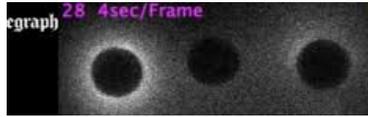


Opening Illustration:

By Faith

“Now *faith* is the *assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*” Hebrews 11:1



BLOGS | MAY. 22, 2016

Contrary to Reports, There is No Flash of

Light at Conception

Stacy Trasancos

Northwestern’s newscaster is partially at fault for the mix-up. They reported the research as a “stunning explosion of zinc fireworks” when a human egg is “activated” by sperm enzyme, but they also correctly (of course) explained the other details later in the article. It seems the *Telegraph*’s science writer mistook the opening metaphor as literal, and apparently the writers citing the *Telegraph* took it from there.

I am addressing those writers, as well as all the people who shared these articles on the internet:

I totally understand that you wrote and shared about the “flash of light” story because you love life. You were excited to “see” what you know to be true—that the moment of conception is awesome. In your zeal for truth, you quite reasonably reported what was reported. But I implore you as Christians to take extra precaution when speaking of science.

“Desire (or Zeal) without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way.” **Proverbs 19:2**
(not included in the original article)

Let me sketch a scenario. Suppose there is someone out there, say a young man named Steve who has a tentative and new faith. He wants so desperately to be confident in his faith. Suppose Steve reads the above articles, and his faith is strengthened. Steve thinks, *Wait! Oh my gosh! So cool! The Church is right. I see now why they say life begins at conception. Why, God creates us all with a spark of life, a flash of light; scientists even call it fireworks! Hallelujah!*

Armed with this pseudo-knowledge, poor Steve gets up the nerve to evangelize. He meets a sassy female atheist abortion supporter online; let us call her Dusty. In his newfound enthusiasm, Steve wants to lead Dusty to Heaven, so he tells her about this miraculous flash of light. Dusty rightly demands he cite his sources. Steve gives her one of the pro-life links above.

And woops, Dusty has taken Chemistry 101 in college and knows what fluorescence is. As Dusty reads the article and finds the scientific paper online, she realizes with a laugh that the Christians got the science wrong. Instead of checking their sources, they jumped right into making a big deal about conception, miracles, and souls, when the researchers made no such declarations. She can hardly hold her tongue.

“Ah, Christians and science—what a conflict! Christians are ignorant of science and blinded by their dogma. They can’t even get a simple metaphor. Do you realize this research only further supports my claim that life, even human life, is nothing but a biological machine made up of clumps of cells? It’s just zinc, not some miraculous firework show. What’s next? Sacraments for the immortal souls of mice? What a bunch of gullible buffoons!”

“I...I didn’t know,” Steve says.

“Look, Steve, you cannot trust these sources. They have an agenda. They don’t even really believe what they say. Why do you think they make such desperate claims any time science seems to give a nod to their doctrines?”

Steve has no answer.

Dusty feels obliged to set him straight. She shows him the *correct* information in the *realscientific* paper, and explains that it is nothing more than a stain used to detect a biochemical process, one of many processes, during the fertilization of eggs. Steve sees that she is right. He is utterly deflated and mistrustful of his sources, so embarrassed that he will not even reach out to Christians for support. What is more, Dusty confirms her suspicion that Christians do not understand science and congratulates herself for helping the sad fool. All in a day’s work.

I guarantee you such scenarios play out. The thing is: the public hears from the Dustys. We do not hear from the Steves. And the faith and science conflict myth perpetuates. To any Christian, please take this advice when communicating about scientific research:

Find and read the actual paper written by the scientists who did the work.

Never trust a popular science source completely. Too often, they are after the “wow” factor. If your goal is to educate, inform, and inspire, then do not write, talk, or share on social media about science without making darn sure you understand the science. If you need to ask for help, do it.

As for conception, be confident. We need no fireworks to prove that life begins at conception. It is simply sound reasoning. **“Conception” means to first come into existence, and it is a beautiful word—a word that unites faith and science.**

Scientifically fertilization is taken as the beginning of any new organism that reproduces this way. No, we do not know all the molecular details of human fertilization. Honestly, we do not need to know, for that knowledge will at some point require the destruction of human lives as test subjects. It is enough to recognize life once it has occurred, like Mary did—the real *fiat* (*fiat - a command or act of will that creates something without or as if without further effort*). **Faith tells us that if there is a human body, there is a human soul. Science and reason tell us that a healthy human zygote is a living human organism. Faith and reason! That is us.**

If you want to be amazed at science, open a high school level chemistry or biology textbook and read carefully—through the eyes of faith—about meiosis, fertilization, fluorescence, the periodic table and atomic models, zinc, calcium, all of it, just the basics. It will blow your mind. That is the handiwork of God. I would love to see more pro-life articles teaching others about the biochemical events involved in the processes of life. Is that information boring? It does not have to be, but yes, it takes more work.

For now, I get it: “zinc is released” as an “inorganic signature” does not sound as share-worthy as “fireworks occur at moment of conception” when a “human soul enters an egg.” But you have to ask yourself in this age of the internet: **Do I want to be snagged by shiny click-bait? Or do I want to be illuminated and awed by the truth?**

<http://www.ncregister.com/blog/trasancos/pro-lifers-there-is-no-flash-of-light-at-conception>

Parallel Illustration: David – The Catholic Church - Revelation 2:18-29:

To the Church in Thyatira

¹⁸“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: ‘The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

¹⁹“I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. ²⁰**But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.** ²¹**I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality.** ²²**Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works,** ²³and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works. ²⁴But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. ²⁵Only hold fast what you have until I come. ²⁶The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, ²⁷and he will rule^[a] them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. ²⁸And I will give him the morning star. ²⁹He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

- The Letter to the Church at Thyatira - Revelation 2:18-29

The Meaning of the Name: “Perpetual sacrifice” or “continual offering”

Revelation: *The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze.* Jesus Christ who is able to see and judge all things.

Commendation: *I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.*

Criticism: *But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 'And I gave her time to repent; and she does not want to repent of her immorality.* A woman with the name of Jezebel cannot be identified with the Church in any literal sense; however, her identity can be discovered on a spiritual level by using information from the Bible concerning her.

Instruction: *But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them-- I place no other burden on you. 'Nevertheless, what you have, hold fast until I come.* Keep doing what you were doing and don't become involved in this teaching.

Penalty: *Behold, I will cast her upon a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. 'And I will kill her children with pestilence; and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.* Christ will make her a whore (to be used by the nations) and those who have relationships (agree) with her will suffer great tribulation and their children will be killed by plagues (Beginning in the 1340's, the Black Death (Bubonic Plague) hit the continent of Europe decimating between 30 to 60% of its population, which dealt the Roman Catholic Church a devastating blow. An estimated 75 million people died in that pandemic alone. Yet there were to be more than 100 other plague epidemics, which would sweep over Europe within the next 400 years.)

Promise: *He who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the morning star.* I see what you are doing and will reward you according to your deeds, do the deeds that I did because they honor the Father. If you overcome, I will give you a day on which you will rule and reign over the nations because all power and authority has been given to Me by My Father.

The Church (787 – 1517 AD) became corrupted from within and the corruption came in three parts: **worship, doctrine, and leadership.**

This age of the Church (The Medieval Age) is associated with “parable of the leaven.” In the parable a **woman** hides **leaven** in **three** parts of a measure until all of it is changed. Before continuing with this Church “age” we need to know more about leaven.

Leaven is a corrupting agent that **changes the nature** of the substance it is put into. In the parable, leaven was put in three portions of meal. The three portions represent the whole thing that was leavened. By this, Jesus is indicating that every human being consists of **three** parts: spirit, soul, and body. So when leaven is introduced into each of the parts, **the entire nature of the person will be changed.** But more importantly we must know what the spiritual **equivalent** of leaven is. **Jesus said it was teaching!** *And Jesus said to them, “Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the **teaching** of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Matthew 16:6 & 12*

- Corruption of Worship -

The changes that were made in the worship of God during this period of time were stupendous both in their nature and quantity. Ritualism was in vogue ... as pagan teaching, ceremonies and practices entered the Church.

Images were placed in churches in violation of the Second Commandment under the pretense that it was enhancing the worshipper's experience. Christians knelt, prayed to and burned candles before them just as idol worshippers in pagan religions had done before them. Seven sacraments replaced the two that Jesus had commanded which were baptism and communion. The rosary, which was of Hindu origin made its appearance in 810 AD and was Christianized.

And the simple “breaking of bread” or “communion” became a ritual all of its own, called the “Mass”, officiated over by a group of people known as the clergy. The Mass centers on a priest who offers Christ as a sacrifice at each service and then supernaturally changes bread and wine into Christ's body and blood, which the congregants partake of. **This repeated offering of Christ as a sacrificial victim at each Mass is a violation of Scripture.** *So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. (Hebrews 9:28) For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit. (1 Peter 3:18)* No wonder Jesus sent his message to the Church that was in Thyatira whose name, “Perpetual **Sacrifice**” or “continual offering”, fits so perfectly.

- Corruption of Doctrine -

In 1075, Pope Gregory VII issued the decree “*Dictatus Papae*” that contained 27 statements of powers ascribed to the Pope. Among them are: “He himself can be judged by no one . . . the Roman Church has never erred, nor ever, by the witness of Scripture, shall err to all eternity . . . papal infallibility . . . forbade reading the Bible in the common language . . . ordered the extermination of heretics . . . only those ordained as priests may grant absolution from sin . . . cult of the saints . . . prayers for the saints”

In 1223 AD, Pope Gregory IX set up the Inquisition to enforce papal doctrine on the people. Anyone who did not conform had to recant his beliefs or he was tortured and put to death. For example, John Wycliffe (1320-1384 AD) taught that all tradition, including Church council decisions and doctrines, must be tested by the Bible. “Holy Scripture,” he said, “is the highest authority for every Christian.” He applied that principle by working to have the Bible translated into his native English. Wycliffe was considered to hold heretical beliefs and sentenced to death because he would not recant. Protected by English kings he died a natural death. However, by order of the Council of Constance (1414-1418 AD) his body was exhumed and publicly burned.

- Corruption of Leadership -

Church leadership became more and more involved with secular power as evidenced with the formation of the Holy Roman Empire.

This period of time is also referred to as the **Midnight** of the Dark Ages as its popes were full of bribery, corruption, immorality and bloodshed. In history the period from 904-963 AD is called the “Rule of the Harlots”. The popes after this period sold their offices and robbed Christians. Most bishops and priests had paid for their offices, for it gave them a chance to live in luxury.

Many other popes had concubines, mistresses and illegitimate children. They sold and granted indulgences to sin, sold offices, and decreed that money would deliver souls from purgatory.

Two theologians, an Englishman, John Wycliffe (1320-1384 AD) and a Czech, John Huss (1374-1415 AD) lit the fires of the reform movement literally, when their bodies were publicly burned. Both of them not only challenged papal authority but the very sacramental structure and theology of the Church. The coming reformation of the Church was to be mightily assisted by two events that occurred within 90 years of the burning of Wycliffe and Huss. In 1453 Gutenberg began printing Bibles on the first moveable printing press in Europe and in 1492 Christopher Columbus discovered America.

- Jezebel -

Perhaps no other Old Testament character has had such a profound impact upon the people of God as Jezebel. Her leadership plagued the people of Israel in her time. And Jesus in the book of Revelation even warns the Church not to tolerate her. She epitomizes evil and has become a symbol of all that is detestable from a moral standpoint.

The first mention of Jezebel is in 1 Kings 16:31 on the occasion of her marriage to King Ahab of Israel in the year 889 BC. Jezebel is not an Israelite, one of God's chosen people. She is a foreigner, a pagan and an idol worshipper. Jezebel is the daughter of Ethbaal (which means “with Baal”), king of Tyre and Sidon.

There is a spiritual clue here for us. In Ezekiel 28, God speaks against the king of Tyre. According to the text, the King of Tyre is really Satan, the anointed cherub. **By association, Jezebel is the daughter of Satan.** The daughter of Satan marries the leader of Israel in order to corrupt God's people. Satan's master plan is and always has been the destruction of God's people. And Satan knows that God will destroy His own people if they turn away from Him.

After becoming queen of Israel, Jezebel instituted the worship of Baal, had an altar and temple built for him and erected Asherah (ancient middle-eastern goddess, wife of the supreme god . . . as mother goddess she was widely worshiped . . . frequently paired with Baal). She tried to have Elijah killed when he confronted her prophets in 879 BC. After her husband's death in 870 BC she continued on as Queen Mother until her own demise. In 857 BC, Jezebel was thrown out of an upper window by her own men, then trampled by horses and had her body and blood consumed by dogs. Jezebel was no ordinary woman!

More than nine hundred years later her character reemerges in the apocalyptic writings of the Apostle John. In the Book of Revelation chapter 2, verses 18 through 29, Jesus instructs the Apostle to write a letter to the angel of the Church in Thyatira. That letter points out that the Church is tolerating the woman Jezebel, describes her role, what she is teaching and **calls on the Church to repent.** This Jezebel is certainly no ordinary woman either. **She has infected the entire Church with false teaching and immorality.** Which woman has ever had that much power and influence?

My intent is to identify the woman and compare her attributes with that of the original Jezebel. Since Jesus' death until now there has only been one Church, one Body of which we are all members. Oh sure, we all go to our own church. But the fact remains that in God's eyes there is only one Church and Jesus Christ His Son is building it.

Jesus states that Jezebel is in the Church. So that is where we must find her. She will have the characteristics of the original Jezebel including her power and influence.

The Rest Of The Story - In 813 AD, Leo V again made it illegal to worship images, however in 843 AD **another woman**, Empress Theodora, convened the Council of Constantinople in order to secure image worship again. Image worship was approved and still stands today.

Today we will see this real **TRUTH** come to light when we learn of Rachel’s death in child birth in fulfillment of the Scriptures that read:

²⁶ And Laban said to Jacob, . . . ³⁰ And now you have gone away because you longed greatly for your father's house, but why did you steal my gods?³¹ Jacob answered and said to Laban, “Because I was afraid, for I thought that you would take your daughters from me by force. ³² Anyone with whom you find your gods shall not live. In the presence of our kinsmen point out what I have that is yours, and take it.” Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them. Genesis 31:25-32

It was because of these words spoken by Jacob that Rachel died in childbirth shortly thereafter.

Week 8 - PARASHA VAYISHLACH (And He Sent)
Genesis 32:4 (3)–36:43; Obadiah 1:1–21; Ephesians 4:1–32

“TRUST in God is Greater than all of our Praises to God”

“And Jacob sent [vayishlach נָשְׂרָף] messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.” Genesis 32:4[3]

Last Week:

Genesis 28:10–32:2; Hosea 12:13–14:10; John 4:1–26

In last week’s Torah reading, describes Jacob’s travels to and his life in Harran, his mother’s homeland, to find a wife and to fee the murderous plot of his brother Esau; and his leaving his unjust father-in-law, Laban, while he was off shearing his sheep. Fearing that Laban would keep his daughters, Leah and Rachel, Jacob stole away with all he had: his sons, his two wives, and all of his livestock, heading for the mountains of Gilead.

A few Take-A-Way Points from Last Week were from the following passages:

- 1. Genesis 28:10 – To fulfill our purpose in the Earth, to build “a dwelling for God in the physical world”, one must enter the Wrath of this world, acknowledge God in it, and Overcome it.**

AND JACOB WENT OUT FROM BE’ER SHEVA, AND HE WENT TO CHARAN

The story of Jacob’s journey to Charan is the story of every soul’s descent to the physical world.

. . . journeys to **Charan** (literally, “Wrath”): a place of lies, deceptions, struggle and hardship; a place in which material concerns consume one’s days and nights, sapping one’s energy, confusing one’s priorities, and all but obscuring the purpose for which one has come there in the first place . . .

. . . Had Jacob remained in the Holy Land, the life of this pious scholar who lived 3,500 years ago would have been of no significance to us today.

The soul, too, achieves its enduring significance only upon its descent into “Charan” (literally, “Wrath”). Only as a physical being, invested within a physical body and inhabiting a physical environment, can it fulfill the purpose of its creation, which is to build “a dwelling for G-d in the physical world.”

(From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

- 2. Genesis 28:13 – God’s promise that all peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.**

¹³ And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, “I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. ¹⁴ Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and **in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.**

Jacob awoke from his dream filled with awe, delighting in the presence of the One True God; and for that reason, he called the place **Bethel** or **Beit–El** (House of God).

In truth, though, any place can become a “house of God” when His holy Presence invades the space.

The ancient Jewish rabbis viewed this pivotal encounter with God as Jacob’s SPIRITUAL AWAKENING. It is here that he entered the role of spiritual forefather, moving forward in the promises given to his grandfather, Abraham

— not only to receive the land, but also to bear fruit and bring blessing to generation after generation of all peoples of the earth:

“Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. **All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.**” Genesis 28:14

3. Genesis 28:15-17 – God’s promise that he will not leave you until he has done what he has promised you.

¹⁵ Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” ¹⁶ Then Jacob **awoke from his sleep** and said, “**Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.**” ¹⁷ And he was afraid and said, “**How awesome is this place!** This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”

What perhaps began as a journey of obedience to His parents now became a journey with God Himself:

“I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” Genesis 28:15

After 22 years in Haran, it was likely difficult for Jacob to free himself from Laban’s wicked manipulation and control, but he did succeed. We can imagine that he was anticipating with great joy his return to his ancestral homeland of Canaan; however, in order to do so, he had to first pass through Edom, the territory of Esau, his estranged brother.

This Week: Genesis 32:3-36:43

Genesis 32:3

³ And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom,

AND JACOB SENT MESSENGER-ANGELS BEFORE HIM TO ESAU HIS BROTHER (32:4)

Actual angels.

(Rashi)

The Hebrew word malachim means both “messengers” and “angels” (an angel being a divine messenger). Thus, the verse “And Jacob sent malachim to Esau his brother” can be understood as a reference to human messengers as well. Hence Rashi’s clarification that it means “actual angels”.

Genesis 28:15

Jacob’s Dream

“Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

Psalm 91:11-12

¹¹ For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.

¹² On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.

Genesis 32:3-8

⁴ instructing them, “Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: Thus says your servant Jacob, ‘I have sojourned with Laban and stayed until now. ⁵ I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, male servants, and female servants. I have sent to tell my lord, in order that I may find favor in your sight.’”

⁶ And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, “We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you, and there are four hundred men with him.” ⁷ Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. **He divided the people** (or nation) who were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two camps, ⁸ thinking, “If Esau comes to the one camp and attacks it, then the camp that is left will escape.”

Jacob’s Family Becomes a Nation

The time had come for Jacob to confront his past. More than two decades had passed since Jacob had posed as his brother Esau and received the first-born blessing from their father.

The last time Jacob had seen Esau, he was filled with murderous rage, vowing to kill him; therefore, **it is no wonder that Jacob felt anxiety at the prospect of seeing Esau again, especially upon learning that his brother was headed his way with 400 men!**

Had Esau held a grudge against Jacob all these years? Or had time eased the pain of betrayal and brought forgiveness? Could the generous gifts of livestock sent ahead to Esau somehow appease his anger? Jacob was about to find out.

Jacob was a man of strategy: he divided his family and the people with him, along with his flock, herds and camels, into two camps. That way, if Esau attacked one camp, the other would survive. **Genesis 32:8**

The Torah does not call these two camps Jacob's "family." This is the first time that the Scriptures refers to those who are with Jacob as a nation / people group (ha'am אָמָה).

“Jacob divided the people [ha'am, אָמָה] who were with him into two groups.” Genesis 32:7

This is why the Jewish People, even today, are called the house of Jacob.

Genesis 32:9

⁹ And Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good.’”

IF ESAU COMES TO THE ONE CAMP, AND SMITES IT, THEN THE CAMP WHICH IS LEFT SHALL ESCAPE (32:9)
He prepared himself in **three ways**: he **sent a gift**, **he prayed**, and **he made ready for war**.

(Rashi)

Genesis 32:10-12

¹⁰ I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps. ¹¹ Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, **for I fear him**, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children. ¹² **But you said, ‘I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.’”**

Psalm 56:3, “When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.”

TRUST in God is Greater, Worth More, than all of our Praises to God.

This internalization of Faith, “TRUST” is the greatest service of and too God because it is the internalization of the knowledge that God is running the whole world.

“For the thing that I fear comes upon me, and what I dread befall me.” Job 3:25

Illustration: Planks laid out on the ground allows individuals the TRUST to not Fall, but once we put those same Planks bridging a raven, that same TRUST now becomes FEAR, and many do Fall. It is in this Lack of TRUST that our Fears become our Reality.

Story: I shared this story with someone yesterday regarding Trust being his greatest form of worship as he faced his ever present spiritual and physical battle, at which time he pulled an 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper out from behind a Platter in his kitchen which read “TRUST GOD”, as he explained he had hid this message, not throwing it away, because he knew that was what he was supposed to do, but did not want to face the Truth of this Tested Faith.

Genesis 32:13-28

¹³ So he stayed there that night, and from what he had with him he took a present for his brother Esau, ¹⁴ two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, ¹⁵ thirty milking camels and their calves, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. ¹⁶ These he handed over to his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, “Pass on ahead of me and put a space between drove and drove.” ¹⁷ He instructed the first, “When Esau my brother meets you and asks you, ‘To whom do you belong? Where are you going? And whose are these ahead of you?’” ¹⁸ then you shall say, ‘They belong to your servant Jacob. They are a present sent to my lord Esau. And moreover, he is behind us.’” ¹⁹ He likewise instructed the second and the third and all who followed the drives, “You shall say the same thing to Esau when you find him, ²⁰ and you shall say, ‘Moreover, your servant Jacob is behind us.’” For he thought, “I may appease him^[b] with the present that goes ahead of me, and afterward I shall see his face. Perhaps he will accept me.” ²¹ So the present passed on ahead of him, and he himself stayed that night in the camp.

Jacob Wrestles with God

²² The same night he arose and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. ²³ He took them and sent them across the stream, and everything else that he had. ²⁴ And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. ²⁵ When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. ²⁶ Then he said, “Let me go, for the day has broken.” But Jacob said, “**I will not let you go unless you bless me.**” ²⁷ And he said to him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Jacob.” ²⁸ Then he said, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed.”

Jacob Becomes Israel

That night, after separating everyone and everything into two camps, Jacob stays behind. While alone, he encounters an angel with whom he wrestles until daybreak, insisting, “I will not let you go until you bless me.” (Genesis 32:26)

Jacob refuses to settle for anything less than a full physical and spiritual inheritance, and his tenacity is commendable; even the angel takes note of it.

But the angel's response is puzzling at first. The angel asks Jacob, **“What is your name?”** He said, ‘Jacob (Yaacov יַעֲקֹב).’” Genesis 32:27

Why did the angel ask about Jacob's name? In Hebrew, his name (Yaacov) can mean the heel of the foot (because he grasped Esau's heel when coming out of the womb); but it can also carry a connotation of deceiver or supplanted.

The "angel" knew that in order for Jacob to embark on his divine destiny, he first needed to face the truth about himself.

Stating his name was essentially admitting his character. The angel changed his name to Israel (Yisrael יִשְׂרָאֵל) because he had struggled (sarah שָׂרָה) with God and with men, and had overcome. Genesis 32:28

The name of Israel comes from two Hebrew words: strive (sar שָׂר) and God (El אֵל).

There is a lesson in this for everyone. **To become the overcomers we are called to be and to experience full victory in our lives, there are times when we must be tenacious in our faith and times when we must prevail in prayer.**

Torah identifies Jacob's mysterious wrestling partner only as an **ish** (man); nevertheless, it becomes obvious that he was much more than just a man. Jacob recognized this and, therefore, called the place **Peniel** (פְּנִיֵאל), which means **Face of God**, because **He had seen God face to face (panim el panim)**.

Genesis 32:29-31

²⁹ Then Jacob asked him, “Please tell me your name.” But he said, “Why is it that you ask my name?” And there he blessed him. ³⁰ So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel,^[1] saying, “For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered.” ³¹ The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip.

The prophet Hosea also saw that Jacob wrestled with God:

“In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his manhood he strove with God. He strove with the angel and prevailed.” Hosea 12:3-4

This intense encounter left Jacob with a permanent limp from a dislocated hip.

“And the sun rose upon him as he passed over Peniel, and he limped upon his thigh.” Genesis 32:31

Genesis 32:32-33:4

³² Therefore to this day the people of Israel do not eat the sinew of the thigh that is on the hip socket, because he touched the socket of Jacob's hip on the sinew of the thigh.

Jacob Meets Esau

33 And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two female servants. ² And he put the servants with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all. ³ He himself went on before them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

⁴ But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

Jacob Makes Peace With Esau

On his way to meet Esau, Jacob prepared for the worst to happen.

Positioning his family behind him, Jacob "went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother.

"But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept." Genesis 33:3-4

While there is obvious merit in being prepared for the worst, the Bible teaches us that **worrying about the future is pointless, since much of what we waste time worrying about never comes to pass.**

It's not that we should deliberately fail to recognize the pitfalls before us and go ahead blindly.

The point is that we can put all of our cares and concerns into God's hands, **trusting Him to take care of us in any and all situations**, even those that could cause us to be fearful or distressed.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”
Philippians 4:6

Like Jacob, some of us have relationships that have been strained—perhaps family members are angry over some past offense.

We may even have committed a great wrong toward someone close to us. In time and with the Lord’s leading, even these estranged relationships can be healed.

Each of us have been given the ministry of reconciliation and should do whatever we can to bring healing and restoration to our relationships with one another, especially our brothers and sisters in the Body of Messiah. It is our responsibility to Invite God into our broken relationships and circumstances and give Him the opportunity to Restore them, but not necessarily our responsibility to single handedly make-right those relationships, without the merciful and gracious hand of God, which could happen immediately, over the course of a short period of time, over the course of a long period of time (ex. Jacob and Rachel praying for a child for 19 years, Jacob working for 22 years for his promise), or not at all.

“Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Yeshua the Messiah, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.” **2 Corinthians 5:18**

Although Esau eventually reconciled with his brother, his descendants—the Edomites—continued to harbor hatred against Jacob’s descendants. It is an ancient hatred, the spirit of which continues to this very day.

But we know that God severely judges such violence.

In the prophetic portion for this week, **in the book of Obadiah, God warns that because of their violence against the children of Jacob (Israel), there will be no survivors of the house of Esau**, and they will be cut off forever.

“Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever . . . and there shall be no survivor for the house of Esau, for the LORD has spoken.” **Obadiah 1:10, 18**

Genesis 33:5-14

⁵ And when Esau lifted up his eyes and saw the women and children, he said, “Who are these with you?” Jacob said, “The children whom God has graciously given your servant.” ⁶ Then the servants drew near, they and their children, and bowed down. ⁷ Leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down. And last Joseph and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down. ⁸ Esau said, “What do you mean by all this company that I met?” Jacob answered, “To find favor in the sight of my lord.” ⁹ But Esau said, “I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.” ¹⁰ Jacob said, “No, please, if I have found favor in your sight, then accept my present from my hand. For I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God, and you have accepted me. ¹¹ Please accept my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough.” Thus he urged him, and he took it.

¹² Then Esau said, “Let us journey on our way, and I will go ahead of you.” ¹³ But Jacob said to him, “My lord knows that the children are frail, and that the nursing flocks and herds are a care to me. If they are driven hard for one day, all the flocks will die. ¹⁴ Let my lord pass on ahead of his servant, and I will lead on slowly, at the pace of the livestock that are ahead of me and at the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir.”

AND I WILL LEAD ON SLOWLY... UNTIL I COME TO MY LORD TO SE’IR (33:14)

Said Rabbi Abbahu: We have searched the whole of Scriptures and do not find that Jacob ever went to Esau to the mountain of Se’ir. But when would he come to him? **In the Messianic Era**, when “*the saviors shall ascend Mount Zion to judge the mountain of Esau*” **Obadiah 1:21**.

(Midrash Rabbah)

Genesis 33:15-20

¹⁵ So Esau said, “Let me leave with you some of the people who are with me.” But he said, “What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord.” ¹⁶ So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. ¹⁷ But Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built himself a house and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.

¹⁸ And Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, on his way from Paddan-aram, and he camped before the city. ¹⁹ And from the sons of Hamor, Shechem’s father, he bought for a hundred pieces of money the piece of land on which he had pitched his tent. ²⁰ There he erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.

AND HE BOUGHT THE PIECE OF LAND... FOR A HUNDRED KESITAH (33:19)

This is one of the three places regarding which the nations of the world can- not accuse Israel and say, “You have stolen them.” The three places are: the Cave of Machpeilah, the site of the Holy Temple, and the tomb of Joseph at Shechem. The cave of Machpeilah, as it is written (Genesis 23:16): “And Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver”; The Temple: “So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold” (I Chronicles 21:25). And Joseph’s tomb: “And [Jacob] bought the piece of land for a hundred kesi- tah.”

(Midrash Rabbah)

Genesis 34:1-4

The Defiling of Dinah

34 Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the women of the land. ² And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he seized her and lay with her and humiliated her. ³ And his soul was drawn to Dinah the daughter of Jacob. He loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her. ⁴ So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, “Get me this girl for my wife.”

Jacob’s Daughter Is Defiled

Here records the rape of Dinah, Jacob’s only daughter. When Dinah goes out to see the women in the town of Shechem, the son of Hamor the Hivite (also named Shechem) takes her by force and lays with her; afterward, he wishes to marry her.

Dinah went into the city only to visit the women of the land, not the men. As the sister of 12 brothers, the longing for female company her own age could be considered quite natural. She may have felt safe in the land, as well, since her family lived in the area in peace, having bought the land they dwelled on from the sons of Hamor.

We do not know the exact circumstances. **Yet, it seems that Dinah went out with the confidence of a young man, not conscious of the dangers of entering the city alone as a young woman.**

Whatever her reasoning was, Dinah bears some responsibility for venturing out alone, while **Shechem carries the full responsibility for his criminal and violent act toward a defenseless woman.**

Genesis 34:5-25

⁵ Now Jacob heard that he had defiled his daughter Dinah. But his sons were with his livestock in the field, so Jacob held his peace until they came. ⁶ And Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. ⁷ The sons of Jacob had come in from the field as soon as they heard of it, and the men were indignant and very angry, because he had done an outrageous thing in Israel by lying with Jacob’s daughter, for such a thing must not be done.

⁸ But Hamor spoke with them, saying, “The soul of my son Shechem longs for your^[m] daughter. Please give her to him to be his wife. ⁹ Make marriages with us. Give your daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves. ¹⁰ You shall dwell with us, and the land shall be open to you. Dwell and trade in it, and get property in it.” ¹¹ Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, “Let me find favor in your eyes, and whatever you say to me I will give. ¹² Ask me for as great a bride-price and gift as you will, and I will give whatever you say to me. Only give me the young woman to be my wife.”

¹³ The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully, because he had defiled their sister Dinah. ¹⁴ They said to them, “We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us. ¹⁵ Only on this condition will we agree with you—that you will become as we are by every male among you being circumcised. ¹⁶ Then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to ourselves, and we will dwell with you and become one people. ¹⁷ But if you will not listen to us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter, and we will be gone.”

¹⁸ Their words pleased Hamor and Hamor’s son Shechem. ¹⁹ And the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he delighted in Jacob’s daughter. Now he was the most honored of all his father’s house. ²⁰ So Hamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city and spoke to the men of their city, saying, ²¹ “These men are at peace with us; let them dwell in the land and trade in it, for behold, the land is large enough for them. Let us take their daughters as wives, and let us give them our daughters. ²² Only on this condition will the men agree to dwell with us to become one people—when every male among us is circumcised as they are circumcised. ²³ Will not their livestock, their property and all their beasts be ours? Only let us agree with them, and they will dwell with us.” ²⁴ And all who went out of the gate of his city listened to Hamor and his son Shechem, and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

²⁵ On the third day, when they were sore, two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, took their swords and came against the city while it felt secure and killed all the males.

SIMON AND LEVI, DINAH’S BROTHERS (34:25)

Was she then the sister of these two only, and not the sister of all Jacob’s sons? But she is called by their name because they risked their lives for her sake.

(Mechilta)

EACH MAN HIS SWORD (34:25)

Our Sages calculate that the younger of the two, **Levi, was exactly thirteen years old at the time.** The fact that the Torah refers to him as a “man” is thus one of the sources that 13 is the age at which the Jewish male attains the age of manhood and daat (intellectual maturity), rendering him a bar mitzvah, one who is bound by the commandments.

Simon and Levi's act seems the very antithesis of daat. Indeed, Jacob denounced their deed as irrational, irresponsible and of questionable legitimacy under Torah law. Yet this is the event that the Torah chooses to teach us the age of reason, maturity, responsibility and commitment to the fulfillment of the mitzvot!

But as Simon and Levi replied to Jacob, the situation that prompted their action did not allow them the luxury of rational consideration of its consequences. The integrity of Israel was at stake, and the brothers of Dinah could give no thought to their own person-not to the jeopardy of their physical lives, nor to the jeopardy of their spiritual selves by the violence and impropriety of their deed. In the end, their instinctive reaction, coming from the deepest place in their souls-deeper than reason, deeper than all self-consideration was validated; **G-d condoned their deed and came to their assistance.**

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Genesis 34:26

²⁶ They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the sword and took Dinah out of Shechem's house and went away.

AND THEY TOOK DINAH OUT OF SHECHEM'S HOUSE, AND WENT OUT (34:26)

There are those who say that **Job lived** in the times of Jacob, and that he married Dinah, the daughter of Jacob.

(Talmud, Bava Batra 15b)

Genesis 34:27-29

²⁷ The sons of Jacob came upon the slain and plundered the city, because they had defiled their sister. ²⁸ They took their flocks and their herds, their donkeys, and whatever was in the city and in the field. ²⁹ All their wealth, all their little ones and their wives, all that was in the houses, they captured and plundered.

Jacob's Sons Plot Revenge

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

The sons of Jacob dealt treacherously with Hamor, telling 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 with pain, Simeon and Levi killed every man as vengeance for Shechem defiling 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 the entire city tried to make amends.

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.

Hearing and Doing the Word

¹⁹ Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. ²¹ Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵ But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

²⁶ If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. **James 1:19-27**

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 to cause much destruction.

In the way of Yeshua (Jesus), 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 justify our sinning by committing ugly acts of vengeance.

“Be angry and sin not.” **Ephesians 4:26**

Genesis 34:30-31

³⁰ Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, “You have brought trouble on me by making me stink to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites. My numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household.” ³¹ But they said, “Should he treat our sister like a prostitute?”

Rage Is Cursed

Did Simeon and Levi act righteously? Not in their father's eyes. Although Jacob did not deny that his daughter should have been avenged in some way, to his dying day he did not forgive them for acting in rage. 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.” **Genesis 49:5–7**

And by the time they entered the Promised Land, the tribe of Simeon was the smallest and weakest (see the second census of Moses *Numbers 26:14*), and they were left out of Moses' final blessing before he died (*Deuteronomy 33*). In addition, their small inheritance lie within the larger inheritance of the tribe of Judah—so they were somewhat scattered among Judah (*Joshua 19:1–9*).

The tribe of Levi is the only tribe of the twelve who did not receive an inheritance of land; yet, through their obedience to God in later generations (*Exodus 32*) and by His grace, they did receive the privilege and responsibility of the priestly duties in Israel, to this day.

The word of God has so much to say about anger. God Himself is called gracious and slow to anger (*Psalms 103:8*), 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.” Proverbs 16:32

Genesis 35:1-15

God Blesses and Renames Jacob

35 God said to Jacob, “Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there. Make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.”² So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Put away the foreign gods that are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments.”³ Then let us arise and go up to Bethel, so that I may make there an altar to the God who answers me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone.”⁴ So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had, and the rings that were in their ears. Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree that was near Shechem.

⁵ And as they journeyed, a terror from God fell upon the cities that were around them, so that they did not pursue the sons of Jacob. ⁶ And Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him, ⁷ and there he built an altar and called the place El-bethel,^[6] because there God had revealed himself to him when he fled from his brother. ⁸ And Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried under an oak below Bethel. So he called its name Allon-bacuth.

⁹ God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. ¹⁰ And God said to him, “Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name.” So he called his name Israel. ¹¹ And God said to him, “I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body. ¹² The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you.” ¹³ Then God went up from him in the place where he had spoken with him. ¹⁴ And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone. He poured out a drink offering on it and poured oil on it. ¹⁵ So Jacob called the name of the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.

Struggles Come to All of Us

This Reading concludes on a sad note, as Rachel dies giving birth to her second son, whose name is changed by his father from **Ben-oni** (son of my sorrow) to **Ben-yamin** (son at my right hand).

Jacob returns to his father, Isaac, who lives to an old age of 180, but Jacob never sees his mother again, since she died while he was away in Haran.

Jacob's life shows us that we may go through many trials and difficulties, but through tenacity and prayer, we can overcome.

Yeshua told us that in this life we will have many troubles, but we can be of good cheer for He has overcome the world **John 16:33**.

To this very day, the descendants of Jacob (Israel) still struggle with this Divine Man who is Yeshua HaMashiach (the Messiah).

Genesis 35:16-36:43

The Deaths of Rachel and Isaac

¹⁶ Then they journeyed from Bethel. When they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel went into labor, and she had hard labor. ¹⁷ And when her labor was at its hardest, the midwife said to her, “Do not fear, for you have another son.”¹⁸ And as her soul was departing (for she was dying), she called his name **Ben-oni** (“son of my grief”); but his father called him Benjamin (“son of the right”). ¹⁹ **So Rachel died, and she was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).**

Genesis 31:25-32

Jacob Flees from Laban

²⁵ And Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban with his kinsmen pitched tents in the hill country of Gilead. ²⁶ And Laban said to Jacob, . . . ³⁰ And now you have gone away because you longed greatly for your father's house, but **why did you steal my gods?**” ³¹ Jacob answered and said to Laban, “Because I was afraid, for I thought that you would take your daughters from me by force. ³² **Anyone with whom you find your gods shall not live.** In the presence of our kinsmen point out what I have that is yours, and take it.” Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

“ANYONE WITH WHOM YOU FIND YOUR GODS, LET HIM NOT LIVE” FOR JACOB KNEW NOT THAT RACHEL HAD STOLEN THEM (31:32)

It was because of these words spoken by Jacob that Rachel died in childbirth shortly thereafter.

(Midrash Rabbah)

Genesis 35:20-21

²⁰ and Jacob set up a pillar over her tomb. It is the pillar of Rachel's tomb, which is there to this day. ²¹ **Israel journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder.**

Biblical Prophecy of the Future Birth of Our Messiah

Although the New Testament does not tell us where **in Bethlehem Jesus was born**, the Old Testament does. **Micah 4:8** states:

“And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.” Thus, the Old Testament clearly states that the Messiah would be born at the “**tower of the flock**” (Hebrew: *Migdal Edar*).

The phrase “**tower of the flock**” is the Hebrew phrase “*Migdal Edar*” [(mig-dawl) ay-der] and means a “**watch tower of the flock**”. In ancient times this was a military tower erected to view into the valley on the edge of Bethlehem to protect the city. Several of these military towers are recorded in the Old Testament (See Judges 8:71, 9:46, 9:51; 2 Kings 9:17, 18:8; Nehemiah 3:1). The tower at Bethlehem is first mentioned in **Genesis 35:21**, “*And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edar*” (“**tower of Edar**” - Migdal Edar). After Jacob left Bethel, he came to **Edar** (*the tower*) and there Rachel began hard labor and as she delivered Benjamin she died and was buried there in Ephrath which is Bethlehem” (**Genesis 35:19**). **After burying Rachel** (a Shepherdess herself), Jacob moved his flocks beyond the **tower of Edar**. This would pinpoint the location as being near to what is present day Bethlehem. Clearly, this establishes that **Migdal Edar, “the tower of the flock”** was in Bethlehem in Bible times.

The oldest tradition, based upon **Genesis 35:16-20; 48:7**, points to a place one mile north of present-day Bethlehem and 4 miles from Jerusalem. We do not know what were the bounds of ancient Bethlehem when Christ was born there, but we know the area called Bethlehem was larger than it is today. The references to present day **Migdal Edar** are in reference to present day Bethlehem and not the Bethlehem of biblical times which was certainly greater. **Genesis 35:19** and **48:7** both state that Rachel was buried at “**Ephrath, which is Bethlehem.**”

“*And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to **Ephrath, which is Bethlehem.***” **Genesis 35:19**

“*And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the **way of Ephrath; the same is Bethlehem.***” **Genesis 48:7**

It must be noted that Ephrath or Ephrathah was the ancient name for the area that later was called Bethlehem. According to **Genesis 35:19**, after Jacob buried Rachel, he “*moved his flocks beyond the tower of Edar*” or “*Migdal Edar*”. The location of Rachel's tomb today is outside, on the outskirts of present-day Bethlehem, but clearly it was not when Jacob, buried his wife there. Clearly the area which is called Bethlehem in biblical times covered a greater area than does present day Bethlehem and the Tower of the Flock was in that city.

This watch tower from ancient times was used by the shepherds for protection from their enemies and wild beasts. It was also the place ewes were safely brought to give birth to the lambs. In this sheltered building/cave the priests would bring in the ewes which were about to lamb for protection. **These special lambs came from a unique flock that was designated for sacrifice at the temple in Jerusalem.**

Rabbi Short states, “According to Edersheim in *The Life And Times Of Jesus The Messiah*”, in Book 2, Chapter 6, states, “This **Migdal Edar** was not the watchtower for the ordinary flocks” that pastured on the barren sheep ground beyond Bethlehem, but it lay close to the town, on the road to Jerusalem. A passage from the **Mishnah*** (Shekelim 7:4) leads to the conclusion that “*the flocks which pastured there were destined for Temple sacrifices.*” In addition, **Migdal Edar** is also mentioned by the Jewish **Targums*** and is translated “**The Anointed One of the flock of Israel**”.

* **The Mishnah** was the first recording of the oral law of the Jews or its Rabbinic Judaism. The word means “repetition” which means it was memorized material. It is the major source of rabbinic teachings of Judaism. Next to the Scriptures the Mishnah is the basic textbook of Jewish life and thought, and is traditionally considered to be an integral part of the Torah revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai.

* The Targum is an Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible (Tanak) which was written during Israel's seventy-year captivity in Babylon. Aramaic is one of the Semitic languages, an important group of languages known almost from the beginning of human history and including also Arabic, Hebrew, Ethiopic, and Akkadian (ancient Babylonian and Assyrian).

Thus, Targum Yonatan, cited by Rabbi Munk, paraphrases Genesis 35:23 and Micah 4:8, “***He spread his tent beyond Migdal Edar, the place where King Messiah will reveal Himself at the end of days.***” What are we to make of all of this information from the writings of the rabbis? First, we know that Migdal Edar was the watchtower that guarded the Temple flocks that were being raised to serve as sacrificial animals in the Temple. These were not just any flock and herd. **The shepherds who kept them were men who were specifically trained for this royal task.** “*They were educated in what an animal, that was to be sacrificed, had to be and it was their job to make sure that none of the animals were hurt, damaged, or blemished.*” **These lambs were apparently wrapped in “swaddling clothes” to protect them from injury and also were used to wrap the Lord Jesus.**

Thus, with the establishment of Temple worship in Jerusalem, *the fields outside of Bethlehem became the place where a special group of shepherds raised the lambs that were sacrificed in the Temple. Being themselves under special Rabbinical care, they would strictly maintain a ceremonially clean stable for a birthing place. The Tower of the Flock was used for birthing ewes, and the surrounding fields were where these shepherds grazed their flocks.* These shepherds customarily kept their flocks outdoors twenty-four hours a day every day of the year, *but brought the ewes in to deliver their lambs where they could be carefully cared for. It was to this place that Joseph took Mary. It was in this special place at “Migdal Edar” that Christ was born!* *How do we know? Micah 4:8 tells us so!:*

*And you, O tower of the flock,
hill of the daughter of Zion,
to you shall it come,
the former dominion shall come,
kingship for the daughter of Jerusalem.*

Prophetically, “Migdal Edar” is the exact place in Bethlehem for Christ to be born. ***Micah was God's prophet*** who was warning Israel of the coming captivity. *He used the authenticating prophecy of the Assyrian captivity of the Northern Kingdom (soon to occur when he foretold it) to serve as a reminder to Israel of God's promised Kingdom.* God wanted them to know that even though they would be taken from their land because of their disobedience that He would restore them in time. **Micah 4:7** establishes the context of the passage and clearly is a Messianic prophecy of the coming of the Millennial Kingdom when Jesus Christ will reign over Jerusalem forever. “. . . **LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even forever.**” In other words, God was assuring Israel that He would fulfill His promises to them of the Kingdom. In **Micah 4:8** the word is rendered “**tower of the flock**” (marg., “Edar”), *and is used as a designation of Bethlehem, which figuratively represents the royal line of David as sprung from Bethlehem.*

In this setting, **Micah (Micah 4:8)** uses the prophecy of the Babylonian captivity of the Southern Kingdom as a pledge to guarantee (authenticating prophecy) of the birth of Christ at “**Migdal Edar**” at Bethlehem which is exactly where it took place! **Micah prophesied that as surely as Assyrians would soon carry away Israel in the North, so the Messiah would come and establish His kingdom,** the “*first dominion, the kingdom shall come to Jerusalem.*” **The verse states that as surely as Babylon would carry away the tribe of Judah, in the South, into captivity, so the Messiah would arrive at the Tower of the Flock.** This prophecy was one other evidence that later proved that Jesus was the Messiah, but one that Israel ignored in rejecting Him as their Messiah.

An Amazing Story and Biblical Prophecy that falls every year during the season of Hanukah. The continuation of one of the Greatest Stories and Prophecies ever written in Scripture, playing out right in front of our eyes during this very special Appointed Time in God's Heart to Reveal His Redemption of Mankind from the Beginning of Time:

Genesis 3:15

**¹⁵I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring^[a] and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.”**

Genesis 35:22-36:43

²²While Israel lived in that land, Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine. And Israel heard of it.

Now the sons of Jacob were twelve. ²³The sons of Leah: Reuben (Jacob's firstborn), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. ²⁴The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. ²⁵The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's servant: Dan and Naphtali. ²⁶The sons of Zilpah, Leah's servant: Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan-aram.

²⁷And Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned. ²⁸Now the days of Isaac were 180 years. ²⁹And Isaac breathed his last, and he died and was gathered to his people, old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Esau's Descendants

36 These are the generations of Esau (that is, Edom). ²Esau took his wives from the Canaanites: Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, Oholibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter^[w] of Zibeon the Hivite, ³and Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, the sister of Nebaioth. ⁴And Adah bore to Esau, Eliphaz; Basemath bore Reuel; ⁵and Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. These are the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan.

⁶Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the members of his household, his livestock, all his beasts, and all his property that he had acquired in the land of Canaan. He went into a land away from his brother Jacob. ⁷For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together. The land of their sojournings could not support them because of their livestock. ⁸So Esau settled in the hill country of Seir. (Esau is Edom.)

⁹These are the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir. ¹⁰These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz the son of Adah the wife of Esau, Reuel the son of Basemath the wife of Esau. ¹¹The sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz. ¹²(Timna was a concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son; she bore Amalek to Eliphaz.) These are the sons of Adah, Esau's wife. ¹³These are the sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These are the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife. ¹⁴These are the sons of Oholibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon, Esau's wife: she bore to Esau Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

¹⁵These are the chiefs of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz the firstborn of Esau: the chiefs Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, ¹⁶Korah, Gatam, and Amalek; these are the chiefs of Eliphaz in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Adah. ¹⁷These are the sons of Reuel, Esau's son: the chiefs Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah; these are the chiefs of Reuel in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife. ¹⁸These are the sons of Oholibamah, Esau's wife: the chiefs Jeush, Jalam, and Korah; these are the chiefs born of Oholibamah the daughter of Anah, Esau's wife. ¹⁹These are the sons of Esau (that is, Edom), and these are their chiefs.

²⁰These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ²¹Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan; these are the chiefs of the Horites, the sons of Seir in the land of Edom. ²²The sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam; and Lotan's sister was Timna. ²³These are the sons of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam. ²⁴These are the sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah; he is the Anah who found the hot springs in the wilderness, as he pastured the donkeys of Zibeon his father. ²⁵These are the children of Anah: Dishon and Oholibamah the daughter of Anah. ²⁶These are the sons of Dishon: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran. ²⁷These are the sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan. ²⁸These are the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran. ²⁹These are the chiefs of the Horites: the chiefs Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ³⁰Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan; these are the chiefs of the Horites, chief by chief in the land of Seir.

³¹These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the Israelites. ³²Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom, the name of his city being Dinhabah. ³³Bela died, and Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his place. ³⁴Jobab died, and Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his place. ³⁵Husham died, and Hadad the son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the country of Moab, reigned in his place, the name of his city being Avith. ³⁶Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his place. ³⁷Samalah died, and Shaul of Rehoboth on the Euphrates^[x] reigned in his place. ³⁸Shaul died, and Baal-hanan the son of Achbor reigned in his place. ³⁹Baal-hanan the son of Achbor died, and Hadar reigned in his place, the name of his city being Pau; his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, daughter of Mezahab.

⁴⁰These are the names of the chiefs of Esau, according to their clans and their dwelling places, by their names: the chiefs Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, ⁴¹Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, ⁴²Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, ⁴³Magdiel, and Iram; these are the chiefs of Edom (that is, Esau, the father of Edom), according to their dwelling places in the land of their possession.

Next Week's Reading & Location:

Week 9 - VAYESHEV (And He Lived)
Genesis 37:1–40:23; Amos 2:6–3:8; Romans 8:18–39

Upcoming Event:

Hanukkah (Jesus' Conception) 2019
Sunday, December 22nd to Monday, December 30th
ber 22nd to Monday, December 30th