

**VAYISHLACH PT II**  
**By Hannah Nesher**  
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**‘I will change your name’.**

Part I of this week’s parashah (Torah portion) recalled the wrestling match between Jacob (Ya’acov) and a Divine Being, which resulted in a change of name from Yaacov (Jacob) to Yisrael (Israel).

We see that this wrestling with God for His blessing and the resulting limp produced a result far beyond a simple change of name – it changed Jacob’s entire character. We see this in the Hebrew where names carry great significance.

Yaacov יעקב comes from the root ekev עקב which can mean ‘heel, to follow at the heel, or to deceive, deceitful. After wrestling with the Divine Being, he changed his name to Yisrael, ישראל from the root sar, שר which means to wrestle, strive, or struggle.

This word, ישר yashar, however, also has another meaning and that is to be straight or honest; and El אל is a name for God. Therefore, in changing Yaacov’s name to Yisrael, ישר-אל he gave him a name meaning ‘straight, honest, or right with God’.

Yaacov, the deceitful grasper was miraculously transformed, through his tenacious struggle with the Divine, into Yisrael – a man of integrity, right with God and man.

The biggest change in Jacob is that before this struggle, he was a ‘taker’. He took Esau’s birthright; he took Esau’s blessing; but after striving with God and coming out victorious, he became a giver.

After this life-changing encounter, he meets his brother Esau once again. Instead of killing Jacob as he had threatened earlier, Esau instead ran to meet him, embraced him, fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept.

Today, we seem to consider tears the domain of women and weeping is considered too ‘emotional’ to be manly. But in the Bible, we see several instances of mighty men of God weeping.

Abraham cried when his beloved wife Sarah died. Isaac wept when he saw Rebekkah. Joseph cried when he saw his brother Benjamin again and Jacob cried when he was reunited with his beloved son, Joseph. King Hezekiah wept when told that he would die from his illness<sup>1</sup>. Even Yeshua wept at the tomb of his friend, Lazarus, and he wept over Jerusalem.

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<sup>1</sup> II Kings 20:1-5

Throughout the Bible, crying was not only acceptable but also sometimes a necessary accompaniment to one's powerful emotions.<sup>2</sup> It is said that tears penetrate the heavens. Whether men or women, sometimes we just need to cry, because tears can be a release when we feel there is nothing more that can be done.

Sometimes all we can do is weep before the altar; when we have no right sounding or lofty words to express our desperate or grief stricken prayers to God, tears can suffice. Sometimes we need to cry alone, as did Joseph when overcome with emotion – he sent everyone out of the room.

But there are times when we need to cry in the presence of others and have them comfort us in our pain. We are to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice.

And one thing we know about our tears is that God keeps each one in a special vessel<sup>3</sup>; not one tear drop is wasted. And there will come a day when God will wipe away every tear from our faces and comfort us.<sup>4</sup>

Tears are not a sign of weakness; they express our God-given emotions.

When Esau asked his brother who this great company of people were with him, Jacob replied, **“The children whom God hath graciously given they servant.”** (Gen. 33:5)

Jacob now acknowledges that all the blessings he has received in his life come from God alone. He calls himself Esau's servant; Jacob has learned humility and servanthood. Jacob has become more like Yeshua, who humbled himself to come to earth as a servant.

The Divine Being, at some point in the wrestling match imparted His Divine nature into the depths of Jacob (Israel)'s being. Jacob urges Esau to receive his gifts. **“Take, I pray thee, my gift that is brought to thee; because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough.’ And he urged him, and he took it.”** (Gen. 33:11)

Now the tables are turned. Jacob no longer says to his brother, *Give me, give me!* Now he gently urges, “Take the blessing, I have enough, so please take it.” God is a giver and when we become more like Him, we no longer grasp after His blessings, conniving, deceiving and manipulating others to ‘get a blessing’; but instead, knowing we have more than enough, we love to share the blessing with others.

**“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.”** (2 Cor. 9:8)

I would love for you to receive further encouragement through a related article I recently wrote entitled ‘I will change your name’. [www.voiceforisrael.net/studies/articles](http://www.voiceforisrael.net/studies/articles)

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<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Nina Beth Cardin, The Women's Haftarah Commentary, Vayishlach

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 56:9

<sup>4</sup> Rev. 21:4

## CRUEL ANGER & RIGHTEOUS ANGER

This week's Scripture portion continues with the rape of Dinah, only daughter of Leah and Jacob. When Dinah went out to see the daughters of the land, Shechem, son of Hamor the Hivite, took her and lay with her by force. Afterwards, he wished to marry her.

Interestingly, the Hebrew meaning of the name Hamor is a donkey. Is it possible that the son of a donkey was just as stubborn and self-willed as his father? Stubborn enough to take what he wanted, by force if necessary?

We can also see from the Hebrew, however, that the Scripture does not totally absolve Dinah of all responsibility for her misfortune. In Hebrew, a male youth is called a na'ar נַעַר; a female youth is a na'arah נַעֲרָה.

In describing Dinah's adventure to see the daughters of the Land (with whom they were forbidden to mix or intermingle), the Torah calls her a na'ar, not a na'arah. True, it is only the difference of one letter, but this letter is the letter hey ה **which can be used as an abbreviation for the name of God.**

By removing the letter hey, it shows us that in going out to the daughters of the land alone, she did not walk in the fear of God. Also, **removing the letter hey renders her a male youth rather than a female.**

If someone is not aware of how precise and exacting Torah scribes are, one might think this a simple typo – a technical error. But knowing of the scrupulousness in which Torah scholars transcribe each Torah scroll, one would know that the removal of the letter hey was not a mistake, but rather a deliberate act.

It suggests that Dinah's solo jaunt into the countryside was made without awareness or acceptance of the vulnerability of her feminine gender. I am not in any way, shape, or form, suggesting that Dinah 'asked for it', or that she was not a victim of rape; only pointing out what the Hebrew scriptures show us – that Dinah went out as if she were a male youth, not conscious of the dangers of wandering the countryside alone as a young woman.

She could easily have taken one of her brothers with her, but she chose not to. This is not courage, but rather foolishness. Taking appropriate precautions to protect our purity is not cowardice; it is wisdom.

It seems to me that there is a lesson in this for us as women. There are vulnerabilities to our feminine nature, and in the fear of the Lord we must acknowledge these, walk in

wisdom, and not put ourselves in situations where we endanger our purity or sanctity of mind, soul, and/or body.

Although Shechem must carry full responsibility for his criminal and violent act towards a defenseless woman, Dinah perhaps also showed a lack of feminine modesty in wandering the countryside alone.

I don't recall ever hearing about Dinah again. Did she ever marry? Have children? Or did this forced loss of her virginity ruin her life forever? I don't know. Perhaps Jacob, as her father, was negligent in allowing his daughter to wander about the land alone and unprotected.

Fathers need to establish rules and boundaries to protect their daughters.. When my eldest daughter, Courtney, turned twelve we celebrated with a bat mitzvah.<sup>5</sup> At this time, we also gave her a necklace with three simple words engraved on it, “**True Love Waits**”. <http://www.lifeway.com/n/product-family/true-love-waits>



She wore this simple necklace continually, day and night, until the moment I led her up the altar to meet her beloved bridegroom, Emanuel. Just before walking down the aisle, she reached up, unclasped the necklace and placed it in my hand, saying, “*Thanks Mom, I won't be needing this anymore.*” It was truly a precious moment.

But I will never forget one particular moment in Courtney's teenage years. Of course, when Courtney grew into a lovely young woman it happened that young men began to take interest in her. One such young man phoned the house, asking for her. Poor boy, he had the misfortune of having my husband, Radek, pick up the phone.

Coming from an Eastern European background, the father is absolute boss and makes no pretense of running a democratic home. It's “*his way and there's no highway option*!”<sup>6</sup> Radek's response to this young man calling Courtney was to bellow, “No! You can't talk to Courtney and never ever call here again!!” (followed by a loud hang up). And that was that.

It may have seemed extreme, but Radek took his job as protector of feminine virtue very seriously, and I am thankful for that. It's sometimes hard to know where to set the boundaries with our children. We sometimes waver between being too protective or too permissive.

We once let our son, Timothy (Shmuel), then eight years old, ride his bike over to a friends' house which is several blocks away. It was his first time doing so, and we were a little nervous about letting him go alone. But he had a cell phone on him and he could call if he needed help.

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<sup>5</sup> Bat mitzvah, coming of age ceremony

<sup>6</sup> From the movie, *Pacific*

Upon returning home, he told us that three teenagers had accosted him on the way and tried to force him to hand over his cell phone, taking his bag away and hassling him. We were horrified, knowing that this time it had been three fairly harmless teenagers, but in a city like Jerusalem, another encounter could be much more dangerous.

Today, Timothy has grown into a handsome young man who is already married to his lovely bride, Victoria. Not only does he ride a bike alone but he also drives a car. As we all have to do one day, I have had to let go and let God. We can't keep our kids in a bubble forever. ☺

Jacob's sons, Dinah's brothers, were outraged at the defilement and dishonoring of their sister. Hamor spoke with Jacob, asking that through this marriage of their son and daughter, their two people groups could come into covenantal relationship.



This would have caused Jacob to break the Torah, as God had forbidden Israel to intermarry with the pagan peoples of the Land. But the sons of Jacob spoke treacherously to Hamor, and told him that they would agree to his proposal on the condition that all the males be circumcised, since this was the sign of the covenant.

Hamor and Shechem, in good faith, agreed, and all the males were circumcised. On the third day, when they were immobilized and in pain, the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, slew all the males, because Shechem had defiled their sister. They even took all the spoil – their flocks, riches, wives, and little ones.

Simeon and Levi took revenge for a terrible crime committed against their sister, even though God has said, “**Vengeance is Mine**”<sup>7</sup>. They used trickery and deceit to murder innocent men for a crime they did not even commit.

Rage can cause people to do terrible things; a bad temper is a character weakness that needs to be overcome if we are ever to be the people of God He desires us to be. The word of God tells us **that the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God; and that anger rests in the bosom of fools.**

It is natural to feel anger at times, but we must not allow anger to control us. The enemy wants to use our anger against us and others to cause much destruction. **Sin crouches at the door and its desire is for us but we must master it.** Sin must not have dominion over us; we must have dominion over sin, including the sin of anger.

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<sup>7</sup> Deut. 32:35

In the way of Yeshua, we are **not to return evil for evil, but to overcome evil with good**. Yes, we may become angry over injustice and the wrongs that people do against us or others, especially our loved ones, but this does not give us the right to sin in return. **“Be angry and sin not...”**<sup>8</sup>

Did Simeon and Levi act righteously? Their father never forgave them to his dying day. Rather than blessing them on his deathbed, he cursed their anger and cruelty.

**“Simeon and Levi are brothers; instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place. Let not my soul enter their council...cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.”** (Gen. 49:5-7)

The word of God has so much to say about anger. God Himself is called gracious and slow to anger;<sup>9</sup> and He asks us to imitate him in this:

**He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty,  
And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.”** (Prov. 16:32)

Wow! Self-control over our anger is a more powerful victory than a conquering warrior?! It seems unbelievable, and yet, judging from how difficult it can be, at times, to keep my anger under control when really stressed, pressured or provoked, I now agree with this scripture.

We can have all the best intentions in the world, and then something sets us off and – wham! A huge explosion! It’s funny – I didn’t even know that I had a problem with my temper until I got married and had kids. ☺

We always think it’s the other person’s fault. “If not for them, I’d be fine.” One day my teenager was giving me an attitude while I chauffeured him to yet another event. We were both getting a little ‘hot under the collar’. Finally he burst out with, “Well, it must be you! Because I wasn’t like this all day long until I got into the car with you!” ☺

Some people really do know how to push our buttons, don’t they? I know I’m probably not the only one who struggles with anger. But we know that the anger of man does not accomplish the righteousness of God.

When we are under the influence of out of control anger, we can be very cruel indeed. This is definitely something that we must cooperate with the Holy Spirit to transform us deep within. Being filled with the fruit of the Spirit will help us to overcome the works of the flesh, which include outburst of wrath and murder.

Those who habitually practice having outbursts of wrath (or rage) will not enter the Kingdom.<sup>10</sup> Sobering words.

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<sup>8</sup> Eph. 4:26

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 103:8

The parashah comes to a conclusion with God affirming Jacob's change of name to Israel and the passing of the covenant through his generational line to his descendants. This includes the promise of the Land of Israel.<sup>11</sup>

Rachel gives birth to her second son, and calls him **Ben-Oni**, which means **son of sadness**, for she was dying. But his father changed his name to **Ben-yamin**, whose name means **son at my right hand**.

A change of name is a powerful thing. It can even affect our entire destiny. Although the ten northern tribes of Israel were exiled for their sins and 'lost' among the nations, the tribe of Benjamin, along with Judah, were preserved and survive as the Jewish people today!

Rachel died and was buried in Beit Lechem, (Bethlehem) where her grave is to this very day. Isaac also dies and his sons, Jacob and Esau bury him, as did Isaac and Ishmael their father Abraham. Hopefully, it is not only in death that families can resolve their differences and be reconciled.

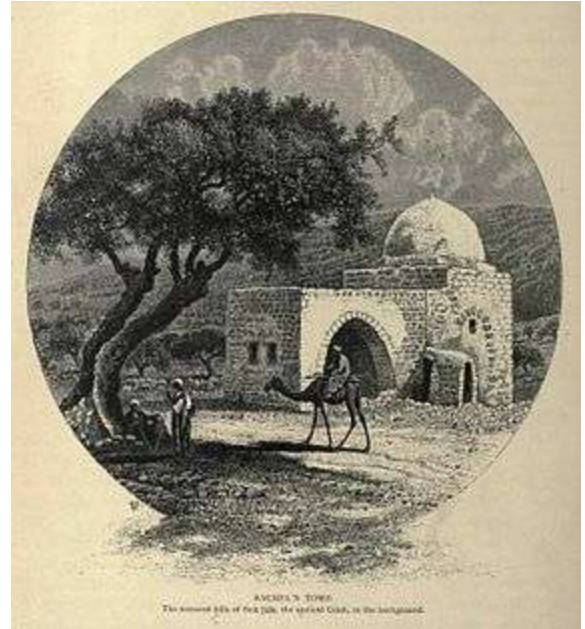


Illustration of Rachel's Tomb, 1880

Esau settled in the territory of Mt. Seir and it clearly states not once or twice but three times here that **Esau is Edom**<sup>12</sup> (Adom in Hebrew is the color red). **Adom** was Esau's nickname because he was red and hairy when born. Esau becomes **father of the Edomites**, a fact which becomes significant to Biblical prophecy as highlighted in this week's haftorah (prophetic portion of Scriptures).

#### Haftorah Vayishlach (Obadaiah) – An Ancient Hatred

Today's study from the prophets (Nivi'im) is the book of Obadiah, which tells us of prophecies regarding Edom. **“Thus saith the Lord God concerning Edom”** (v. 1)

We have already described Edom as 'Adom' in Hebrew, meaning 'red', and standing for the descendants of Esau. Apparently, the animosity and hostility between Esau and Jacob did not end with the brothers' reconciliation but this ancient hatred has carried on down the generations to our very day.



<sup>10</sup> Gen. 5:19-21

<sup>11</sup> Gen. 35:10-12

<sup>12</sup> Gen. 16:8, 19,43

*Photo: Map showing kingdom of Edom (in red) at its largest extent, c. 600 BC. Areas in dark red show the approximate boundary of classical-age Idumaea*

The prophet Ezekiel also warned Edom of the destruction God would bring against them for their violence against the children of Israel:

**“Because you have had an ancient hatred, and have shed the blood of the children of Israel by the power of the sword at the time of their calamity,...therefore as I live, says the Lord God, “I will prepare you for blood and blood shall pursue you, since you have not hated blood, therefore blood shall pursue you.**

**Thus I will make Mount Seir most desolate...Because you have said, These two nations and these two countries (*Judea and Samaria*) will be mine, and we will possess them...**

**therefore as I live, says the Lord God, I will do according to your anger and according to the envy which you showed in your hatred against them....Then you shall know that I am the Lord.” (Ezekiel 35:5-12)**

God makes it completely clear in His word that this land belongs to the descendants of Jacob (Yaa’cov)/Israel and not to Edom (the descendants of Esau).

Today there are those who make a claim to this land; who say “*this land is ours and we will take possession of it and drive those Jews into the sea*”. But the ones who make this boast are boasting against the Almighty God and woe to those who consider themselves Christians but ally themselves with the enemies of Israel.

God does not take lightly the terrorist attacks perpetrated by the war-like descendants of Esau against the children of Israel. Their innocent blood yet cries out to God from the ground for justice!

Obadiah gives the word of the Lord, “FOR THE VIOLENCE DONE TO THY BROTHER, JACOB, SHAME SHALL COVER THEE, AND YOU SHALL BE CUT OFF FOREVER. (v. 10)

In fact, Obadiah goes so far as to declare that none shall escape the Lord’s wrath; there will be no survivors: **‘there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau’**. (v. 18).

What a terrible word against an entire people group, but it is our obligation to be a ‘voice crying out in the wilderness’ and to speak the word of truth wherever the Holy Spirit opens the door.

This word is very relevant to our world situation today, for Obadiah also speaks a the word of the Lord to the nations (in Hebrew the word is used goyim which could be translated Gentiles):



**“For the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations; as you have done, it shall be done unto you; your dealing shall return upon your own head.” (v. 15).**

As each Gentile nation deals with Israel, so shall it be done unto them, for the God of Israel has promised to bless those who bless the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel) and also to curse those who curse us. (Gen. 12:3)

This Divine promise has proved itself true amongst the nations throughout history and will hold true now and in the future. God’s word is established forever. Halleluyah!

Note: I highly recommend viewing the DVD, Where is Your Brother Jacob? &/or reading the book on Purim (Feast of Lots) for a further study of anti-Semitism. Available by request by mail or through our website: [www.voiceforisrael.net](http://www.voiceforisrael.net)

Todah rabah (Thank you very much) and Shabbat Shalom.

Love and shalom in Yeshua Hamashiach

Hannah

#### About the Author:

Hannah Nesher grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and received her education in a religious Hebrew school in Canada.

During a crisis pregnancy, she came to know Jesus (Yeshua) as her Messiah and Savior.

She now lives in Israel with her children and grandchildren, teaching Christians about the Jewish roots of their faith.



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