



Wembley Synagogue

וישלח

Insights from the commentators into the Sedra of Vayishlach

וישלח יעקב מלאכים - *And Yaakov sent messengers.* (32:4)

Rashi comments: "*Malachim mamash*" — "Actual angels."

Rabbi Meir of Premishlan explained Rashi's words with the Mishna in Pirkei Avot (4:13): "He who fulfills one mitzvah gains one advocate for himself." When an individual performs a Mitzvah, he creates an angel that speaks favourably on his behalf in Heaven. The verse tells us that Yaakov sent angels as messengers to Esav.

Which angels did Yaakov send? Those angels that had been created through the mitzvot that he had performed.

This is what Rashi is alluding to when he says "mamash." For "mamash" is an acronym of the words "malachim me'mitzvot she'asah" – (angels from the mitzvot he performed)

(Source: A Shabbos Vort)

Rashi writes earlier that when Esav "came home from the field exhausted" (25:29), he was exhausted "from committing murder." Similarly, after Esav discovered that Yaakov had taken the blessing intended for him, "Esav said to himself, the days of mourning for my father will soon end, and then I will kill my brother Yaakov." (27:41)

Since Esav was a murderer and there was a considerable possibility that he still harbored resentment many years later, Rashi was troubled by the question: How could Yaakov send messengers to Esav when it was likely that they might be killed on the spot? Although Yaakov had received a message that it was an appropriate time to return home (31:3), we know that in a case where there is a threat to life every precaution must be taken.

Of course, Yaakov could have sent spies, and not messengers, which would not have put them in any direct danger. Nevertheless, the Torah states explicitly that Yaakov sent *malachim* – which means messengers not spies. Rashi therefore concluded that Yaakov had sent "actual angels," which could not possibly have been harmed by Esav.

(Source: Likkutie Sichos Vol 5)

כֹּה תֹאמְרוּן לְאֲדֹנָי לַעֲשׂוֹ - *This is what you shall say to my master Esav* (32:5)

The Chizkuni points out that Yaakov referred to Esav as "my master" eight times during this episode. Therefore, eight generations of king reigned in Edom before the first king reigned over the Jewish People. (The Parsha Anthology)

עִם לְבָן גִּרְתִּי - *I have sojourned with Lavan* (32:5)

When Yaakov sent messengers to his brother Esav, he told them to relay the above message to his brother. Rashi comments that the word גִּרְתִּי in this verse has the numerical value of 613, which is also the number of mitzvot in the Torah. By using this word, Yaakov was alluding to Esav, "I dwelt with Lavan and kept the mitzvot; I did not learn from his bad deeds." The simple meaning of this statement is that even someone on the high spiritual level of Yaakov could have been influenced negatively in the environment of Lavan; it was a substantial accomplishment that he withstood the test of living with the evil and dishonest Lavan. (Source: Something to Say)

וַיִּהְיֶה לִי שׂוֹר וְחֲמֹר - *I have acquired oxen and donkeys* (32:6)

The word for "oxen" in this verse is in the Hebrew singular שׂוֹר. Rashi comments that it is *derech erez* (courteous) to speak of many oxen as an "ox." The expression *derech erez* here seems to indicate a positive quality of Yaakov. Although how does calling many oxen an "ox" reflect a praiseworthy quality?

In the context of our verse, it seems more courteous to use the singular form to avoid boasting of one's wealth. This form also suggests that Yaakov thanked Hashem for even a single ox that He gave him, and thanked Him that much more for the far greater reward that He gave Yaakov continually. This teaches us that even when one is blessed with riches, he must not forget to thank Hashem even for the insignificant things a person has. (Source: Darash Moshe)

וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֱלֹקִים שְׁמֹךָ יַעֲקֹב.....כִּי אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל יִהְיֶה שְׁמֹךָ - *And Hashem said to him, "Your name is Yaakov: You shall no longer be called Yaakov anymore, but Yisrael shall be your name;" and He called his name Yisrael* (35:10)

This verse seems to contain an inherent contradiction. If Hashem wished to change Yaakov's name to Yisrael at this time, why did He preface His doing so with the statement "your name is Yaakov?" Surely Yaakov was aware of his own name! Moreover, when Yaakov struggled with the angel and triumphed, the angel told him "No longer will it be said that your name is Yaakov, but rather Yisrael." (32:29) Thus it would seem that the name change had already taken place. What was Hashem adding at this time?

Ramban explains that one of these questions provides the answer to the other. Although the angel that Yaakov had defeated had indeed told him that his name was to be Yisrael, this angel had not been given the mission to actually change Yaakov's name. Thus, at that time, the name remained Yaakov. The angel merely informed him that his name would be changed to Yisrael in the future. Because of this, Hashem began His statement here by saying: At this point, your name is still Yaakov, because it was not the angel's right to change your name. Now, however, I will indeed call you Yisrael.

Although the verse seems to say that Yaakov would no longer be called Yaakov, the commentators note that this is not the case. Indeed, we find a later verse (46:2) in which Hashem Himself refers to Yaakov by that name. In addition, although we find in reference to Avraham that once his name was changed from Avram, it was forbidden to call him Avram, with Yaakov, that is not the case. The Gemara Berachot 13a states that Yisrael became the principal name, while Yaakov was the subsidiary name. (A Daily Dose of Torah)

The name Yaakov was used later by Hashem Himself and so it is obvious that in the previous verse He did not mean to prohibit the use of this name, but to make it secondary. From the time of this change onward, the name Yaakov was used for matters pertaining to the physical and mundane, while the name Yisrael was used for matters reflecting the spiritual role of the Patriarch and his descendants. (Source: Rabbeinu Bachya to Bereshit 35:10 -quoted in the footnote in the Artscroll Gemara Berachot 13a²)

על כן לא יאכלו בני ישראל את גיד הנשה - Consequently the Children of Israel may not eat the sciatic nerve (32:33)

As this verse is talking about something that we cannot eat, the words **את גיד הנשה** hint to the six days during the year that we fast.

א refers to תענית אסתר - The Fast of Esther ת refers to תשעה באב - The 9th of Av - Tisha B'Av ג refers to צום גדליה - Fast of Gedalia י refers to י' בטבת - Fast of 10th Tevet and י' תשרי - 10th Tishri (Yom Kippur) and finally **גיד** which totals 17 refers to שבעה עשר בתמוז - Fast of 17th Tammuz (Source: Niflaot Hatorah)

ויעקב נסע סוכתה ויבן לו בית ולמקנהו עשה ספתי על כן קרא שם המקום סכות - *Yaakov journeyed to Sukkot and built himself a house and for his cattle he built shelters; therefore, he called the name of the place Sukkot* (33:17)

Why would Yaakov name the place Sukkot just because he made shelters for animals there? Would it not be more appropriate to give a name that was connected to the houses he built for human habitation?

The Ohr Hachayim suggests that perhaps Yaakov was the first one to show such mercy towards animals in building them huts to provide relief during the hot summer months (as Rashi points out). This had never been done before, and because of this uniqueness, it was commemorated in the name of the town. (Source: Ohr Hachayim)

וְאֵלֶּה תְּלֻדֹת עֵשָׂו - *And these are the generations of Esav* (36:1)

Not counting this verse which introduces the children of Esav, there are 42 verses left in this Sidra which talk about Esav. The gematria (numerical value) of the word **כִּיבוֹד** - honour is 42. The one mitzvah that Esav kept was **אֲבֹתָיו יִכְבֹּד** - honouring his parents. These verses are the Torah's reward to Esav for fulfilling the mitzvah of **אֲבֹתָיו יִכְבֹּד** (Source: Niflaot Hatorah)

Shabbat Shalom!



Shabbat starts 3.37pm



Shabbat ends: 4.46pm

The *Insights into the Sedra* sheet is edited by Chazan Anthony Wolfson

Online at: http://www.wembleysynagogue.org/html/sedra_notes.html