



**Take a Stand for a Better World**  
**(A teaching to accompany the Torah portion Vayishlach)**  
**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 - 8<sup>th</sup> Torah portion

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