

THE LIGHTHOUSE FELLOWSHIP

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Digging into the Torah

I have specifically chosen this week's Parsha because it presents us with a few "problems." By problems, I mean facts that don't always make sense to the average reader, like me. Sorry about the subjectiveness of my definition of the word, problems. Let's generate a general outline of the flow of events in the Parsha. Try your hand at it before looking at mine. Remember, I'm not the standard. Your outline may be different and even more correct than mine. The point is, learn how to outline! Also, make the titles to your outline as short as possible. Making your outline titles short forces you to formulate a more general theme.

- Genesis 32:4-7—Jacob informs Esau of his return.
- Genesis 32:8-24—Jacob prepares to meet Esau.
- Genesis 32:25-33—Jacob wrestles with an angel.
- Genesis 33:1-15—Jacob and Esau meet.
- Genesis 33:16-17—Jacob and Esau part ways.

Let's concentrate primarily on the first four parts of our outline.

Point 1.

A. Read Genesis 32:4-7. Even before reading Genesis 32:7, how do we know that Jacob is extremely worried concerning Esau's feelings about his return? Why was Jacob worried about Esau's reaction to his return? Okay, this sets the scene. Esau was entertaining thoughts of murder the last time Jacob saw him. It's been twenty years and Jacob wants to know if Esau is still intent on killing him.

B. Read Genesis 32:7-8. Note the information given to Jacob by his messengers, as well as Jacob's response. What should we expect to occur once Jacob and Esau meet?

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C. Read Genesis 32:7-23. What one word characterizes Jacob's emotional state of being? As you can see, Jacob is hurrying in fear. He is extremely fearful for the lives of his family.

D. Read Genesis 32:25-33. Doesn't this passage seem strange? Of course it does. This passage immediately brings up many questions. Who is the man? What happened to cause them to begin wrestling? Why did Jacob want the angel to bless him? Does this passage seem to have anything at all to do with Jacob and Esau's reunion?¹² I must admit, I don't know the answers to these questions; however, hopefully I can impart some knowledge to you that will lead you one small step closer to the significance of these events. For now, let's skip this section and return to it later.

E. Read Genesis 33:1-15. Does this passage seem to fit with the first passage we read in this long Parsha? Why or why not?¹³ In other words, Genesis 32:4-24 leads us to believe that Esau was approaching with murderous thoughts, the same ones he had when Jacob fled for his life. Then, all of the sudden, Genesis 33:1-15 shows us a totally different picture of Esau from the one portrayed through the characterization of him by Jacob's messengers and Jacob's fearful actions. This should immediately grab our attention!

Point 2. What happened? Can you tell me what happened between Genesis 32:4-24 and Genesis 33:1-15? Do you see that? Earlier, I asked you if Genesis 32:25-33 had anything at all to do with Jacob and Esau's reunion. Now we can see that it had everything to do with it. It is the key to understanding the apparent transformation of Esau. Note how Jacob's encounter with the angel is strategically placed right between the seemingly disparate portraits of Esau! Surely, the events surrounding Jacob's wrestling match had a bearing on Esau's apparent change of heart.

A. We can look at this Parsha in a number of ways. Had Jacob's messengers misinterpreted Esau's intent in approaching with 400 men? Or, had Esau intended on killing him, only to change his mind for some reason? I don't know the answer for sure; however, I will suggest my current view. I say current because I don't know that it is necessarily the correct answer. I believe that Esau had intended to kill Jacob until his encounter with the angel. Here is my reasoning.

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Point 3. To understand Esau's transformation, let's first try to understand Jacob's wrestling match.

A. Read Genesis 32:8-22. What three things does Jacob do in preparation for his fateful meeting with Esau? Genesis 32:22 informs us that after making his three preparations, Jacob turned in for the night. As pointed out by Rav Chanoch Waxman from Har Etzion Yeshiva:

"His threefold preparation complete, Yaakov goes to sleep, as ready as he can be (32:22). Surprisingly, immediately after being informed of Jacob's lying down for the night and right before the story of the struggle, we find Yaakov up and about, crossing the Yabbok...In pointed contrast to the previous splitting of his camp, he gathers together all of his people and possessions. He is breaking camp and initiating a journey. The sense of reversal of Jacob's previous preparations is further emphasized by the image of 'getting up that night' (32:23), the precise opposite of the 'sleeping there that night' (32:22) that closes out Jacob's preparations. Yaakov seems to have undergone a last-minute change of plans."

Chaverim, this was a brilliant analysis by Rav Waxman. To support his thesis that Jacob has had a last second change of mind, note how he mentions that Jacob had already divided his family and possessions into two camps. Now he is seen bringing them all together for a trip across the Jabbok! Surely, this is a reversal of his original plan to meet Esau as two separate groups. So, what happened in Genesis 32:23-24! Why did he wake up in the night and send his family across the Jabbok River? The classical commentators are split in their opinions concerning his actions. Some state that he was simply getting off to an early start, wanting to be prepared lest Esau come upon them unawares. However, I believe that the Rashbam hits the nail on the head with the following spectacular, stupendous, awesome thematic connection in which he noted the similarity of this passage concerning Jacob and a similar passage concerning David.

B. Read II Samuel 17:21-24! In this passage, David is fleeing from Absalom. Note the following thematic connections to this week's sidra (Torah portion).

- Just as Jacob arose, so likewise David arose.

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- Just as Jacob arose in the late night, pre-dawn hours, so likewise, David arose in the late night, pre-dawn hours.
- Just as Jacob had all who were with him cross the river, so likewise, David had all with him cross the river.
- Just as the verb stem for crossing appears three times to describe Jacob's late night crossing, so likewise, this same stem appears three times describing David's late night crossing.
- Rashbam also noted that the two crossings occurred near each other geographically!
- David arrived in Machanaim after crossing the river. Jacob's last location was pinpointed at Machanaim (Genesis 32:3)!
- Both David and Jacob are fleeing from a close family relative.

Because of these amazing thematic connections, Rashbam concluded that just as David was fleeing from Absalom, so likewise, Jacob was fleeing from Esau! Therefore, Adonai sent the angel to stop him from fleeing. Furthermore, this would explain why Jacob's hip was injured; to prevent him from fleeing. The beauty of this interpretation is that it is based on a clear thematic connection to a similar event. And, if you've studied with MBM for any length of time now, you know that this thematic connection is significant and shouldn't be disregarded too easily.

Connecting the Prophets

The Haftarah reading is found in Obadiah 1:1-21. I will list some verses from the Haftarah reading. Your job will be to relate them thematically to the Parashat HaShavuah reading.

- I. How is Obadiah 1:1 thematically related to the Torah portion?
- II. You may not know this unless you have a Chumash, but in Genesis 33:4, each letter in the phrase, and he kissed him, has a little dot over it. This is very unusual and the sages of Israel are divided concerning its meaning. Some feel that it is an allusion to the fact that Esau's kisses were insincere.

A. Read Ezekiel 35:1-5, According to these verses, Esau will maintain his hatred for Israel forever. At this time, I think the dots may have the following meaning. Could they imply that although Esau truly expressed forgiveness, his descendants wouldn't? Remember, I think Esau was changed because of

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Jacob's transformation into Israel. Prophetically, we know that the transformation of the nation of Jacob's descendants into Israel, one who prevails with Elohim, will not occur until Messiah returns and Israel is made the head of the nations. Therefore, I think this may be a warning to future generations of Am Israel. Yes, Esau did act with forgiveness towards Jacob; however, don't be fooled. His descendants won't extend the same kiss in sincerity. As you read the Haftarah, you will see that Edom truly dealt treacherously with their brother, Jacob.

Connecting the Torah with the NT

I told you that Esau was changed because Jacob had changed. Let's see how this works.

- A. All Jacob's life he has tried to secure the blessing. Even before his birth, he strove for the blessing! What does the blessing represent? 25 Jacob wants to lead. He wants to establish the nation that will one day be a blessing to the entire world. Until he wrestled with the angel, he used every means to secure the blessing including physical struggling, lopsided deals, and deceit. He knew what he wanted and was willing to pay any human price for it. However, note his attitude after wrestling with the angel. He is repentant. Furthermore, he has placed himself in the role of servant, the exact opposite of what he desires.
- B. Can you think of a thematic connection between the above stated concepts and one of Jesus's teachings on discipleship? 26 That's right. This is Jacob's, or shall I say Israel's new motivation. Instead of trying to secure the leadership, he is now taking on the role of servant. Now he understands that he must serve to lead!
- C. This is the reason Esau was able to accept him. Prophetically, the Jewish nation will never gain the respect of the Arab nations until it is transformed into Israel, one who has prevailed with Elohim. Furthermore, Israel will have to be the servant to the nations the Holy One has called him to be. And this will only occur as Israel find themselves in Jesus. Only then will Israel be reconciled to Esau.

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Rachel's Mourning and Death

I. Read Genesis 35:16-20. During this passage, Rachel died during childbirth. As she was dying, she named her son Ben Oni, which means son of my mourning. Thus, we have a thematic connection between Rachel, her child and mourning. Can you think of another Scripture thematically related to this one?²⁷ In Jeremiah 31:15, the prophet stated that Rachel was mourning for her children. In past lessons, we saw the reason why Rachel's children should be linked to the Messiah. She was the third Matriarch who needed supernatural help to conceive a child from a barren/dead womb. Although she had already had Joseph, she went through approximately eight more years of barrenness before conceiving her second son, whom Jacob renamed Benjamin.

- A. Note the location where Rachel died. It was just outside Ephrath. Can you think of a verse that thematically links the Messiah with Ephrath?²⁸ As you can see, this is a Messianic prophecy of the birth of the Messiah. According to Matthew 2:5-6, the religious rulers in Israel understood Micah 5:2 to be a prophecy of the Messiah's birth.
- B. How is Micah 5:2-3 thematically connected to this week's Parsha?²⁹ The sum of these thematic connections teaches us that in some manner, the Messiah's birth will be related to mourning and labor pains.
- C. Now Read Matthew 2:16-18 . As you can see, when Rachel named her son Ben Oni (son of my mourning), she was actually prophesying of the mourning that would occur when the Messiah was born! This mourning resulted because of the slaying of all male babies below the age of two. Once again, we see that the lives of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs have as much to do with the future as they do the past.

II. Can you think of another thematic connection between Rachel's mourning because of the slaughter of innocent male babies? That's right. What does this thematic connection teach us about Moses? We know this because Moses was the expectant deliverer for Israel, just as Jesus was! Just as the Satan tried to destroy Moses (the expectant deliverer) at his birth, so likewise, he tried to destroy Jesus.

III. Can you think of another deliverer whom the Satan will try to destroy at his birth? In Exodus, Pharaoh tried to destroy the future deliverer of the nation of

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Israel by having all baby boys cast into the Nile. In Revelation, the Satan tries to destroy the man child who was to rule the nations with a rod of iron. Note the following similarities.

- A. In Exodus, the one to be destroyed (Moses) was destined to rule and exercise authority. In Rev 12, the man-child to be destroyed was destined to rule the nations with a rod of iron.
- B. In Exodus, Pharaoh tried to destroy the future ruler at his birth. In Revelation 12, the Satan tries to destroy the manchild at birth!
- C. In Exodus, the deliverer, Moses, is supernaturally preserved by Adonai. In Revelation, the manchild is supernaturally delivered from the hands of the Satan.
- D. In Exodus, Pharaoh tries to use the waters of the Nile River to destroy the deliverer. In Revelation 12, the Satan tries to use water to destroy the remnant of the woman's seed. Is this mere coincidence? While many believe that the manchild of Revelation 12 refers to Jesus and that the catching up to God's throne refers to Jesus's ascension, at present, I do not think so. I think it pertains to an end-time company of overcomers for the following reasons.
 1. Revelation 2:26-27 promises that those who overcome will be allowed to rule with a rod of iron—just as stated in Revelation 12:5, concerning the manchild. 2) In Revelation 1:19, John is told to write the things which he has seen, the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter. Revelation 1:1-19 corresponds to the things that he had seen. Revelation 1:20- 3:22 correspond to the things which are. Revelation 4:1-22:21 correspond to the things which shall be hereafter, i.e., in the future.
 2. Revelation 4:1 specifically states, "...I will show you the things which must be hereafter." Therefore the catching of the manchild into heaven cannot be Jesus's ascension, which was a past event. Furthermore, Jesus wasn't delivered from the Satan—as stated in Revelation 12—by being caught up to the throne. Lastly, Revelation 14:4 states that there are some who stand on Mount Zion (Rev 14:1), who were redeemed from the earth (Rev 14:4) as firstfruits, which is thematically connected to being caught up to God's throne (Rev 12:5).

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The Doctrine of Balaam in the Last Generation

I. We have already seen that the doctrine of Balaam—a doctrine of assimilation among the nations of the world—was prophetically pictured for us when Jacob was tempted to allow his descendants to intermarry with Hamor in Shechem. On a deeper level, I suggest that the doctrine of Balaam is actually the doctrine of the Satan! Remember, the lives of the Patriarchs are prophetic foreshadows of future generations. We saw a fulfillment of this picture (originally presented in Genesis 34) when Balaam counseled the Midianites to seduce Israel. What you may not know is that any prophetic act may have multiple fulfillments!

B. Read Revelation 2:14. In this passage Jesus states that the last generation will have to deal with the doctrine of Balaam! Now remember, the doctrine of Balaam was played out for us prophetically in Genesis 34! Therefore, we see that the story of Genesis 34 was actually a prophetic foreshadow of events pertaining to the last generation who will see Messiah come on clouds of Glory! Now you can understand why Isaiah made this prophecy:

“To whom will you liken me and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be alike? Those who lavish gold from the purse, and weigh out silver in the scales, hire a goldsmith, and he makes it into a god; then they fall down and worship! They lift it to their shoulders, they carry it, they set it in its place, and it stands there; it cannot move from its place. If one cries to it, it does not answer or save him from his trouble. Isaiah 46:5-10