- ✚ Yaacov introduces his family to Esav who then grants them a safe passage through the land of Edom
- ✚ Yaacov and family continue their journey until they reached the land of Canaan and settled down in the city of Shechem.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 34, verse 1 - Chapter 35, verse 11

- ✚ Yaacov's daughter Dinah is abducted by the King's Son who desires to marry her.
- ✚ Enraged her brothers convince the king and his son to circumcise themselves along with the rest of the men in the city. On the third day after their mass bris, Shimon and Levy loot the city, killing every male in the process.
- ✚ Hashem sends Yaacov and his family to Beit El asking him to build an altar there.
- ✚ Hashem then officially changes Yaacov's name to Yisrael and blesses him, saying his descendants will become a great nation and will one day receive the land that he promised Avraham and Yitzhak.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 35, verse 12 – Chapter 36, verse 19

- ✚ While journeying from Beit El to Efrat, Rachel gives birth to Binyamin but she unfortunately dies in childbirth. Yaacov buries her in Beit Lehem.
- ✚ Yaacov finally reaches his childhood home in Hebron and is reunited once more with his father Yitzhak.
- ✚ Yitzhak passes away aged 180. Esav returns and along with Yaacov buries Yitzhak in the cave of machpelah.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 36, verses 20 - 43

- ✚ .The Chronicles of Esav and his descendants are recorded here.

Haftorah – Ovadiah chapter 1, verses 1 - 21

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ Ovadiah the prophet foretells what fate will be bestowed upon the nation of Edom.
- ✚ All the nations of the world will unite and wage war against them, leaving Edom no choice but to engage in a battle which they know deep down they would never win.
- ✚ Once Edom is defeated, Israel's survival is secured as Hashem's kingdom and will be established forever.

GEMATRIA LINKED TO THE SEDRA

- ✚ Yaakov hinted to Esav that, although he had been staying with the swindler Lavan for a considerable amount of time, Yaakov still kept all of the 613 Mitzvot.
- ✚ How do we know this? If you look at the phrase "With Lavan have I Lived" (Chapter 32, verse 5), you will notice that the word 'גרתי geritee I lived' has the Gematria of 613

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

In this week's Parsha we read of the incident involving the abduction of Dinah by Shechem and in retaliation Shimon and Levi killing not only the kidnappers but all the male residents of the city as well. There are various opinions that explain what the rationale of Shimon and Levi was in committing these acts.

The Rambam says that it was because all of the inhabitants of the city knew that Shechem kidnapped Dinah and they did not bring him to justice. By law they were deemed just as guilty as if they had carried out the crime themselves and was therefore deserving of the death penalty. Nachmanides disagrees with the Rambam and counter argues that if everyone in the whole city was guilty and deserved the death penalty, why then did Yaakov either not give the order or kill them himself or more importantly disapprove of Shimon and Levi's actions if all they did what was to carry out Hashem's word to the letter of the law? There must be another reason why all the inhabitants deserved to die.

Nachmanides suggests the reason why was because the whole city were involved in idolatry and conducting immoral relations with each other which also deserved the death penalty. However Yaakov believed that their punishment for these actions was not down to Shimon and Levi to carry out. When Yaakov initially heard all of his sons telling Shechem and his father to circumcise the entire city's populace, he did not object because he thought that they would only use this ploy to rescue his daughter, their sister Dinah and then leave. The fact Shimon and Levi intended to take further action. This Yaakov did condemn because he knew that they did not kill them for reasons stated above, but rather in retaliation for what happened to Dinah out of anger and not because it was the correct thing to do.

Despite Yaakov's condemnation of Shimon and Levi's anger, Yaakov nonetheless recognized that such passion can also be channeled in a positive direction. Shimon and Levi were the only two of his sons who showed a striking amount of desire and devotion by replying to their father, "Should we let our sister be treated as a whore and do nothing?" Since only Shimon and Levi put their lives on the line for the sake of their sister and displayed their passion and energy by doing so, Yaakov saw them as characters who could now utilize these qualities positively, as they had an innate ability for self-sacrifice for Hashem and his Torah. Shimon and Levi, and by extension their descendants as well, would not be indifferent or apathetic to a lack of Torah education or observance, and would immediately burn with positive indignation which they would not only use to remedy and rectify the situation but enhance Torah learning and the performance of mitzvot to the nth degree.

As we see later on in the Torah the tribe of Levi especially, fulfilled Yaakov's wishes and blessings bestowed upon them. Levi emerged as a spiritual champion not only for producing the greatest ever Navi (Prophet) who ever lived, Moshe and his brother Aron who became the Kohen Gadol but despite the pressure of following the other tribes they remained steadfast, and loyal to Hashem by abstaining away from the sin of the Heter Eigel 'Golden Calf'.

Levi's passion was focused on spirituality within the framework of the Torah. By contrast, from the little we know in the rest of the Tanach about the tribe of Shimon's behavior, we instead find an undirected passion, which at times worked against the Torah and what it stood for, as in the notable case of Zimri, the prince of the tribe of Shimon, who engaged in inappropriate sexual behavior (Bamidbar chapter 25) and had to be made an example of by Pinchas.

With Hashem's help, May we live our daily lives like the tribe of Levi and strive to channel our abilities as positively as we can.

