

# וַיִּשְׁלַח

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

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Last week after Ya'acov's awesome and fearful dream of the stairway that reached into heaven, Ya'acov made a "vow":

**Bereshith/Genesis 28:17** And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful *is* this place! this *is* none other but the house of Elohim, and this *is* the gate of heaven. <sup>18</sup> And Ya'acov rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put *for* his pillows, and set it up *for* a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. <sup>19</sup> And **he called the name of that place Bethel**: but the name of that city *was called* Luz at the first. <sup>20</sup> And **Ya'acov vowed a vow**, saying, If Elohim will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, <sup>21</sup> **So that I come again to my father's house in peace**; then shall יהוה be my Elohim: <sup>22</sup> And this stone, which I have set *for* a pillar, shall be Elohim's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

After Ya'acov had spent around 20 years in Haran, and after acquiring two wives, two concubines, eleven sons, and one daughter, יהוה commands him to "return to his family and to Bethel":

**Bereshith 31:3** Then יהוה said to Ya'acov, "**Return to the land of your fathers and to your family**, and I will be with you."...<sup>13</sup> **I am the Elohim of Bethel**, where you anointed the pillar *and* where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family.'

יהוה recalls the vow that Ya'acov had made to Him at "Bethel," and announces that it is time for Ya'acov to return to the land of his family and to keep the vow he had made to יהוה. Ya'acov's entrance into the Land is not without its obstacles, strategies and divine meetings. First there was the confrontation with Lavan, meetings with angels, the family's separation into two camps, and his wrestling match with a man/angel/Elohim who blesses Ya'acov with a new name - **Israel**. But **Israel** is a name that **Ya'acov** will have to grow into. And last, but not least, there is the reunion of Ya'acov with his brother, Esav...a meeting that leaves us filled with questions. Are all of these events somehow a shadow picture for the end of days before Israel's return to the Land? Time will tell and more revelation is necessary to make things clearer.

This week, several things happen that leave us with an unsettled feeling. First is the promise that Ya'acov made to Esav:

**Bereshith 33:13** But Ya'acov said to him, "My lord knows that the **children are weak**, and the flocks and herds which are nursing *are* with me. And if the men should drive them hard one day, all the flock will die. <sup>14</sup> "Please let my lord go on ahead before his servant. **I will lead on slowly**

at a pace which the livestock that go before me, and the children, are able to endure, **until I come to my lord in Seir.**"

It's not clear why Ya'acov refers to his children as "**weak.**" It seems they have weathered the journey from Haran thus far with no problems. If anyone is "**weak,**" it is Ya'acov who was disabled in the wrestling match. However, why did Ya'acov make the false promise to join his brother in Seir? Is Ya'acov once again "**deceiving**" Esav?

Instead of heading south to Seir and in the direction of his father's house, Ya'acov went north a few miles from the Yabbok River to Sukkot:

**Bereshith 33:17** And Ya'acov journeyed to Sukkot, **built himself a house,** and made booths for his livestock. Therefore, the name of the place is called Sukkot.

So Ya'acov went north and "**built himself a house.**" It appears he is planning on settling down. But after a time, Ya'acov picks up and settles within sight of a godless Canaanite city. We cannot help but be reminded of Lot and his attachment to the wicked city of Sodom:

**Bereshith 13:12** Avram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and **pitched his tent even as far as Sodom.**

For Ya'acov, **Shechem** is where trouble begins:

**Bereshith 33:18** Then Ya'acov came safely to the city of **Shechem,** which *is* in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan Aram; and **he pitched his tent before the city.** <sup>19</sup> And he bought the parcel of land, where he had pitched his tent, from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money.

Like his grandfather, Avraham, and his father, Yitzchak, Ya'acov builds an "**altar**":

**Bereshith 33:20** Then he **erected an altar** there and called it El Elohe Israel.

However, while building an altar is similar to what Ya'acov's forefathers did in the past, along with building the altar, both Avraham and Yitzchak "**called on the Name of יהוה.**" For Ya'acov, there does not seem to be any indication of worship, only the motions of building an altar. It's been said that it's extremely difficult to worship יהוה in a place where we're not supposed to be.

**Bereshith 12:8** And he (**Avram**) moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent *with* Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he **built an altar** to יהוה and **called on the name of יהוה.**

**Bereshith 26:25** So he (**Yitzchak**) **built an altar** there and **called on the name of יהוה** ...

Our parasha continues with the very sad account of Dinah. We know that Ya'acov's daughter, Dinah, could not have been older than 6 or 7 when Ya'acov left his father-in-law's house, since she was born later to Leah. But by the time Ya'acov is at Shechem, Dinah is of marriageable age – at least 12 or 13. That means several years have passed since Elohim had commanded Ya'acov to go back to Bethel. We are still waiting on Ya'acov to keep the vow he made at **Bethel (Bereshith 28:20)**. But here's how the story goes:

**Bereshith 34:1** Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Ya'acov, went out to see (רָאָה) the daughters of the land.

It's a heartbreaking story. By not going to Bethel as Ya'acov had been commanded (**Bereshith 31:13**), he was now endangering his family. Now sadly, there is no mention of יהוה or Elohim in this entire tragic chapter. We don't read that Ya'acov or his sons ever pleaded with יהוה for direction. How did Ya'acov expect to prevent assimilation, when he lived in the face of the Canaanites?



The word for “see” in **34:1** is “ra'ah” (רָאָה), and it implies wanting to explore and experience something new. There is much written about why Dinah ventured off...from wanting to rebelliously participate in a Hivite pagan feast, to just being an innocent girl wanting to have some fun. Was she interested in the culture, the customs, their music, or their clothing? We don't know, but we do

know that soon she was taken advantage of by a smooth-talking powerful man in the city, Shechem. “**Deception**” has once again raised its ugly head. Dinah would be forced to give up what was the most precious thing to a woman in those times – her virginity.

**Bereshith 34:2** And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw (רָאָה) her, he took (לָקַח) her and lay (שָׁכַב) with her, and defiled (עָנָה) her.

It is an interesting sequence of verbs. The first two verbs – “saw” (רָאָה) and “took” (לָקַח) occurred in the same order with Havah (Eve) and the forbidden fruit in the garden:

**Bereshith 3:6** So when the woman saw (רָאָה) that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took (לָקַח) of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

The same sequence occurs a second time in the episode concerning the “**sons of Elohim**” and the “**daughters of men**”:

**Bereshith 6:2** that the **sons of Elohim** saw (רָאָה) the **daughters of men**, that they *were* beautiful; and they took (לָקַח) wives for themselves of all whom they chose.

Shechem “saw” her, “took” her, “lay” with her and “defiled” her. She was forcibly taken and raped. It’s a terrible picture because a daughter of Israel was defiled by a Canaanite. In **Bereshith 34:11**, a second Hebrew word, “tamei” (טָמֵא) is translated as “defiled.”

**Bereshith 34:13** But the sons of Ya’acov answered Shechem and Hamor his father, and spoke deceitfully, because he had **defiled** (tamei - טָמֵא) Dinah their sister.

“Tamei” (טָמֵא) is used elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures to describe a person who has contacted impurity through such things as skin diseases, bodily emissions, or touching something dead. So, the “defilement” of Dinah and the “defilement” of the Tabernacle are regarded with the same feelings and described by the same word.

Never in the story does Shechem express remorse regarding his actions. No apology was offered, in fact Dinah was held as a hostage. It seems as though he expected them to welcome him with open arms. Yet, he appears to make a generous offer:

**Bereshith 34:11** Then Shechem said to her father and her brothers, "Let me find favor in your eyes, and whatever you say to me I will give.<sup>12</sup> "Ask me ever so much dowry and gift, and I will give according to what you say to me; but give me the young woman as a wife."

Shechem focuses on what this marriage would mean for Ya’acov and his sons financially. He is attempting to lure them into an offer they can’t refuse.

Ya’acov’s sons negotiate with the family of Shechem with more “deceit”:

**Bereshith 34:13** But the sons of Ya’acov answered Shechem and Hamor his father, and spoke deceitfully (בְּזָדָה), because he had defiled Dinah their sister.<sup>14</sup> And they said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that *would be* a reproach to us.<sup>15</sup> "But on this *condition* we will consent to you: If you will become as we *are*, if every male of you is circumcised,<sup>16</sup> "then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to us; and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people.<sup>17</sup> "But if you will not heed us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and be gone."

Dinah’s brothers acted “deceitfully (בְּזָדָה),” but where had they learned the power of “deception”? This same word was used when Yitzchak told Esav that Ya’acov had come to him “deceitfully” (בְּזָדָה). But what is worse is that the brothers made a mockery of “circumcision,” the sign of the covenant. The covenant was a sign meant to signify someone who had been set apart to the Elohim of Israel, and to an abundant life of Torah. But instead, this covenant sign was used “deceitfully” as a weapon to bring death.

Shechem and Hamor responded quickly and positively to the proposal. Shechem first circumcises himself. Then Hamor and his son approached the men of the city. However, nowhere in their speech do

they say anything about Shechem's passion for Dinah, or his violation of her. Instead, the proposal is approached from a purely political angle of economic benefit. Thus, we have two "**deceptions**" going on simultaneously. Ya'acov's sons are "**deceiving**" Shechem and Hamor, who in turn are "**deceiving**" their own villagers.

**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: <sup>21</sup> "These men *are* at peace with us. Therefore, let them dwell in the land and trade in it. For indeed the land *is* large enough for them. Let us take their daughters to us as wives, and let us give them our daughters. <sup>22</sup> "Only on this *condition* will the men consent to dwell with us, to be one people: if every male among us is circumcised as they *are* circumcised. <sup>23</sup> "Will not their livestock, their property, and every animal of theirs *be* ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will dwell with us."

Ahhh...we know the sad story of the massacre of the residents of Shechem well. We don't need to replay it here. But it is interesting that two verses are devoted to the act of slaughter, carried out by Simeon and Levi (**34:25-26**) and three verses are devoted to the act of plundering, carried out by Ya'acov's other sons (**34:27-29**). Moshe, as the writer of the Torah, uses more words to describe the looting, perhaps making the point that the looting was just as heinous. If the motivation of Simeon and Levi was the honor of their sister, what was the motivation of the brothers in laying claim to the wealth of the Canaanites? In fact, later in the Torah we will be told that "**no plunder**" shall be taken from a destroyed city:

**Devarim/Deuteronomy 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. <sup>16</sup> "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 יהיה' your Elohim. It shall be a heap forever; it shall not be built again. <sup>17</sup> "So **none of the accursed things shall remain in your hand**, that יהיה' 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

Ya'acov does not scold his sons for being dishonest or deceptive. Rather, his greatest fear is that he and his family may become the object of retribution. It appears that his concern wasn't for Dinah, but for his own reputation and safety. Notice all the references to "**me**" and "**I**":

**Bereshith 34:30** Then Ya'acov 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**."

The sons have the last word:

**Bereshith 34:31** But they said, "Should he treat our sister like a harlot?"

Ya'acov's sons' instincts were correct. They knew what Shechem had done to Dinah was wrong and they knew it would not be right to assimilate and intermarry with the Canaanites. Perhaps they really knew Yah's heart on the matter:

**Devarim 20:16** "But of the cities of these peoples which יהוה your Elohim gives you *as* an inheritance, you shall let nothing that breathes remain alive,<sup>17</sup> "but you shall utterly destroy them: the Hittite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, just as יהוה your Elohim has commanded you,<sup>18</sup> "lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations which they have done for their gods, and you sin against יהוה your Elohim.

Ya'acov's sons were angry with their passive father who took no action. They used “**deceit**” as a weapon, because Ya'acov had repeatedly modeled it. And sadly, all of this could have been avoided if Ya'acov had just done what יהוה had told him to do in the first place...go to His father, Yitzchak, and make good on his vow at Beth El. I heard it said by **Grant Luton** ([www.bethtikkun.org](http://www.bethtikkun.org)), “When proper authority (Ya'acov) does not take proper action, then improper authority (Dinah's brothers) will take improper action.” This is why leaders have to lead. A vacuum can be dangerous.

Despite all his shortcomings, Ya'acov was the chosen son to continue the covenant. Unlike Ya'acov, יהוה is not a passive Father. He will continue to work on Ya'acov. He says:

**Hebrews 12:5** And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of יהוה, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; <sup>6</sup> For whom **יהוה loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.**"

Ya'acov had indeed failed. His past “**deceptions**” were catching up with him. He opened the door to tragic consequences, through his disobedience in settling in a place of his own choosing. He had gotten too close to the world. Yet, יהוה, who is gracious and long-suffering, faithful to His promises, and full of grace, still loved Ya'acov and would continue to mold him into “**Israel**” the one who has “**wrestled with El and prevailed.**” In Hebrew, the name “**Israel**” is in the active tense. Today, Israel still struggles with their El. **Israel** also means “**the straight of El.**” Both of those meanings are correct and true today. But is “**deceit**” (as practiced by Ya'acov) still a problem for those who claim to be part of “**Israel**?”

In doing a short search on “**deception**” in the Scriptures, I was surprised how often it showed up. From the beginning to the end, the “**serpent**” has been active as the “**deceiver**”:

**Bereshith 3:13** And יהוה Elohim said to the woman, "What *is* this you have done?" The woman said, "The **serpent deceived** me, and I ate."

**Revelation 12:9** So the great dragon was cast out, that **serpent of old**, called the Devil and Satan, who **deceives the whole world**; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

“**Deception**” is defined as an act or practice intended to mislead by a false appearance or statement. There is usually some truth mixed in to make it more credible. “**Deception**” can be so close to the truth, but yet it’s not the truth. Hasatan is a master at “**deception**” and will continue to mislead people as long as he can. Yeshua warned:



**Matthew 24:24** "For false messiahs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

Many warnings are given:

**2 Thessalonians 2:3** Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition

**1 John 3:7** Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

Now returning to the story of Dinah for a moment, consider the thought that it is a shadow picture of rampant “**deceit**” in the last days. A time where people fall into the trap of the devil and “**deceive just as they are being deceived.**”

**2 Timothy 3:13** But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

Just as יהוה took Ya’acov to Bethel (House of El) following the disaster at Shechem, so will a remnant of His people fight “**deception**” with truth:

**1 Peter 2:1** Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, <sup>2</sup> as newborn babes, **desire the pure milk of the word**, that you may grow thereby

**James 1:22** But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

**1 Peter 3:10** For "He who would love life and see good days, Let him **refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit.**

**Hebrews 3:12** Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living El; <sup>13</sup> but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

And to close, a couple of verses worth mentioning. In the first verse, **Yeshua** describes **Nathanael** (name means “**gift of El**”) as an example of a true “**Israelite**”:

**John 1:47 Yeshua saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"**

And the grand finale verse worth meditating on! The **remnant of the tribes of Israel**, the **firstfruits**, the **144,000** ...those who are without “**deceit**”:

**Revelation 14:1** Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him **one hundred and forty-four thousand**, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. <sup>2</sup> And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. <sup>3</sup> They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred *and* forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. <sup>4</sup> These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from *among* men, *being* **firstfruits to Yah** and to the Lamb. <sup>5</sup> And **in their mouth was found no deceit**, for they are without fault before the throne of Yah.

Let us continue to “**wrestle with El**” to become “**Israel, in whom there is no deceit!**”

Shabbat Shalom!  
Ardelle