



Parashah VaYishlach "The Way Back"

Beit Emet Congregation ~ Vancouver, WA

Rabbi Robert N. Gordon

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The Way Back

Text: VaYishlach: Torah: B'resheet 32:8-36:43; Haftarah: Obadiah 1:15-18, T'hilli 16:8, 37:23-26, 63:8, 138:7, Mishlei 24:16; B'rit Chadashah: Colossians 3:1, Galatians 6:7, Hebrews 11:13-16.

Theme: Heartache in the family can strengthen us.

I. Introduction.

B'resheet 32:8-13: Ya'akov became very frightened, and it distressed him. So he divided the people with him, and the flocks, cattle, and camels, into two camps. For he said, "If Esav comes to the one camp and strikes it down, then the remaining camp shall survive" Then Ya'akov said, "Elohim of my father Avraham and Elohim of my father Yitz'chak; YHVH Who said to me, 'Return to your land and to your relatives and I will do tov with you,' I have been diminished by all the kindnesses and by all the truth that You have done Your servant; for with my staff I crossed this Yarden and now I have become two camps. Rescue me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esav, for I fear him lest he come and strike me down, mother and children. And You had said, 'I will surely do tov with you and I will make your offspring like the sand of the sea which is too numerous to count.'"

Just before Ya'akov and company venture to cross the Yarden, in anticipation of the unknown, the much concerned Ya'akov davens for safety and deliverance. He also expresses gratitude to the Elohim of His fathers, acknowledging his own unworthiness.

B'resheet 32:10 I have been diminished by all the kindnesses and by all the truth that You have done Your servant; for with my staff I crossed this Yarden and now I have become two camps (companies, "ma'cha'not"). Here, Ya'akov is actually dividing up his family (out of concern for their safety) into "**two camps**" or **companies**, which hints of the future division of his house. It must be noted, however, that this division does not conform to the way the Nation of Yisra'el eventually splits up.

However, the division of the camp is a prophetic reckoning of what would come much later in the division of Yisra'el into the two houses. Rav Silver writes: Much as YHVH used the division of Yisra'el to reach out into the nations of the Olam to spread His

teachings He also used the division to teach Yisra'el a lesson about where her loyalties lay. Once again in this passage we see YHVH using Esav as a representation of the Olam. Esav comes to meet his brother Ya'akov/Yisra'el with an army. When Esav sees Ya'akov he breaks down and turns temporarily from thoughts of revenge and cries over his brother. But it comes to Ya'akov's mind that this is only a temporary respite and that Esav might turn back to thoughts of revenge.

II. The Olam's Attitude Toward Eretz Yisra'el Today.

Similar to Esav, after the Holocaust much of the Olam felt bad about what had happened to the Jewish people. Some because of true remorse about what had happened and some from guilt because they had seen what was happening and did nothing about it. However, because of their identity, the Jewish people, are still the scapegoats for the Olam system, that system being run by ha-satan. Ha-satan uses the Olam system to further his goal and that goal is to destroy not only the Jewish people but also Efrayim and anyone committed to YHVH and to the restoration of Yisra'el. Yisra'el sits on the Land that YHVH promised to not only Y'hudah but also to Efrayim. This Land will hold the people of YHVH, all of Yisra'el, all people sold out and belonging to YHVH. The Land belongs to Yisra'el, Y'hudah, Efrayim and the companions of both, restored and reunited as one people ruled over by Yahshua the Mashiach.

The division of the family of Ya'akov/Yisra'el was a shadow of what would come. YHVH will protect His people the same as Ya'akov sought to protect his. Yisra'el is the beloved of YHVH and Y'hudah and Efrayim are His children and He will love and protect them even as He disciplines them for their attitude.

We read in

Obadiah 1:15-18: For the day of YHVH upon all the nations is near; as you did, so will be done to you, your recompense shall return upon your head. For you have drunk on My Kadosh (Set-apart) Mountain, so shall all the nations always drink, they shall drink and swallow and become as if they had never been. But on Mount Tzion there shall be a remnant, and it shall become Kadosh (Set-apart); and the House of Ya'akov will inherit its inheritors. The House of Ya'akov will be a fire and the House of Yosef a flame, and the House of Esav like straw; they will kindle among them and consume them; and there will be no survivor of the House of Esav, for YHVH has spoken!

Again, Rav Silver writes: In these passages the **House of Ya'akov** can be likened here to Y'hudah and the **House of Yosef** to Efrayim. As these Two Houses come back together we will become the instrument of YHVH's refining fire that will consume Esav/the Olam and burn up the evil that is produced by the Olam. On YHVH's **Kadosh (Set-apart) Mountain** and in YHVH's **Kadosh (Set-apart)**

Land there will always be a remnant of His people. That people are not only Y'hudah but also

Efrayim. We stand out from the Olam and the Olam hates us and tries to do its best to wipe us out. One look at the news from Yisra'el today and we can see the intent of ha-satan there. Make no mistake about it; it is the hand of ha-satan that is moving against not only the Jewish people and Eretz Yisra'el but he is moving against every last one of us, of the House of Yisra'el, who stand behind Y'hudah and believe that YHVH will win out in the end.

III. Avraham, Yitz'chak, Ya'akov and You.

We read in

Hebrews 11:13-16: All these people kept on trusting until they died, without receiving what had been promised. They had only seen it and welcomed it from a distance while acknowledging that they were aliens and temporary residents on the earth (Divrei-Hayamim Alef - 1 Chronicles 29:15). For people who speak this way make it clear that they are looking for a fatherland. Now if they were to keep recalling the one they left, they would have an opportunity to return; but as it is, they aspire to a better fatherland, a heavenly one. This is why YHVH is not ashamed to be called their Elohim, for He has prepared for them a city.

Avraham lived in the Land but did not own it. Yitz'chak lived in the Land but also he did not own it. Ya'akov lived there but it would not be until after our time of slavery in Mitzrayim that the descendants of Ya'akov would finally enter into the Land promised to us by YHVH and possess the Promise that YHVH had made to our forefathers. But that Promise was contingent upon the people doing as YHVH Instructed us to do because if we did not trust in YHVH enough to follow Him there could be no completion of the Promises of YHVH.

Live YHVH's way through trust in Him and receive the B'rakhot that He gave or live according to the way of Esav and see temporary B'rakhot, because ha-satan can counterfeit many things that YHVH can do, but the end result of being like Esav is that you lose the rights and inheritance of the firstborn of YHVH. What the firstborn of man receives is temporary and what the firstborn of YHVH receives is forever.

Trust in YHVH even though you may not immediately inherit the fullness of the Promises that He has made. Our fathers trusted and He was faithful to their children. We are their children and we are beginning to see the Promises come to pass. Maybe not in our day but probably in the day of our children. But then again maybe in our lifetime the Promises to Yisra'el will come to pass as Y'hudah and Efrayim come back as one people, one Nation united in YHVH through Yahshua our Mashiach.

IV. "Rise ("kum"), and go to Beit-El.

Efrayim Frank writes: In **B'resheet 35:1**, Elohim charges Ya'akov to **"rise ("kum"), and go to Beit-El...and to make an altar there to YHVH, who appeared before you...."**, Ya'akov is to go back there and continue to **"rise up"**. Truly, Ya'akov's continual growth from that point is evident. First, he charges his family to **B'resheet 35:2 "put away**

the foreign gods which are among you..." In last week's Parashah (**chapter 31**), we saw that Ya'akov's household was not free of idolatry, indeed Ya'akov seemed to tolerate that state of affairs, but not so now! After all the foreign idols and the earrings are gathered, Ya'akov buries them under the "**ela**", the **terebinth tree**.

Second, in **B'resheet 35:3**, Ya'akov calls his YHVH "**the El who answered me in the day of my distress...**" ("**tzarati**"). In **B'resheet 35:9**, Elohim appears before Ya'akov once again, B'rakhah and reminding him that his name is no longer Ya'akov, but Yisra'el, repeating the Promises He had given to his fathers.

YHVH directed Ya'akov to go back to the place called **Beit-El**. **Beit-El** means **House of El**.

When we do not know what to do or which direction to turn, we should always return to Elohim's House for answers. Through prayer and by reading and following Torah we receive our answers.

V. Rach'el's End and a New Beginning.

B'resheet 35:16-20 Then they journeyed from Beit-El; and when there was still some distance to go to Efrath, Rach'el began to give birth and she suffered severe labor. And it came about when she was in severe labor that the midwife said to her, "**Do not fear, for now you have another son.**" And it came about as her soul was departing (for she died), that she named him Ben-Oni; but his father called him Ben-Yamin. So Rach'el died and was buried on the way to Efrath (that is, Beit-Lechem). And Ya'akov set up a pillar over her grave; that is the pillar of Rach'el's grave to this day.

Nu, on the way from **Beit-El**, Rach'el died in childbirth. Rach'el died giving birth to Ya'akov's 12th son. **Efrath** is the ancient name for **Beit-Lechem**, and the **City of Mothers**. Ibn Ezra; Ramban writes that she named her son **Ben-Oni** meaning literally, **son of my mourning or son of my sorrow**, as if to say; his birth caused my death. Nu, Rach'el names this last child, who before would have been seen as a cause for rejoicing and victory in the competition with her sister, **Ben-Oni**. Ultimately, this shows the futility of Rach'el's competition with her sister Leah. Now at the time of her final victory, all she finds is sorrow.

But Ya'akov renames him **Ben-Yamin**, meaning **son of my right hand** or **son of my strength**. The right side was associated with greater strength and honor, because most people are right handed. **Ben-Yamin, son of my right hand**, therefore has the idea of **son of my strength** or **son of my honor**.

The idea is expressed in passages like **Sh'mot 15:6: Your Right Hand, O YHVH, has become Kavodim (Esteemed) in power; Your Right Hand, O YHVH, has dashed the enemy in pieces.**

YHVH is our strength and honor, as in **T'hilli 16:8: I have set YHVH always**

before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.

YHVH Elohim's strength and honor are for us: T'hilli 63:8 My nefesh (soul) follows close behind You; Your Right Hand upholds me. T'hilli 138:7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me; You will stretch out Your Hand against the wrath of my enemies, and Your Right Hand will save me.

Yahshua sits at and as the Right Hand of the Father, the position of strength and honor, and we sit there with Him!

Colossians 3:1 If then you were raised with Mashiach, seek those things which are above, where Mashiach is, sitting at the Right Hand of YHVH Elohim.

In a rare move, Ya'akov denied the girl he loved most her dying request, He renamed him the son of my strength or my right hand. When Rach'el died, something died in Ya'akov. For the most part it may have been his worldly ambitions. It was Ya'akov who buried Rach'el. It was Yisra'el who moved on. He had now become what both his grandfather and father were, pilgrims. R. Guzik writes: Can you imagine with feet of lead, a heart in pieces Ya'akov could now set his sights on the things above where Yahshua HaMashiach is seated at the Right Hand of the Father.

The cost of going to the **House of Elohim** is often very steep. In the end, the reward is well worth the cost. Mashiach Yahshua told us, **Mattityahu 10:39 "He who holds on to his life will lose it, but he who loses his life for my sake shall find it."** If we are to wrestle with YHVH and win, we must be willing to give up everything for the Kingdom for YHVH's sake.

VI. Conclusion and Application.

Some lessons may be learned from the events of these chapters. First, the importance of renewal. Believers seem to ever be seeking some new and exhilarating experience. They wish to go from one novel experience to another. In the Scriptures, however, we see little of this happening, either to Avraham, Yitz'chak, or Ya'akov. What Ya'akov did at Beit-El was hardly novel, and what YHVH Elohim Said to him at His second appearance was nothing new. That should tell us something. What was really important for Ya'akov was that he gain a deeper and deeper appreciation of what he had already experienced but not fully grasped. He needed nothing new, but a greater grasp of that which was already given him.

Dr. George Bush (not the President of the United States but the author of one of the old, classic commentaries on **B'reshet**) clearly verbalized this truth and said: These incidents may teach us that the most precious favors of Heaven often come to us, not in the form of B'rakhot or Promises entirely new, but in the repetition or revival of those which we have already experienced in times past. And so, on the other hand, it may be that the most acceptable manner in which we can serve YHVH Elohim will be, not by engaging in something unattempted before, but by **"doing our first works,"** by reminding ourselves of our Covenant vows, and seeking anew that spiritual communion which is the life of our

nefeshim (souls).

Ya'akov's renewal at Beit-El necessitated several actions on Ya'akov's part. **First**, he came to the point where he stopped going his own sinful way and once again obeyed that which he knew to be the Will of YHVH Elohim. There cannot be renewal without **obedience (following Torah in word and deed)**. **Second**, there cannot be renewal without separation. So long, Paganism! Ya'akov put away those foreign gods which he had so long tolerated and which were so offensive to YHVH Elohim. **Finally**, Ya'akov's renewal involved reconciliation with those (Esav) who had been injured and offended by his sins. We cannot be reconciled to YHVH Elohim without being reconciled with men (**Mattityahu 5:23-24**).

The second lesson

which Believers need to learn is that even when we do renew our relationship with YHVH Elohim, all things will not go smoothly for us. Life, even the Ruakh-filled life, can still be full of sickness (**Philippians 2:25**), suffering, and sorrow (**Corinthians Bet 6:4-5; 12:7-10**). Walking in the path which YHVH Elohim has revealed to us is not strolling along some rose petal strewn pathway, free from the adversities of life. In fact, these adversities and afflictions are the very things which draw us nearer to YHVH Elohim and strengthen our faith (**Ya'akov 1: 2-4**).

The **third lesson** has to do with **Galatians 6:7 "reaping what we have sown."** Much of the heartache which Ya'akov experienced in this chapter was the result of his previous sins. Now I want to be very clear that Ya'akov did not suffer the penalty for his sins. No Believer ever suffers the penalty for sins, for Yahshua HaMashiach has borne our sins on the Tree. But while the guilt and condemnation are dealt with, the consequences of sin remain. David sought YHVH Elohim's forgiveness for his sin and received it (**T'hilli 51, 32**), but the consequences for his acts were not held back (**Sh'mu'el Bet 12:9-12**).

The final lesson

is what we might call the certainty of being set-apart (made kadosh). YHVH Elohim had purposed that Ya'akov would someday return to Beit-El and to his father. If we are true Believers, we cannot put a stop to the purposes of YHVH Elohim for our lives. We may, of course, resist them, but we cannot prevent them.

Let us not

conclude, therefore, that it matters little what we do. It matters a great deal. There was much needless heartache and sorrow in Ya'akov's life because of his waywardness. Sin is never worth the price. We can be fully assured that what YHVH Elohim has begun, He will finish (**Philippians 1:6**). Whether this is done the hard way or the easy way is determined by our resistance or cooperation, but YHVH Elohim's purposes will be achieved (**Romans 8:28-30**). Is this not the very thing which motivates us to be faithful and encourages us when we have failed?

T'hilli 37:23-26 The steps of a man are established by YHVH; And He delights in his

way. When he falls, he shall not be hurled headlong; Because YHVH is the One who holds his hand. I have been young, and now I am old; Yet I have not seen the tzadeek (righteous) forsaken, Or his descendants begging bread. All day long he is gracious and lends; And his descendants are a B'rakhah.

Mishlei 24:16 For a tzadeek (righteous) man falls seven times, and rises again, But the wicked stumble in time of calamity.

Be **tzadeek (righteous)** and **kum (rise)** to Him, our YHVH.