

A Rood Awakening!

Presents

Awakening in the Word

By Glenn McWilliams of TK TORAH KEEPERS
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THE OVERVIEW

Not out of fear, but out of obedience to the direct commandment of the Sovereign One, Jacob leaves the defiled area of Shechem and returns to the land of his first personal encounter with YHWH, the Elohim of his fathers, Abraham and Isaac. It was here at Bethel that YHWH appeared to Jacob and confirmed the blessings promised to Abraham and Isaac. From here the story heads south in more ways than one. On the way to Mamre, just south of Jerusalem, Jacob's twelfth son is born, and Jacob loses his beloved wife. Next, Jacob's firstborn son rebels by sleeping with his father's concubine. Further south along the journey we are told of the death and burial of Isaac. The portion concludes with a lengthy genealogy of the children of Esau.

THE OUTLINE

The outline of the portion may be broken down by the events recorded followed by the lengthy genealogy of Esau, which makes up the whole of chapter 36, one of the longest chapters in the book of Genesis.

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| • Genesis 35:9-15 | The blessing of Jacob/Israel |
| • Genesis 35:16-21 | The birth of Benjamin and the death of Rachel |
| • Genesis 35:22 | The rebellion of Reuben |
| • Genesis 35:23-26 | The sons of Jacob |
| • Genesis 35:27-29 | The death and burial of Isaac |
| • Genesis 36:1-43 | The genealogy of Esau |

SUGGESTED STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is our hedge of protection, and how do we enter into it?
2. What is the "again" in verse 9 referring to?
3. What is the significant difference between the three appearances of YHWH?
4. Why does YHWH identify Himself by the name El Shaddai?
5. What is the meaning of El Shaddai?
6. Why does YHWH command a man with thirteen children to be fruitful?
7. To whom is YHWH speaking?
8. What significance is there to Rachel's death?
9. What connection is there between the blessing and Benjamin's birth?
10. What are the meanings of the names Benoni and Benjamin?
11. What did Reuben really do?
12. What connection is there between the death of Rachel and Reuben's actions?
13. Why is Isaac's death recorded here?
14. Why does the Torah include the genealogy of Esau?

THE TEXT

Genesis 35:9-36:43 *And Elohim appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him. ¹⁰And Elohim said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and He called his name Israel. ¹¹And Elohim said unto him, I am El Shaddai: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; ¹²and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. ¹³And Elohim went up from him in the place where He talked with him. ¹⁴And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. ¹⁵And Jacob called the name of the place where Elohim spake with him, Bethel. ¹⁶And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour. ¹⁷And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also. ¹⁸And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin. ¹⁹And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. ²⁰And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day. ²¹And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edar. ²²And it came to pass, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine: and Israel heard it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve: ²³the sons of Leah; Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Zebulun: ²⁴the sons of Rachel; Joseph, and Benjamin: ²⁵and the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid; Dan, and Naphtali: ²⁶and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid; Gad, and Asher: these are the sons of Jacob, which were born to him in Padanaram. ²⁷And Jacob came unto Isaac his father unto Mamre, unto the city of Arbah, which is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac sojourned. ²⁸And the days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years. ²⁹And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.*

^{36:1} Now these are the generations of Esau, who is Edom. ²Esau took his wives of the daughters of Canaan; Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Aholibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite; ³and Bashemath Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebajoth. ⁴And Adah bare to Esau Eliphaz; and Bashemath bare Reuel; ⁵and Aholibamah bare Jeush, and Jaalam, and Korah: these are the sons of Esau, which were born unto him in the land of Canaan. ⁶And Esau took his wives, and his sons, and his daughters, and all the persons of his house, and his cattle, and all his beasts, and all his substance, which he had got in the land of Canaan; and went into the country from the face of his brother Jacob. ⁷For their riches were more than that they might dwell together; and the land wherein they were strangers could not bear them because of their cattle. ⁸Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir: Esau is Edom. ⁹And these are the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in mount Seir: ¹⁰these are the names of Esau's sons; Eliphaz the son of Adah the wife of Esau, Reuel the son of Bashemath the wife of Esau. ¹¹And the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, and Gatam, and Kenaz. ¹²And Timna was concubine to Eliphaz Esau's son; and she bare to Eliphaz Amalek: these were the sons of Adah Esau's wife. ¹³And these are the sons of Reuel; Nahath, and Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah: these were the sons of Bashemath Esau's wife. ¹⁴And these were the sons of Aholibamah, the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon, Esau's wife: and she bare to Esau Jeush, and Jaalam, and Korah. ¹⁵These were dukes of the sons of Esau: the sons of Eliphaz the firstborn son of Esau; duke Teman, duke Omar, duke Zepho, duke Kenaz, ¹⁶duke Korah, duke Gatam, and duke Amalek: these are the dukes that came of Eliphaz in the land of Edom; these were the sons of Adah. ¹⁷And these are the sons of Reuel Esau's son; duke Nahath, duke Zerah, duke Shammah, duke Mizzah: these are the dukes that came of Reuel in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Bashemath Esau's wife. ¹⁸And these are the sons of Aholibamah Esau's wife; duke Jeush, duke Jaalam, duke Korah: these were the dukes that came of Aholibamah the daughter of Anah, Esau's wife. ¹⁹These are the sons of Esau, who is Edom, and these are their dukes. ²⁰These are the sons of Seir the Horite, who inhabited the land; Lotan, and Shobal, and Zibeon, and Anah, ²¹and Dishon, and Ezer, and Dishan: these are the dukes of the Horites, the children of Seir in the land of Edom. ²²And the children of Lotan were Hori and Hemam; and Lotan's sister was Timna. ²³And the children of Shobal were these; Alvan, and Manahath, and Ebal, Shepho, and Onam. ²⁴And these are the children of Zibeon; both Ajah, and Anah: this was that Anah that found the mules in the wilderness, as he fed the asses of Zibeon his father. ²⁵And the children of

Anah were these; Dishon, and Aholibamah the daughter of Anah. ²⁶And these are the children of Dishon; Hemdan, and Eshban, and Ithran, and Cheran. ²⁷The children of Ezer are these; Bilhan, and Zaavan, and Akan. ²⁸The children of Dishan are these; Uz, and Aran. ²⁹These are the dukes that came of the Horites; duke Lotan, duke Shobal, duke Zibeon, duke Anah, ³⁰duke Dishon, duke Ezer, duke Dishan: these are the dukes that came of Hori, among their dukes in the land of Seir. ³¹And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel. ³²And Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom: and the name of his city was Dinhabah. ³³And Bela died, and Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his stead. ³⁴And Jobab died, and Husham of the land of Temani reigned in his stead. ³⁵And Husham died, and Hadad the son of Bedad, who smote Midian in the field of Moab, reigned in his stead: and the name of his city was Avith. ³⁶And Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his stead. ³⁷And Samlah died, and Saul of Rehoboth by the river reigned in his stead. ³⁸And Saul died, and Baalhanan the son of Achbor reigned in his stead. ³⁹And Baalhanan the son of Achbor died, and Hadar reigned in his stead: and the name of his city was Pau; and his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab. ⁴⁰And these are the names of the dukes that came of Esau, according to their families, after their places, by their names; duke Timnah, duke Alvah, duke Jetheth, ⁴¹duke Aholibamah, duke Elah, duke Pinon, ⁴²duke Kenaz, duke Teman, duke Mibzar, ⁴³duke Magdiel, duke Iram: these be the dukes of Edom, according to their habitations in the land of their possession: he is Esau the father of the Edomites.

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At the heart of our portion last week was the tragic story of the rape of Dinah and the slaughter of the men of Shechem. Jacob rebuked his children for their violent behavior and feared the retaliation of the neighboring peoples upon the nascent nation of Israel.

Genesis 34:30 *And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.*

We also witnessed the somewhat shocking and disrespectful response of Levi and Simeon to their father for his failure to respond in kind to Shechem and Hamor.

Genesis 34:31 *And they said, Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?*

The unresolved tension between father and sons is made clear by the lack of response from Jacob to the challenging question of his angry sons. It is clear that this schism between father and sons was interrupted by the command of YHWH before it was resolved. YHWH commanded Jacob to return to the “safety” of Bethel, which was formerly known as Luz. According to Nahum M. Sarna, the inclusion of the name “Luz” is quite revealing.

The name may mean “an almond tree,” as in 30:37. In fact, the region is ideal fruit and nut country. An alternative possibility is to derive it from the Arabic laudh, “a place of refuge,” a name highly appropriate to the present circumstances.¹

We should note that it was at Luz that Jacob first found a place of refuge when he fled from the death threats of his brother Esau.² Now again, in fear of the reprisal of a potential enemy, YHWH commands Jacob to return to this same place of refuge. I would contend that this call to return to Bethel, the place where YHWH had first appeared to him, was to comfort Jacob’s fear by reminding him of the promise YHWH had made to him there.

Genesis 28:13-15 *And, behold, YHWH stood above it, and said, I am YHWH Elohim of Abraham thy father, and the Elohim of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; ¹⁴and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵And, behold, **I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land;** for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*

¹ The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis, Nahum M. Sarna, Jewish Publication Society, Pg. 200

² Genesis 28:19

So it was that YHWH was with Jacob and his family, giving them safe passage as they fled the defiled land of Shechem and made their way to the land of Bethel.

Genesis 35:5 *And they journeyed: and the terror of Elohim was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.*

Here we should recall the great power of the Sovereign One, who instills fear into the hearts of nations to protect those who faithfully bear His image. We may also recall here that all other *elohim* were purged from the children of Israel prior to their arrival at Bethel.³

Exodus 15:14-16 *The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. ¹⁵Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. ¹⁶Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of Thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till Thy people pass over, O YHWH, till the people pass over, which Thou hast purchased.*

Deuteronomy 3:22 *Ye shall not fear them: for YHWH your Elohim He shall fight for you.*

Deuteronomy 11:25 *There shall no man be able to stand before you: for YHWH your Elohim shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as He hath said unto you.*

Deuteronomy 20:3-4 *And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; ⁴for YHWH your Elohim is He that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.*

Deuteronomy 31:6-8 *Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for YHWH thy Elohim, He it is that doth go with thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. ⁷And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which YHWH hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. ⁸And YHWH, He it is that doth go before thee; He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.*

Joshua 9:24 *And they answered Joshua, and said, Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that YHWH thy Elohim commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you, therefore we were sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing.*

Joshua 10:25 *And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall YHWH do to all your enemies against whom ye fight.*

Pure holiness has a peculiar impact even upon the unbeliever, often evoking fear. We see this to be true even of individuals.

Mark 6:20 *For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.*

Mark 11:18 *And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.*

³ Genesis 35:2-4

John 18:5-6 *They answered him, Yeshua of Nazareth. Yeshua saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. ⁶As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.*

We may understand from this command that when we purge all the impurities from ourselves and indeed live the PURE TORAH and bear the unpolluted image of YHWH, we enter into the hedge of protection. In this regard we should understand the Torah to be our refuge. Under YHWH'S protection Jacob and his family arrive in Luz, the place of refuge, and there Jacob builds an altar as he is commanded.

Genesis 35:6-7 *So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Bethel, he and all the people that were with him. ⁷And he built there an altar, and called the place Elbethel: because there Elohim appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother.*

Our portion this week begins with the declaration:

Genesis 35:9 *And Elohim appeared unto Jacob **again**, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him.*

We must be careful to remember that the report of the death and burial of Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, is an insertion into the chronology of our story. Therefore, we should read verses 9-15 as though they are a part of the narrative that was interrupted at verse 7. If we were to remove the insertion of verse 8, the narrative would read as follows:

Genesis 35:7, 9-15 *And he built there an altar, and called the place Elbethel: because there El appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother. ⁹And Elohim appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him. ¹⁰And Elohim said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and He called his name Israel. ¹¹And Elohim said unto him, I am El Shaddai: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; ¹²and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. ¹³And Elohim went up from him in the place where He talked with him. ¹⁴And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. ¹⁵And Jacob called the name of the place where Elohim spake with him, Bethel.*

Clearly we should see from this example that the events described are not two separate occurrences but a single incident which was introduced briefly in verse 7 and then expanded upon in verses 9 and following. We may hearken back to the appearance of YHWH to Abraham in the plains of Mamre.

Genesis 18:1-2 *And YHWH appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; ²and he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground.*

We have already talked about this passage in a previous portion. Clearly we should recognize that the visitation by the three men is the appearance of YHWH. Therefore, we may understand that verse 1 is simply a brief introduction to what is about to follow. The same may be said in our portion as well. Verse 7 introduces the story, while verses 9 and following give us the details of the story. We should not read verse 9 as a secondary event from verse 7.

It is important that we see this connection so that we may address the question of YHWH'S appearances to Jacob. Our text clearly states that YHWH appears to Jacob "again."

Genesis 35:9 *And Elohim appeared unto Jacob **again**, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him.*

If we read verse 7 as though it were separate from verse 9, we may get the false impression that YHWH appears to Jacob in verse 7 and again in verse 9. But the “again” of verse 9 is referring to the previous appearance of YHWH to Jacob at Bethel, as is clear from the text itself.

Genesis 35:1 *And Elohim said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto Elohim, **that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.***

Genesis 35:7 *And he built there an altar, and called the place Elbethel: because there Elohim appeared unto him, **when he fled from the face of his brother.***

Genesis 35:9 *And **Elohim appeared unto Jacob again**, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him.*

We should note that there are additional appearances other than the initial appearance at Bethel. The Sovereign One speaks to Jacob a number of times, and there are at least two appearances of a messenger of YHWH.

Genesis 31:3 *And YHWH said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee.*

Genesis 31:11 *And the angel of Elohim spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob: And I said, Here am I.*

Genesis 31:13 *I am the Elohim of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto Me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.*

Genesis 32:1 *And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of Elohim met him.*

Genesis 32:24 *And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.*

Genesis 35:1 *And Elohim said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto Elohim, **that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.***

The appearance in this week’s portion, however, is quite unique. The root of the Hebrew word for “see” in verse 9 is *ra’ah* (*resh, aleph, hey*). In our portion, however, the word appears not in the active voice but in the passive (*niphal*), and may be translated as “was seen.” Thus, the opening verse of our portion may be read as follows:

Genesis 35:9 *And Elohim **was seen** by Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him.*

If this translation is correct, then we may connect this visitation not only to the previous visitation at Bethel but also to the wrestling match at the Jabbok, after which Jacob declared:

Genesis 32:30 *And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for **I have seen Elohim face to face**, and my life is preserved.*

Overlooking for the moment those references to Jacob “hearing” from the Holy One and focusing upon the four main stories – the first appearance at Bethel, the visitation of the messenger in Haran, the

wrestling match at the Jabbok, and the second appearance at Bethel recorded in our current portion – we should notice a very clear pattern emerging. The first appearance at Bethel was in a dream. We may recall that YHWH appeared even to pagans like Amibelech⁴ and Laban⁵ in dreams. The next two visitations are through agents, a messenger/angel and a man. This final appearance, however, is the very presence of YHWH Himself. Elohim was seen by Jacob. This may explain why in the first appearance at Bethel Jacob speaks and even takes a vow, and why at the wrestling match Jacob demands a blessing, yet in this appearance, Jacob is reverently silent before the very presence of the Holy One. We should see in this pattern the growing intimacy between the Holy One and Jacob, now named Israel. I would suggest that it is this growing intimacy that evokes from the Holy One the change of Jacob's name to Israel. There are two very important lessons being taught by this pattern.

The first lesson that we may glean from this pattern is to understand the sanctity of the land of Israel. It is in the land of promise that YHWH first appears to Jacob, and it is in the land of promise that YHWH appears most intimately with Jacob. Outside the land Jacob hears from YHWH and encounters the agents of YHWH. The sanctity of this promised land is later confirmed in the Torah given to the children of Israel. It is clear that the reason this sacred land was taken from the nations and given to the children of Israel was because of the wickedness of the previous inhabitants. It is also made clear to the children of Israel that if they fail to honor this sanctity, they too will be spewed out of the land.

Leviticus 18:24-30 Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: ²⁵and the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants. ²⁶Ye shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you: ²⁷(for all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled;) ²⁸that the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you. ²⁹For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls that commit them shall be cut off from among their people. ³⁰Therefore shall ye keep Mine ordinance, that ye commit not any one of these abominable customs, which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein: I am YHWH your Elohim.

The second lesson we may learn from this pattern is found in the fact that the most intimate connection between YHWH and Jacob comes only after the purging of all foreign or strange *elohim*.

Genesis 35:2-4 Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange elohim that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: ³and let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto Elohim, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. ⁴And they gave unto Jacob all the strange elohim which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem.

Only after the purging of the defilement of idolatry, sin, and death can Jacob experience such intimacy with the Holy One. Many of us are bewildered by the lack of “power” and “miracles” displayed today in the community of believers. I would suggest that this lack of power and miracles comes from a lack of intimacy with YHWH. Many believers are still carrying with them the defiling idols, theologies, and traditions of past religious systems that prevent such intimacy with the Holy One. We have not yet purged ourselves of all the filters that blind our eyes to the presence of YHWH in our world and our lives. We are hindered from receiving the PURE TORAH from the mouth of the Eternal One because of our tendency to hold on to many “sacred cows” from our previous walk. Jacob sets an example for us by having his household purge all the “sacred cows” from their lives, wash away the defilement of sin and

⁴ Genesis 20:3

⁵ Genesis 31:24

death, and put on new garments of righteousness.⁶ Then and only then does he encounter the very presence of the Holy One. With this said, let us turn our attention to the content of this encounter.

In many ways the content of this appearance is merely a confirmation of the previous two encounters. For the sake of convenience, let me include here the text of all three encounters.

The first appearance at Bethel in a dream

Genesis 28:12-22 *And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of Elohim ascending and descending on it. ¹³And, behold, YHWH stood above it, and said, I am YHWH Elohim of Abraham thy father, and the Elohim of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; ¹⁴and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all the places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. ¹⁶And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely YHWH is in this place; and I knew it not. ¹⁷And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of Elohim, and this is the gate of heaven. ¹⁸And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. ¹⁹And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first. ²⁰And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If Elohim will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, ²¹so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall YHWH be my Elohim: ²²and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be Elohim's house: and of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee.*

The second appearance at Jabbok by an agent

Genesis 32:24-32 *And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. ²⁵And when He saw that He prevailed not against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as He wrestled with him. ²⁶And He said, Let Me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me. ²⁷And He said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. ²⁸And He said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with Elohim and with men, and hast prevailed. ²⁹And Jacob asked Him, and said, Tell me, I pray Thee, Thy name. And He said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after My name? And He blessed him there. ³⁰And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen Elohim face to face, and my life is preserved. ³¹And as he passed over Peniel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. ³²Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because He touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.*

The third appearance at Bethel in person

Genesis 35:9-15 *And Elohim appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him. ¹⁰And Elohim said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and He called his name Israel. ¹¹And Elohim said unto him, I am El Shaddai: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; ¹²and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. ¹³And Elohim went up from him in the place where He talked with him.*

⁶ Genesis 35:2

¹⁴And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. ¹⁵And Jacob called the name of the place where Elohim spake with him, Bethel.

The first thing we should note is that in this final blessing, the promises and declarations made in the previous two blessings and encounters are confirmed. Here we may clearly see that the “again” of verse 9 in our portion is clearly not referring to verse 7 of the previous portion but to both of the previous encounters between Jacob and YHWH. We likewise witness the affirmation of the change of the patriarch's name from Jacob to Israel. We should note that in their previous encounter at the Jabbok, Jacob's opponent asked Jacob for his name. Here, the Sovereign One simply states that his name is Jacob, but he shall now be called Israel.

We may also note that contrary to the previous encounter, no reason is given for the change of name; it has already been explained and is merely being affirmed here. Of great significance, however, is the fact that the Sovereign One reveals to Jacob His own name. At the river Jabbok, Jacob asked his opponent His name but was not given an answer. Now, inside the land and in a personal appearance, the Sovereign One clearly states His name as El Shaddai. We may quickly recognize that this is the Elohim of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We have talked about the meaning of this name in previous portions.

While the patriarchs knew the name YHWH, they had not yet fully experienced the attributes connected with this name. Rather, the patriarchs were familiar with the attributes expressed by the titles "Elohim," "El Elyon," and "El Shaddai."

The use of the name El Shaddai or Shaddai is predominantly found in the poetic writings. It should be understood that poetry tends to preserve older and even archaic language. Nahum M. Sarna writes:

The overwhelming appearance in poetic contexts points a priori to a verbal tradition, for Hebrew poetry tends to preserve or consciously employ early forms of speech. The remarkably high incidence of Shaddai in Job is of particular importance in light of that book's patriarchal setting. All the prose usages are concentrated in the Genesis narratives (17:1, 28:3, 35:11, 43:14, 48:3; 49:25), a fact that is in perfect harmony with Exodus 6:3: "I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as El Shaddai," a tradition explicitly assigning the divine name to the pre-Mosaic age.⁷

While we recognize that the name El Shaddai is an older epithet for the Creator, it is important that we have some understanding of what the name or title means. The etymology of this word is debated by scholars. Some scholars, like Ernest Kline, feel that the most likely etymology of the word Shaddai (*shin, dalet, yud*) is from the root *shin, dalet, dalet*, which means to "overpower," "destroy violently," "rob," "devastate," or "ruin." If this is the root of Shaddai, we may easily understand the translation as "Almighty." Others, however, point to the root word *shad (shin, dalet)*, which can mean "breast" or "breasts."⁸ We may ponder upon the numerous images of Astarte, the many-breasted fertility goddess of the Canaanites, depicting her as sufficient to feed all her children. If *shad* is the origin of the word Shaddai, then we may better translate El Shaddai as the "All Sufficient One." C. I. Scofield writes:

El Shaddai is the name of God which sets Him forth primarily as the strengthener and satisfier of His people. It is to be regretted that Shaddai was translated "Almighty." The primary name, El or Elohim, sufficiently signifies almightiness. "All-sufficient" would far better express the characteristic use of the name in Scripture. Almighty God (El Shaddai) not only enriches but makes fruitful. This is nowhere better illustrated than in the first occurrence of the name (Gen. 17:1-8).⁹

⁷ The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis, Nahum M. Sarna, Jewish Publication Society, Pg. 348

⁸ The New Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words, James Strong, LL.D., S.T.D., Thomas Nelson Publishers, Pg. 835

⁹ The New Scofield Study Bible KJV, C.I. Scofield, Oxford University Press, Pg. 31, notes (1) and (2)

The image of YHWH as the satisfier and sustainer of His creatures is clearly given evidence in the words of the psalmist:

Psalm 145:14-16 *YHWH upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down. ¹⁵The eyes of all wait upon Thee; and Thou givest them their meat in due season. ¹⁶Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.*

Nahum M. Sarna and others point out that there may be yet another possible origin for the word "Shaddai."

The modern conjecture that has gained widest currency connects Shaddai with the Akkadian shadu, "a mountain," often used as a divine (a royal) epithet. The name would originally have meant "the One of the Mountain," probably referring to a cosmic mount or corresponding to the divine epithet "the Rock."¹⁰

In truth, all three of these options may be conceptually connected. Please excuse any insensitivity on my part, but it is not a huge leap to see the connection between full, sufficient breasts and mountains. It is likewise not difficult to imagine the connection between a large, dominant mountain, such as a volcano, and the idea of "overwhelming" or "powerful." I would suggest that all three of these concepts are contained in the name El Shaddai. Clearly Abram, Isaac, and Jacob knew YHWH in His attribute of strength, sufficiency, and fruitfulness. But as we see in Moses' encounter with the Elohim of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, YHWH is also the "Elohim of the Mountain."

What is clear is that regardless of who the other people groups and religions may have understood El Shaddai to be, the Torah clearly associates the title El Shaddai with YHWH, the same Elohim who met with the descendants of Abraham at Mount Sinai. So it may be that this title was used prophetically to confirm to Abram that YHWH had sufficient power and strength to fulfill the promises of the covenant, to make Abram fruitful, and to bring his descendants out of bondage to the mountain where He would meet with them personally. We should remember that in the Covenant of the Pieces, YHWH foretold of Abram's descendants being in bondage in another country not their own and then returning to the land. Clearly YHWH knew what was yet to come for the descendants of Abram.

Genesis 15:13-16 *And He said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; ¹⁴and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. ¹⁵And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.*

The name El Shaddai, therefore, reveals to us that Abram and his descendants first experienced the Creator as the one sufficient to fulfill His promises.

We may also note that it was El Shaddai who changed the names of Abram and Sarai to Abraham and Sarah.

Genesis 17:1 *And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, YHWH appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am El Shaddai; walk before Me, and be thou perfect.*

Genesis 17:5 *Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.*

¹⁰ The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis, Nahum M. Sarna, Jewish Publication Society, Pg. 385

Genesis 17:15 *And Elohim said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.*

By revealing His name to Jacob as El Shaddai, the Sovereign One confirms to Jacob that he is indeed the heir to the very prophecies and promises made to Abraham and Isaac. He also addresses Jacob's concern of being overwhelmed by his enemies. El Shaddai is, after all, the "All Sufficient One," who is able to fulfill His prophecies, promises, and covenants. By revealing His name as El Shaddai, the Eternal One establishes for the reader the continuity between the Elohim of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob/Israel, and his descendants.

After affirming the change of name, El Shaddai then commands Jacob/Israel to be fruitful and multiply. It may appear a bit peculiar that the Creator would command a father of thirteen children to be fruitful and multiply. We may have more likely expected Him to say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Just as the name El Shaddai created continuity with Abraham and Isaac, so too this command creates continuity all the way back to Adam and Chava and Noah and his family.

Genesis 1:28 *And Elohim blessed them, and Elohim said unto them, **Be fruitful, and multiply,** and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*

Genesis 9:1 *And Elohim blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, **Be fruitful, and multiply,** and replenish the earth.*

There is a very subtle lesson to be learned from this commandment. In both the story of Adam and Chava and the story of Noah and his sons, there is a connection made between being fruitful and multiplying and the subduing of the animal realm. Adam and Chava are clearly told to be fruitful and multiply and to subdue the animal realm (including their own animal nature). In the story of Noah and his sons, they too are told to be fruitful and multiply. They are later instructed to make a distinction between man and animals. This distinction is made emphatic by a change in man's diet. It is affirmed that man may kill animals, but neither animals nor man may kill man.

Genesis 9:3-5 *Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. ⁴But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. ⁵And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.*

What should be evident in these passages is that the command to be fruitful and multiply implies that what will be produced will be after its kind. In other words, Adam and Chava and Noah and his sons are to bring forth descendants that will themselves subdue their animal nature, live in the upper spiritual realm, and manifest the image of YHWH. This becomes even clearer in our portion. We have already stated that there is a distinction made between the use of the name Jacob and the name Israel. Jacob refers to the earthly/biological man and line. Israel, on the other hand, refers to the spiritual-natured man and his line. We should note that Jacob, the earthly man, had thirteen children with his two wives and two concubines. The commandment to be fruitful and multiply is not given to Jacob, who married two wives and two concubines in his flesh. The commandment to be fruitful and multiply is given to the spiritual man Israel. It is now Israel's charge to raise up his sons, who are now mere biological descendants, the dust of the earth, to become spiritual heirs and to live in the upper realm as the stars in the heavens. That this command to be fruitful and multiply is referring to the spiritual realm and not the physical realm may be seen in the fact that the death of Rachel follows immediately after the encounter. It would seem that if YHWH had wanted Jacob to simply produce more physical descendants, He would have blessed him with even more wives, not diminished their number and potential. Thus, the death of Rachel may be an indication that Israel is to produce a spiritual line of descendants.

The reality of a spiritual line of descendants may also be understood in the promise that a "nation" and a company of "nations" would come from Israel. We should note that the Hebrew words for "nation" and

"nations" are *goy* and *goyim* respectively. These terms are generally used of those who are not the biological descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We may understand from this promise that the descendants of Israel are not all from among the biological line. Instead, we shall see spiritual descendants coming from among the *goyim* and joining themselves to the Elohim of the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Isaiah 42:6 *I YHWH have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the **goyim**.*

Isaiah 49:6 *And He said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the **goyim**, that thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth.*

Isaiah 60:3 *And the **goyim** shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.*

Isaiah 62:2 *And the **goyim** shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of YHWH shall name.*

Malachi 1:11 *For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same My name shall be great among the **goyim**; and in every place incense shall be offered unto My name, and a pure offering: for My name shall be great among the **goyim**, saith YHWH of hosts.*

Zechariah 8:22-23 *Yea, many people and strong **goyim** shall come to seek YHWH of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before YHWH. ²³Thus saith YHWH of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the **goyim**, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that Elohim is with you.*

Zechariah 14:16 *And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the **goyim** which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, YHWH of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.*

The promise of nations coming from Israel is followed by the promise that kings will likewise arise from the descendants of Israel. It should be noted that the first king of Israel was Saul from the tribe of Benjamin, whose birth is told immediately after the promise is given. Thus, El Shaddai sets the stage for the fulfillment of all that He has promised to Israel.

1 Samuel 9:21 *And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? And my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Wherefore then speakest thou so to me?*

The Torah goes into great detail about the name of Jacob's twelfth son. Upon her deathbed Rachel names her final son Benoni. Unlike the other sons born to Jacob, there is no clear reason given for this name, nor for Jacob changing his name to Benjamin. Both names may be interpreted in several different ways. The traditional understanding, however, is that Benoni means "Son of My Sorrow," while Benjamin means "Son of the Right Hand" or "Son of the South." The name Benjamin may also be translated as "Son of My Days" as a reference to Jacob's aging. The youngest son born was often the one given the responsibility of providing care for the aging parents. We may remember that this was possibly part of Abraham's refusal to let Isaac go on a long journey to seek a wife. It may also be the reason for Jacob's refusal to allow Benjamin to journey with his brothers to Egypt to seek food during the famine.

Following the story of Benjamin's birth and Rachel's death is a brief listing of the sons of Jacob, who shall become the children of Israel. That these children are still the sons of Jacob is made emphatically clear by the carnal actions of Reuben, Jacob's firstborn. To understand what is going on, we must return to the

beginning of this teaching and recall the unresolved tension between Jacob and his sons. While it may, at first, appear that Reuben simply acted upon his animal lusts and engaged in sexual relations with his father's concubine, there is much more at stake in this story.

There is a tendency among some of the rabbis and sages to put a positive spin on everything that one of the patriarchs or their offspring do while at the same time demonizing the likes of Ishmael, Esau, and Laban. An example of this is given in the following rabbinic commentary:

After Rachel's death, Jacob established his primary residence in the tent of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant. Reuben considered this an affront to his mother Leah, saying, "If my mother's sister Rachel was my mother's rival, should the handmaid of my mother's sister now be my mother's rival?" To defend his mother's honor, Reuben took it upon himself to move Jacob's bed to Leah's tent. This is all that transpired (Shabbos 55b); Nevertheless, Scripture describes it as starkly as if Reuben had sinned grievously. This follows the dictum that even minor transgressions or great people are judged with the utmost gravity, because their conduct is measured by an infinitely higher standard than ours.¹¹

The reference to the Talmud given here is an interesting one that reveals how midrashic interpretation is derived by editing texts and even reversing the letters of words to derive some other meaning than the plain meaning of the text.

Said R. Samuel bar Nahmani said R. Jonathan, "Whoever says that Reuben sinned only errs, for it is said, 'Now the sons of Jacob were twelve' (Gen. 35:22)—this teaches that all of them were equal to one another."

Then what is the meaning of the verse, "And he lay with Bilhah, his father's concubine" (Gen. 35:22)? This teaches that he transposed his father's bed, and Scripture credits it to him as though he had lain with her.

It has been taught on Tannaite authority:

R. Simeon b. Eleazar says "That righteous man was saved from that sin, and that deed did not even come into his hand (he never had a chance to do it). Is it possible that this one, whose seed was destined to stand at Mount Ebal and say, 'Cursed be he who lies with his father's wife' (Deut. 27:20), should have the opportunity to commit such a sin? Then how do I interpret, 'And he lay with Bilhah, his father's concubine' (Gen. 35:22)? He objected to the humiliation of his mother. He said, 'If my mother's sister was co-wife to my mother, should the bondmaid of my mother's sister be co-wife to my mother?' So he went and transposed her bed."

Others say, "He transposed two beds, one of the presence of God, the other of his father, in line with the verse: 'Then you defiled my couch, on which the presence of God went up' (Gen. 49:4)."

This follows along lines of Tannaite statements:

"Unstable as water, you shall not excel" (Gen. 49:4).

R. Eliezer says, "You were hasty, you were guilty, you did disagree" (words that begin with the three letters from "unstable").

R. Joshua says, "You overstepped the law, you sinned, you fornicated."

Rabban Gamaliel says, "You meditated, you supplicated, your prayer shone forth."

¹¹ The Schottenstein Edition Interlinear Chumash, Mesorah Publications, Pg. 208

*Said Rabban Gamaliel, "We still need (the interpretation of) the Modiite."
R. Eleazar the Modiite said, "Reverse the order of the letters of the word and that is how to explain it: You trembled, you recoiled, your sin fled from you."
Raba said, and some say, R. Jeremiah bar Abba, "You remembered the penalty of the crime, you were sick, you held aloof from sinning."¹²*

This exercise in homiletical gymnastics is clearly contrary to the true meaning of the text and subverts the lesson being taught. We should avoid such leaven of the Pharisees at all costs. Clearly the plain meaning of the text is that Reuben slept with his father's concubine. Victor Hamilton sheds a great deal of insight into the possible motives for Reuben's clearly sinful behavior.

Reuben's actions are not simply sexually motivated. The O.T. provides examples of a deceased king's wives becoming the wives of his successor (2 Sam. 12:8). Closer to this passage are those narratives in which a man went into the concubines of another. Ishbosheth was disturbed when Abner went into the late Saul's concubine Rizpah, not because of moral reasons but because he interpreted Abner's action as a subtle move to grab the throne (2 Sam. 3:7). The same idea is operating when Ahithophel urges Absalom to take possession of his father's ten concubines (2 Sam. 16:20-22). Through this move Absalom is making clear his intentions to usurp his father's royal authority. Once he has reasserted himself, David will have nothing to do with these concubines (2 Sam 20:3). Solomon so interpreted Adonijah's request for Abishag (1 Kg. 2:22). Is Reuben simply engaging in sexual play? Or, more likely, is he attempting to usurp his father and take control of the family? Jacob's lack of response to Shechem over the Dinah incident clearly cost Jacob any credibility with his family.¹³

I agree with Hamilton that Reuben's motivation for his grievous behavior was more than sexual and may well have been motivated by a lack of respect for his father due to his inactivity at Shechem. As we pointed out earlier, this conflict between father and sons was interrupted before it was resolved. While the inclusion of this story may simply be based upon historical chronology, I must also point out that it may well support the earlier supposition that the fruitfulness of Israel is to be spiritual and not physical. Just as the death of Rachel diminished Jacob's opportunity to reproduce biologically, so too would the defiling of his concubine. Therefore, we may see this story as another support to the fact that it was Israel, not Jacob, who was now to be fruitful and multiply.

The importance of this calling upon Israel is heightened by the announcement of Isaac's death. Clearly the torch of righteousness has been passed, and the fulfillment of the calling of the patriarchs is now solidly in the hands of Israel. It is he who must now diligently teach his children and inspire them to rise to new heights.

The Torah also uses the occasion of Isaac's death to reintroduce Esau. It is clear that Esau and Jacob have put aside their differences. The day of Isaac's death was once the point at which Esau would have sought his revenge. Now, however, it has become a time of mutual sorrow and support, and both sons come together to pay homage to their father and to bury him in peace.

Our portion concludes with a lengthy genealogy of Esau and his descendants. We witnessed a similar pattern earlier in the Torah at the announcement of the death of Abraham, which was followed by a genealogy of the descendants of Ishmael.¹⁴ It should be noted that the genealogy of Ishmael is followed by the introduction of the generations of Isaac.

¹² The Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat, Jacob A. Neusner, Hendrickson Publishers, Pp. 236-237

¹³ New International Commentary on the Old Testament, The Book of Genesis Chapters 18-50, Victor P. Hamilton, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Pg. 387

¹⁴ Genesis 25:12-18

Genesis 25:19 *And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac.*

While our portion ends with the genealogy of Esau, it is, nonetheless, followed by a similar phrase.

Genesis 37:2 *These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.*

Clearly the Torah includes the genealogy of Esau for several reasons. First, the descendants of Esau will indeed play a significant role in the journey of the children of Israel in the years and generations ahead. We should also remember that Esau is a descendant of Abraham and Isaac, and, as such, is given honor. The fact that his genealogy is given first, however, is a way of dismissing his importance and demonstrating that the important line shall not follow through Esau but through Israel, the true heir of Abraham and Isaac.

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