SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 18 Kislev 5787, corresponding to November 28, 2026.

TORAH DIALOGUE
(p. 122 Hz) (p. 195 S) (p. 148 Hi) (p. 170 AS)
VAYISHLACH **וישלח**
Bereishit 32:4
[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis]

1. In preparation for his reunion/encounter with his brother Esav, Yaakov confronts a Man/Angel with whom he fights. No dialogue sheds any light on this struggle. We are clueless as to anything about Yaakov's foe. No weapons are used in the battle. Yaakov is injured, but prevails. After the fight we learn that the enemy is an angel, but nothing is known about him. Commentary informs us that the angel represented Esav, and the confrontation will last a long time. The angel blesses Yaakov and changes Yaakov's name to Yisrael. The name change is not as strong as Avram's transformation into Avraham. When Yaakov is involved in a narrative that has national importance, the Torah will use the name Yisrael. Otherwise the name Yaakov is used. The injury led to a Halachah: the prohibition to eat the Gid HaNosheh, the sciatic nerve of the animal.

2. When the reunion occurs, Esav is warm and cordial. We cannot conclude that the hatred disappeared, but at that moment, the embrace is heartfelt. Esav is a warm and convincing brother. The gifts worked. Yaakov submitted himself to his brother, restoring Esav's power and authority, and peace is restored to the family. But Yaakov keeps his distance and agrees to a relationship that will be free of conflict. Yaakov will remain in Canaan while Esav has settled in Seir, a neighboring country, that will be known as Edom, one of Esav's other identities. Esav is impressed by Yaakov's growth and accomplishments in his large family. Esav admits that he has prospered beyond his dreams. He acknowledges that Yaakov can have Canaan because Esav has a great deal more in his life and his own family empire.

3. After prevailing successfully over Lavan and Esav, Yaakov truly wants to retire with his family, which includes his ailing father. But more difficulties lie ahead. The first ordeal is his daughter Dinah's kidnapping and rape. A major change comes over Yaakov in this episode. Yaakov relinquished control in this struggle to his sons. They take over on negotiations with Shechem and his father, regarding the future of their sister. Levi and Shimon grab the leadership in the momentary crisis and annihilate the entire male population of Shechem. Yaakov cringes, in fear of the potential retaliation of the neighboring foreign tribes against the Jewish foreigners who have come into their midst. But no retaliation materializes. The Kli Yakar explains why. When the Shechemites circumcised themselves, they basically displayed their willingness to becoming Jews. And the neighboring tribes don't care about Jews killing fellow Jews!

4. In the aftermath of the Shechem affair, Yaakov is angered by Levi and Shechem. But he backs away. Later on his deathbed, Yaakov will unleash his anger and curse Levi and Shimon for their violent reaction to Dinah's fate. The entire remainder of the Torah can be seen as to what Shimon and Levi will do in their cursed state. Levi will improve its state as Moshe, the leading Levi will elevate Levi's position in the nation and become the religious leader of the tribe. On the other hand, Shimon will continue to decline in its Jewish tribal status. The final confrontation between the two will culminate in the sinful debacle at the end of Parshat Pinchas when Shimon leads the nation in the impure sin. Pinchas, representing Levi, kills Zimri, a tribal leader of Shimon. 24,000 men of Shimon die in that event. Pinchas is rewarded with the high priesthood. At the end of his life, Moshe blessed each tribe on the day of his death, omitting Shimon in his final speech.

5. In passing, the Torah mentions the death of Devorah, Rivkah's nurse. Commentators fill the void and attempt to explain who she was and her standing in the family. More intriguing to us is the assumption that the Torah was revealing to us that Yaakov's mother Rivkah died at this time. (The source for this to me is the name of the place where Devorah died. Alon Bachut, a tree of Weepings, crying for both Devorah and Rivkah.). When Rivkah died, Yitzchak was housebound with his blindness. Yaakov was not home yet. Esav did not care for Rivkah. She was probably buried by members of Yitzchak's household, not the assembled people due to her Matriarchal status. The Torah hides her death from us because of the missing honor and respect due her at her final passing.

6. Rachel died while giving birth to Benjamin, son number twelve to Yaakov. The number 12 is important to the Torah in elevating the family to the status of a tribe. After the Akeidah, the Torah lists the family tree of Nachor, Avraham's brother. He had reached tribal status with 12 sons. In the next Torah portion, the Torah will list Yishmael's offspring, noting the Yishmael had reached tribal status with his 12 sons. All this noting follow the slow development of the Jewish family. Finally now Yaakov's family reach tribal status. The next step will come when the tribe reaches 70, which Yaakov's tribe will reach when they descend into Egypt. After that, the Jewish people will become a nation when their male population reached 600,000. [Interesting note is that the Jewish population in Israel, reached 600,000 in 1948!]. Binyamin's birth and Rachel's death occurred in Bethlehem, and commentators debate where Bethlehem really was. [I won't comment on that since there is an longstanding shrine in Bethlehem today.]

7. The end of the Parshah describes the growing numbers of Esav's family. One member of the nation stands out to us because he did not follow Esav to Seir and that was Amalek, whose nomadic life remained very close to Israel. What is never explained in the Torah is why Amalek had such a hatred for the Jewish people. The Talmud

(Sanhedrin 99b) writes that Amalek was perpetually offended by his mother's inferior status, and he blamed that on the arrogance of Yaakov's children. Amalek's mother, Timna, was a concubine to Esav's son Elifaz. Timna was rejected when she approached Avraham to be part of his family. The animosity between them and us first started when Amalek attacked the Jewish people when we exited Egypt after the years of our slavery there. No reason was ever recorded as to why they attacked us.

8. MIDRASH. Rashi quotes Midrash that states that Magdiel, the last of the Alufs (chieftain) in Esav's line was Rome. There is no real family connection from Esav to Rome other than this comment. The Talmud accepts as true that Esav is the father of Edom, Rome and therefore the origin of Christianity.

QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT VAYISHLACH 5787

I. From the Text
1. How did Yaakov refer to his brother Esav when he sent messengers to Esav? (32:5)
2. How many times did Yaakov bow down to Esav? (33:3)
3. How many of Yaakov's children did Esav meet at the reunion?
4. Who raped and kidnapped Dinah? (34:2)
5. How did Shimon and Levi differ from the devised plan to rescue their sister? (34:25)

II. From Rashi
6. How did Yaakov prepare for his reunion with Esav? (32:9)
7. "Yaakov arrived (in Shechem) intact (whole)..." (33:18). Intact from what?
8. Why did the Torah not record Rivkah's death? (35:8)
9. The Torah records Yitzchak's death here in 35:29. When did Yitzchak really die?
10. Why was Yishmael's daughter Basmat referred to earlier as Machalat? (36:3)

III. From the Rabbis
11. What do we learn in our history from Yaakov's fight with the angel? (Seforno)
12. Why did Rachel die when she did? (Ramban)
13. When does the Torah use the word Yaakov and when Yisrael? (Rabbeinu Bachya)

IV. Midrash
14. Why was Rachel buried in Bethlehem?

V. Haftorah. Amos
15. How do we contrast the prophet Ovadiah and Esav?

VI. Relationships
16.
a) Dishon - Dishan
b) Yaakov - Esav
c) Yishmael - Yitzchak
d) Korach - Amalek
e) Na'amah - Canaan

ANSWERS FOR PARSHAT VAYISHLACH 5787

1. "My lord."
2. Seven times.
3. Eleven sons (not Binyamin who was not born yet, and not Dinah who was hidden)
4. Shechem, the prince of the city Shechem.
5. Shimon and Levi killed all the male residents of the city. The original plan was to weaken all of them through circumcision and they could easily rescue their sister.
6. By sending Esav gifts. By praying to Hashem. By preparing for war.
7. Healed from fighting the angel. Whole with all his money. And whole with all the Torah he had learned.
8. Because the Torah was afraid that the people would curse her for giving birth to her evil son Esav.
9. He died 12 years after Yosef was sold.
10. To teach us that one's sins are forgiven on the day of one's marriage.
11. When the Jewish people will fight their enemies, we will suffer losses but would emerge victorious in the end.
12. Because the Torah will prohibit a man from marrying 2 sisters.
13. Yaakov would be used for mundane and physical matters. Yisrael would be used for matters pertaining to the spiritual role of the Patriarch.
14. Because when the Jews were to be taken into Exile, they would pass by her grave and they and she would pray together from there.
15. Esav grew up in a righteous home and turned out evil. Ovadiah was a courtier to two evil monarchs, Ach’av and Jezebel and remained righteous.

16.
a) Brothers (sons of Seir)
b) Brothers
c) Half Brothers
d) First Cousins
e) Grandmother Na’amah