



#8 Vayishlach – Genesis 32:3-36:43
Torah Teaching
by Moshe Schwab

Names

Esav (ěšāv)– Esau

Hevron – Hebron

Ya'akov – Jacob

Kefa – Peter

Messiah – English for Mashiach; anointed one; Christ in the Greek means to be smudged – anointed

Moshe – Moses

Rivkah – Rebecca

Shaul – Paul

Yeshua – Jesus' real name

Yěhōváh – God's real name forever (Exodus 3:15)

Yitz'chak – Isaac

Yochanan – John

Terms

Cohen – priest

Haftarah – reading from the prophets

Tanakh – Old Testament portion of Bible

Torah – 1st 5 books of the Bible

Torah portion – there are 54 portions of the Torah

Vayishlach - 8th Torah portion

Sometimes we need to review some things; repetition helps us to learn. God's ways are not complicated and don't require tedious work. People are often told that the Old Testament portion doesn't apply to us or is too difficult to keep. The Bible clearly says that God's commandments in the Old Testament portion give us 'wisdom and understanding' and are not difficult to keep.¹

If God's commandments give us wisdom and understanding then they are a blessing of God's grace, His favor. In essence these naysayers are saying that God does not give us good things; so they are saying no to God and telling others to believe in them rather than God. The people who say God's Old Testament commandments doesn't apply any more are wrong. It is extra man-made commandments that make them tedious. The Bible says we are not to make up extra commandments (Deuteronomy 4:2).

Then there are those who say the Old Testament commandments are too hard to keep. The Bible says the opposite: "For this mitzvah which I am giving you today is not too hard for you, it is not beyond your reach; Deuteronomy 30:11 CJB. Isn't that something; people will do anything to make up their own god.

Look at what it says in Proverbs 8:6-11 NKJV:

Listen, for I will speak of excellent things,
 And from the opening of my lips will come right things;
 7 For my mouth will speak truth;
 Wickedness is an abomination to my lips.

¹ Deuteronomy 4:5-6 NKJV says, "Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'"

8 All the words of my mouth are with righteousness;
 Nothing crooked or perverse is in them.
 9 They are all plain to him who understands,
 And right to those who find knowledge.
 10 Receive my instruction, and not silver,
 And knowledge rather than choice gold;
 11 For wisdom is better than rubies,
 And all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her.

God's commandments in the Old Testament are better than rubies and are truth it says. I want what God wants for me no matter what these so-called believers say about God's commandments.

Get tuned into God so that you follow God's commandments and hear God speaking to you. Find out what commandments are applicable and do them. A lot of them have to do with the sacrificial law which the Messiah Yeshua replaced. Hebrews 9:28 NKJV tells us the Messiah (Christ) gave himself for our sins; the old system of sacrifice is done away: "So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation."

Also, don't be like some believers and deny the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 14:1 NKJV says, "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy." Some say God does not speak any more. To them we have a god of stone or wood; that is not true. Shaul says, "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil;" 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 NKJV. We test the prophecies and hold onto the good.

Doing what is right brings blessing. In contrast, doing what is wrong is like fitting a round peg in a square hole. It might seem things work out at times, but a carpenter will tell you for a strong chair, you need the right fit; the peg must fit in the hole without wiggling or the glue will loosen up and the person sitting in the chair will end up on the floor. Proverbs 10:29 NKJV says, "The way of the LORD is strength for the upright, but destruction will come to the workers of iniquity." The person sitting in the wobbly chair will be in for nasty surprise and so will those who live in sin.

Knowing how to live right brings to bear the right attitudes and actions for all we do in life. I remember this person being frustrated with me because I had a simple view of life; namely, we should do what God says is right. Somehow, he couldn't commit to do what was right. It seemed that because he made mistakes, he couldn't accept the idea that we should commit to do what is right. Then false teachers come along and say things like you are not perfect so don't worry about it.

It seemed like this guy was saying to me that Christianity does not call you to do what is right. Ephesians 4:1 NKJV says. "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called." How are we to be worthy? We walk worthy not on our terms, but God's terms. He is God and we are not. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 NKJV

says, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God." The people who continue to live in sin will not be in the future kingdom of God the Bible says.

Some explain these verses away and say that these verses don't apply to them. Shaul says, **"Do not be deceived."** If you are explaining away these scriptures, you are deceived. The early leaders all told us to keep God's commandments. Shaul says in Romans 3:31 NKJV, "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not!"

One of the final scriptures in the Bible tells us the end of those who live in sin and don't repent; They will be "in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone;" Revelation 21:8 NKJV. I wouldn't want anyone to be deceived and end up in the lake of fire, so I mention it for your sake and mine. Don't be deceived by false teachers. The Bible says that false teachers will end up in the lake of fire.² Don't go there with them.

Torah Teaching

The prophets, probably Nehemiah, divided the Torah into weekly readings. These people did things that God commanded them to do. Our weekly readings help us to concentrate on these different sections and learn from them. Remember, God's word gives us wisdom; so let's learn and grow in God's word. The word Torah means instruction.

After Ya'akov leaves the land of his ancestors with his wife and family and approaches where he grew up, he sends ahead a message to Esau (esav, ěšäv), his brother, that he is coming home. He sends gifts for his brother ahead of him and Esau receives Jacob favorably. Ya'akov wrestles with an angel who names him Israel and he identifies the angel as God (Elohim) and that he has seen God's face.

Wikipedia says that Ya'akov is a shortened ancient name meaning, "may God protect." The same article says that Israel could be translated as God rules.³ This sounds like a possibility based on the story of Ya'akov. God does demonstrate His ability to rule and reign, and He protects Ya'akov. That point seems interesting. Ya'akov has everyone in his camp get rid of their idols and God confirms his promised blessings to Ya'akov. Both Rachel and Yitzchak die. Yitzchak was 180 years old when he died.

Esau's descendants settled in the land of Edom which is south of Israel and Jerusalem. *Edom*

² "But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, 13 and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, 14 having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. 15 They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16 but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. 17 These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. 19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption;" 2 Peter 2:12-19 NKJV.

³<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacob>

means red. It is apparent that God has blessed and protected Ya'akov. It says that he was rich when he lived in the land of his ancestors while working for Laban and he sends Esau many gifts apparently to try and placate any anger that Esau may have held onto because Esau wanted the blessing that Yitzchak gave to Ya'akov.

It should be apparent that Ya'akov was blessed by God both materially and spiritually. He had a relationship with God and wanted to do what is right. Amazing blessings can come from our creator God. Ya'akov seems not to care about all that he is sending to Esau. He saw how God prospered him and blessed him when he worked for Laban. We should probably understand that he trusted in God; especially since he had gone through so much with greedy Laban who changed his wages 10 times to try to defraud him.

There is a standard Jewish teaching about the lesson of Ya'akov that has to do with we doing our part and God doing His part. I learned about this as a child. It makes sense that we need to act and trust in God. Just sitting around waiting for something to happen is not really trusting in God. Not acting is actually not believing. When God asked me to go to the jungle, I immediately began investigating how I could do that. Doing nothing would have meant I didn't trust God. Ya'akov acts like God will prosper him in being generous towards Esau.

Ya'akov seems confident in God. Too bad mankind isn't also confident in God. The Bible says, "Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people;'" Deuteronomy 4:5-6 NKJV.

God's ways are wise and good, but mankind seems to want to do things their own way. The lesson of trusting in God and believing in God and His commandments is a lesson that we learn over and over when reading the Torah or for that matter, any of the Old Testament portion books. But instead of trusting God, people add to God's commandments inappropriately. Also, some people take the scriptures out of their Jewish context and change their meaning. The biggest problem we have in our time are those who take the New Testament portion or the Old Testament portion out of its Jewish biblical context and don't understand the Bible properly.

God's ways are wise and good.

Kefa talks about how people are deluded and going to the lake of fire because of that. "Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures." 2 Peter 3:15-16 NKJV. There was no New Testament so what were they untaught in? We are to keep the Old Testament scriptures. They were twisting what Shaul taught and contradicting the Old Testament scriptures. They were taking Shaul's teachings out of context. Don't go to the lake of fire with those who do that. Both Kefa and Shaul were Jewish. The ancient Jews believed in and taught that there is a future kingdom of God for those who follow God, and a

lake of fire where those who do evil will be punished. God is just, so He must act in a just way. Some have been lied about this important understanding. Even some Jewish rabbis have lost touch with their ancient truths.

Rabbi Kefa talked about people twisting the Bible and just before this he says in 2 Peter 2:4-7 NKJV, "For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly." Rabbi Kefa says there is a future judgment. Noah taught people to do what is right; to keep God's commandments. That's what righteousness means. Noah was saved because he did what was right. We are to live godly lives by God's standards and not our own.

The book of Jubilees tells us that Noach taught God's commandments so he knew them. "And in the twenty-eighth jubilee Noah began to enjoin upon his sons' sons the ordinances and commandments, and all the judgments that he knew, and he exhorted his sons to observe righteousness, and to cover the shame of their flesh, and to bless their Creator, and honour father and mother, and love their neighbour, and guard their souls from fornication and uncleanness **and all iniquity**. For owing to these three things came the flood upon the earth;" Jubilees 7:20-21.⁴ Remember, short lists can be representative for larger lists; they are not a complete list. It say "all iniquity;" what is "all iniquity?" It is any and all sins.

Noach taught God's commandments.

The Haftarah for Vayishlach is Obadiah 1:1-21. This prophecy is over Edom (Esau's descendants) for rejoicing over the misfortune of Judah. Edom stole from Judah and turned over those who were fleeing the Babylonians. God says He will bring on them what they did to Judah. We should be especially careful how we treat others. God can turn the tables on us too if we don't treat people right. In the Torah portion God turned the tables on Laban for trying to cheat Ya'akov.

In Closing

God works out everything for Ya'akov. It is really amazing. It seems like Ya'akov is in trouble at times, but everything just keeps working out for him. Shaul tells us in Romans that God is able to work out everything; perhaps He was thinking of Ya'akov, but most certainly, God is in control and even if things don't seem to work out at times, our good God can restore us even as He has done so for believers in the past. God is good and His commandments are good. God has good intentions for us, so stay faithful and don't be tricked by people who don't understand the Bible properly. God is for us just like God was for Ya'akov. Shaul says in Romans 8:31 NKJV, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" If we do our part, God will do His part.

In the Torah portion for today, everything has worked out for Ya'akov. He is able to return

⁴<https://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/jub/jub21.htm>

home and bring his family with him and he makes peace with Esau. Esau was clearly in the wrong and in the last portion, we saw that he was willing to commit murder. Ya'akov trusted in God and in God's ability to supply his needs, prosper him, and protect him. Like believers before Ya'akov, he had a relationship with God and God guided him. People sometimes think that we are cut off from God, but the Bible shows us otherwise. Because of that, believers in God make this world a better place for all. We can rely on God just as Ya'akov did.

Live on things that give you life and keep you on a good path.

There are many mistaken beliefs about the Bible. For example, some people mistakenly think the Bible says not to celebrate anything. Shaul tells us not to participate in reveling. In his time, reveling included pagan practice, idolatry, and sexual sin. He is not saying we cannot celebrate. After all, God gave us Shabbat and His feasts to celebrate. God wants us to celebrate our relationship with Him! There are those who say celebrating our relationship with God is old fashioned. You've got to be kidding me. Celebrating God's feasts and our relationship with the creator of the universe is an honor and a pleasure.

Some think they have to pray with a serious religious voice or they have to pray a certain way or it doesn't count. Some think they are not allowed to do certain things on Shabbat that have nothing to do with work – like turning on a light, or not using an umbrella when its raining because that is putting up a structure. Who came up with that one?

People and religious leaders make up their own doctrine and some of the things they allow are disgusting and sinful according to the Bible. Man foolishly thinks he can do better than the creator God. Man makes up his own ways to live instead of trusting in God. Yochanan says in 1 John 5:2-4 CJB, "When we love God, we also do what he commands. For loving God means obeying his commands. Moreover, his commands are not burdensome, because everything which has God as its Father overcomes the world. And this is what victoriously overcomes the world: our trust."

First it says that loving God is doing what He tells us to do. In case we didn't get it the first time, Yochanan (John) says it again. He is merely reminding them what the Torah says. "Therefore you shall **love the Lord your God**, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and **His commandments always**;" Deuteronomy 11:1 NKJV. How do you love God? It says you love God by keeping His commandments. Yochanan then says God's commandments are not "burdensome." It says in Deuteronomy, "Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach;" Deuteronomy 30:11 NIV. I've heard people make a big fuss about following the commandments in the Old Testament portion. Is there something wrong with the commandment not to kill someone? What are they thinking?

Then Yochanan says that God's commandments and our trust overcomes the world and makes us victorious. What could be possibly wrong with trusting in God, keeping His commandments, and being victorious? The Bible in Deuteronomy 30:9-10 says essentially that keeping God's commandments will make us victorious; they will bring blessings: "The Lord your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your land for good. For the Lord will

again rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your fathers, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God, **to keep His commandments** and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Law."

We can live a victorious life through God.

When we keep God's commandments, we demonstrate our trust in God and God blesses us. God can do that because He is God. In this portion, Ya'akov got everyone associated with his household to get rid of their idols, those things they prayed to or trusted in made of wood or stone, or anything else they used to pray to or used for idolatry. Perhaps there were other people who came back with him and not just the immediate family. Ya'akov set the standard for his family. Men need to rise up and set spiritual standards for their families and their home. Just like Ya'akov trusted in the true God, we need to trust in God.

Our trust in God overcomes the world Yochanan says; our trust in God will prosper us, will cause us to be victorious. My wife and I have done a number of things where we trusted in God. I thought God told me He wanted me to go to the Amazon jungle. I had my doubts about going to the jungle, but God protected us and used us to bless many people; we also saw people get healed miraculously. God is able to help us and prosper us; after all, He is God. Just like God prospered and protected Ya'akov, God can do that for us.

Keeping God's commandments are difficult for those who don't trust in God because their lack of trust leads them to not follow God; they end up doing things their own way. We are to change and want to do things God's way. Rabbi Shaul said, "So far as your former way of life is concerned, you must strip off your old nature, because your old nature is thoroughly rotted by its deceptive desires; and you must let your spirits and minds keep being renewed, and clothe yourselves with the new nature created to be godly, which expresses itself in the righteousness and holiness that flow from the truth;" Ephesians 4:22-24 CJB. We are to be a holy people and we do that by keeping God's commandments. This sounds great doesn't it? We don't have to live in deception any more; instead we can live right through the truth. Be like Noah and live right. He saved mankind by doing what is right.

Junk spiritual food will not give you the full life that God wants for us. (God's ways are incomparable and much better for us.)

I remember this basketball player dying and it bothered me because he played on a team that used their speed and athletic ability to win games. He had to be in tremendous shape. I eventually found out that he didn't eat right. Some people eat all junk food and in this case, even though he was in great shape, it led to his death. I had heard about things associated with bad choices before. People that smoke can end up dying during physical activity because smoking causes their blood vessels to constrict; that is they tighten up. Be sensible about what you do.

There are congregations that share lots of interesting things, but they are not teaching us to follow God. Some of congregations are minimizing God's teachings. Did I say God's teachings? That's right, the commandments of God are God's way of teaching us how to live right. Who doesn't want to do what is right? When we attach the hinges on a door, do we just

put a couple little nails in the hinge? No one would do that; we don't want the door to fall on us. That's what is happening in our society. People are not living right and their lives are showing it. People just accept how messed up life is now. They don't know how to live right and how to enjoy a good life. Their life is just filled with junk ideas and that's how their life turns out. We shared these scriptures last week, but some scriptures are worth sharing over and over.

James 1:14-18 NKJV:

"But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. **Do not be deceived**, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures."

Sin messes up life, so don't be deceived by these people who are headed for the lake of fire. God does not change; His Old Testament commandments are good. Why would they be bad for us; are God's ways bad? That's ridiculous. God does not change. God's commandments are truths for life so that we have good fruit in our lives. Fruit is what a tree produces; it is the result. Do we want good results or rotten fruit?

What good things do you want from following God the right way?

Food, shelter, and my needs met.

A good family.

Good relationships.

A relationship with the creator God.

To live right.

A future in God's eternal kingdom.

The scripture we just read in James said that good things come from God. If you didn't know this, you've been watching too many television commercials. Things don't always go better with Coke. God can do incredible things because after all, He is God. God helped Ya'akov in miraculous ways; and God can help you too.

God has not changed.

God will accomplish His almighty will through following His ways. (God promises blessings for doing things His way, so He puts power on doing things His way. It is not simply just a theory on how to live.)

As we have said, in this Torah portion God prospered Ya'akov; He did this over and over despite Lavan trying to cheat him over and over. You would think that Lavan would have figured it out, but he didn't.

I know of some guy that got fired by his employer because he told someone at work that he thought doing something a certain way was dishonest. After that, the employer said bad things about him, so his former employ made it difficult for him to get a job in his specialty. I

didn't know things like this happen, but it is happening more and more in our ungodly times. God turned that around and he is now helping thousands (I'm not kidding) of people to find God, live right, and also helping the impoverished. So, hang in there and don't give up if this has happened to you. God can turn things around. He did it for Ya'akov and he does it over and over for his people. Ya'akov believed so strongly in God's provision that he gave a lot of what he owned to Esau when he returned. I believe that God has prospered me miraculously at times in my life as well.

*I know that God helped me because
there is no other explanation at times.*

Those that are preventing us from succeeding because they value sin will get their reward in the eternal lake of fire. "The cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone;" Revelation 21:8 NKJV. They may feel they have the upper hand on you now, but they are going down; to the pit of hell. God says, "Vengeance is Mine, and recompense; their foot shall slip in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things to come hasten upon them. For the LORD will judge His people and have compassion on His servants;" Deuteronomy 32:35-36 NKJV. Those who are serving Satan and his lies will get theirs. Revelation 20:10 NKJV says, "The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." Don't envy them; they are to be pitied. God will turn the tables on them in the end. They may think they are smart and savvy; they are not.

For the most part, worldly people don't want God in their lives and many worldly people don't believe in God. When worldly people explain how the world works, they speak in terms of the goals of man and the purposes of man as though God didn't exist. The Bible says, "ADONAI brings to nothing the plans of nations, he foils the plans of the peoples. But the counsel of ADONAI stands forever;" Psalm 33:10-11 CJB.

There are different ways to accomplish what God wants us to do by using the blueprint for life. (We accomplish good things each in our own way.)

We are all different and God can lead us and empower us in many different ways. Ya'akov made a choice to do things God's way. He valued truth over what man valued and God blessed him. He valued doing what is right over making up one's own way of life. We need people like Ya'akov who can speak to this generation and get them heading in the right direction instead of the wrong direction. The Bible tells us that each believer has our own value and we are needed.

Romans 12:4-9 NKJV

"For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. **Having then gifts differing** according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who

leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good."

We don't all have the same function, but we all have a purpose. Use what God has given you; both your talents and your spiritual gifting. Have a strong distaste for evil and sin. Hold onto God's commandments. **Good in Jewish biblical thought is to keep God's commandments.** Deuteronomy 6:17-18 NKJV says, "You shall diligently **keep the commandments of the LORD** your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is **right and good.**"

We saw some of the nastiness of man in Laban. He lied to Ya'akov and manipulated him and tried to cheat Ya'akov. He changed Ya'akov's wages 10 times. In the end, Laban lied to himself and thought that Ya'akov and his family belonged to him even though Ya'akov had earned all that he had. Without lights like us in the world, the world would be a dark place of lies and deceit. Atheists aren't going to make it better even if they are nice people; they can change their minds like Laban did and redefine what they believe over and over. Often, they will make up anything they want to live by.

We need people who are willing to take a stand and show the world a better way. We each can personally experience the goodness of God. Just think though; what if we could help just one other person know the truth about God and life. Can we – at least try – to get others to start understanding some of the truth? What if a million people just tried to help one person each. We could end up with two million who are trying to live holy lives, do what is right, be lights to the world, and make the world a better place to live. It all starts with us; are we willing to trust God and be blessed by God? I've been blessed and you can too. We also then can have the exciting opportunity to try to help someone else understand a better way of life.