

Vayishlach
"And He Sent"

Torah Reading: Genesis (Bereshit) 32:4 - 36:43

Haftarah Reading: Hosea 11:7 - 12:12

Study Questions

1. Discuss Jacob wrestling with the angel.
2. Why did it happen at that particular time? What was going on in Jacob's life which brought it on?
 1. Who was the man with whom Jacob wrestled?
 2. Who "won" the match?
 3. What are at least two things that happened to Jacob as a result? What do they mean?
 4. What did Jacob want from the man?
 5. What did Jacob name that place? Why?
 6. What part of his flesh was God working on? Why?
3. Why do you think Esau treated Jacob so graciously?
4. What was their agreed point of rendezvous?
5. Why do you think that they never met there? Or, did they?
6. Why was the story of Dinah recorded?
7. Was the action of Simeon and Levi justified? Why or why not?
8. What about Jacob's behavior concerning this incident?
9. Who was the only son of Jacob to be born in the Promised Land?
10. What is the significance of the location called "Migdal Eder?"
11. Why does the Torah record the genealogy of Esau and his descendants? What can we learn from it?

Memory Verse

"Your name will no longer be Jacob," the man told him. "It is now Israel". - Bereshit 32:28a

Study Notes

Outline

- The Match with an Angel
- The Mending of a Relationship
- The Mess with the Canaanites
- The Mourning of Loved Ones

Jacob

Was gone from the promised land for 20 years.
The Lord took him away and it was the Lord who brought him back.

The Match with an Angel

Jacob had matured in many ways but there was still at least one boulder left in his flesh which God needed to deal with.

God is not just the God who saves but also the One who sanctifies. This story is insight into the sanctification process.

Jacob started preparing and plotting as soon as he heard Esau was coming but the Lord had some preparing of His own to do.

Common Interpretations of the Dream

It was just a dream...if true it is hard to explain the fact that Jacob was really limping in the morning! Esau's angel was wrestling with Jacob. Jacob wanted to have the blessings willingly given to him by Esau instead of through the deceit he had used. However, Jacob says he saw God face to face. Not quite an explanation for an angel.

It was all a symbolic story of an inner struggle. Again, the fact that he was limping seems to leave out the symbolic.

Commentaries Views

The commentary views the dream as a time for God to transform Jacob from a follower of men into being a Prince of God. Jacob had always acquired his blessings through deception and cunning. This is the way of the flesh.

Jacob now faced Esau in a situation beyond his control. He could deceive no longer. He now must rely on God for everything.

"...after the maiming, combativeness had been turned to a dogged dependence, [upon God instead of his own flesh to secure blessings for himself].

He was changed from Jacob (heel, deceiver, follower of men) to Israel, Prince of God.

"Jacob would soon discover grace, not negotiation, is the only solvent of guilt."

Our Flesh

God does the same for us. We are new creations but we also have layers of flesh which hinder that new creation from functioning and showing itself.

God is continually sanctifying us so that we can yield our members more and more to God's righteousness in us.

Our flesh hinders us from realizing and walking in the fact that we are Princes of God.

Like Jacob, the Lord also causes us to yield our members more and more to the righteousness which He planted within us.

Who was the Wrestler?

Jacob named the place Peniel which means "face of God".

The wrestler also changed Jacob's name to Israel.

Who could these things be said of except God Himself? Most likely the wrestler was none other than Yeshua.

Remembering

There are three ways this even is remembered: Jacob's name change, the place name of Peniel, and the abstention from eating the hindquarters of animals by observant Jewish people.

How do you remember the things God is doing in your life?

Meeting Esau

It seems that none of Jacob's preparations mattered. All Esau wanted to do was to be a real brother to Jacob.

The Lord had done the real work in both Jacob's and Esau's lives so that they could be reunited.

Seir and Succot

Esau and Jacob agreed to meet at Mount Sier which ultimately became the center for the homeland of the Edomites, who were Esau's descendants. Joshua 24:4 tells us that the Lord specifically assigned Seir to be Edom's homeland.

There is not indication that Jacob ever went to Sier. He went to Succot.

The Israelites did finally come to Edom during the Exodus and were refused passage. Speculation is that the Edomites were still bitter at Jacob's deception or that they were angry that Jacob never came to meet Esau at Sier.

Edom's Fate

Obadiah 1:11, 1:18, 1:12

We are to rejoice when God's justice is performed, but we are not to gloat over calamity, even that of our enemies.

The Mess with Shechem

The text doesn't specify rape, though it could mean rape. Either way she was "defiled".

Contrary to most of the society at the time he still wanted to marry her. This is strange given his pagan background. The word in 34:3 for "deeply attached" is "devek" and carries the idea of a married couple. Even though it's not an excuse he wanted to commit himself to being her husband.

The Plot and Aftermath

Simeon and Levi took things into their own hands. It does not seem that Jacob approved though he ultimately remained silent...for a time.

Bereshit 49:5-7 gives us some insight into how this action affected Simeon and Levi later on.

Rachel's Death

Read Bereshit 31:31. Does this tie in with Rachel's death?

Migdal Eder

This was a watch tower used by shepherds who grazed their flocks around the Bethlehem area. Later on it became the location for the official temple sacrificial flocks to be raised. Presumably it was shepherds from these flocks that came to worship the Messiah when he was born.