



## VAYISHLACH

BROADEN YOUR HORIZONS

*What an Ancient Sage's Travels Teach about Exploring New Ideas*

# PARSHAH OVERVIEW

## *Vayishlach*

Jacob returns to the Holy Land after a twenty-year stay in Charan and sends angel-emissaries to Esau in hopes of a reconciliation. But his messengers report that his brother is on the warpath with four hundred armed men. Jacob prepares for war, prays, and sends Esau a large gift (consisting of hundreds of head of livestock) to appease him.

That night, Jacob ferries his family and possessions across the Jabok River; he, however, remains behind and encounters the angel that embodies the spirit of Esau, with whom he wrestles until daybreak. Jacob suffers a dislocated hip but vanquishes the supernal

creature, who bestows on him the name Israel, which means “he who prevails over the Divine.”

Jacob and Esau meet, embrace, and kiss, but part ways. Jacob purchases a plot of land near Shechem, whose crown prince—also called Shechem—abducts and rapes Jacob’s daughter Dinah. Dinah’s brothers Simeon and Levi avenge the deed by killing all male inhabitants of the city after rendering them vulnerable by convincing them to circumcise themselves.

Jacob journeys on. Rachel dies while giving birth to her second son, Benjamin, and is buried in

a roadside grave near Bethlehem. Reuben loses the birthright because he interferes with his father’s marital life. Jacob arrives in Hebron to his father, Isaac, who later dies at age 180. (Rebecca had passed away before Jacob’s arrival.)

Our parshah concludes with a detailed account of Esau’s wives, children, and grandchildren; the family histories of the people of Se’ir, among whom Esau settled; and a list of the eight kings who ruled Edom, the land of Esau’s and Se’ir’s descendants.

What do you enjoy  
most about travel?



# TEXT 1A

*Genesis 33:19*

וַיִּקַּן אֶת חֶלְקַת הַשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר נָטָה שָׁם אָהֳלוֹ מִיַּד  
בְּנֵי חָמוֹר אָבִי שָׁכֶם בְּמֶאֶה קֶשֶׁטָה.

And he purchased the part of the field where he pitched his tent from the sons of Hamor, father of Shechem, for one hundred *kesitah*.

## TEXT 1B

*Rashi, ad loc.*

"קְשִׁיטָה". מַעָה. אָמַר רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא: כְּשֶׁהֲלַכְתִּי  
לְכַרְכֵּי הַיָּם, הָיוּ קוֹרִין לְמַעָה קְשִׁיטָה.

“*Kesitah*.” [A coin known as] *maah*. Rabbi Akiva said, “When I traveled to the cities by the sea, they called a *maah* “*kesitah*.”



*“Kesitah,”*  
*“maah”*

Common  
biblical coin

## TEXT 2A

*Yonatan Ben Uziel,  
Targum Yonatan, ad loc.*

וַיִּזְבֹּן יֵת אַחֲסָנִת חֶקֶל דְּפָרֶס תַּמָּן מִשְׁכָּנִיָּה מִן יַד  
בְּנֵי חָמוֹר אָבוֹי דְּשִׁכָּם בְּמֵאָה מִרְגְּלֵיָין.

And he purchased the part of the field where he pitched his tent from the sons of Hamor, father of Shechem, for one hundred gems.

## TEXT 2B

*Onkelos, Targum  
Onkelos, ad loc.*

וַיִּזְבֹּן יֵת אַחֲסָנִת חֲקֵלָא דִּי פִּרְס תַּמָּן מִשְׁכְּנֵיהּ  
מִיָּדָא דְּבָנֵי חַמּוֹר אֲבוּהֵי דְּשֶׁכֶם בְּמֵאָה חוֹרְפָן.

And he purchased the part of the field where he pitched his tent from the sons of Hamor, father of Shechem, for one hundred sheep.





*“Kesitah,”*  
*“maah”*

Gems  
sheep

# TEXT 3A

*Exodus 30:13*

עֶשְׂרִים גֵּרָה הַשֶּׁקֶל.

A shekel is twenty *gerah*.

## TEXT 3B

*Rashi, ad loc.*

"גֵּרָה". לְשׁוֹן מַעֲה.

“*Gerah*.” A word that  
means *maah*.

## QUESTIONS

1. Why did Rashi choose an exotic, rather than a local, translation?
2. Why does Rashi relate the source of this translation—that it was heard by Rabbi Akiva when he traveled to cities by the sea?

# TEXT 4

*Genesis 33:18*

וַיָּבֹא יַעֲקֹב שָׁלֵם עִיר שְׁכֶם אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן  
בָּבֹאוֹ מִפָּדָן אֲרָם, וַיַּחֲנֶה אֶת פְּנֵי הָעִיר.

And Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem,  
which is in the land of Canaan, when he arrived  
from Padan Aram, and he encamped before the city.

# TEXT 5A

*Maimonides, Mishneh  
Torah, Laws of Kings  
and Their Wars 5:10–11*

גְּדוּלֵי הַחֲכָמִים הָיוּ מְנַשְּׁקִין עַל תְּחוּמֵי אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּמְנַשְּׁקִין אַבְנֵיהָ, וּמִתְגַּלְגְּלִין עַל עֲפָרָהּ. וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר:  
"כִּי רָצוּ עֲבָדֶיךָ אֶת אַבְנֵיהָ וְאֶת עֲפָרָהּ יַחֲנֹנוּ" (תְּהִלִּים קב, טו).

אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים: כָּל הַשּׁוֹכֵן בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲוֹנוֹתָיו מְחוּלִין. שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וְבֹל יֹאמֶר שָׁכֵן חֲלִיתִי הָעָם הַיֹּשֵׁב בָּהּ  
נִשָּׂא עֹן" (יִשְׁעְיָה לג, כד).

אֶפְלוּ הֵלֶךְ בָּהּ אַרְבַּע אַמּוֹת, זֹכָה לְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא. וְכֵן הַקְּבוּר בָּהּ, נִתְכַּפֵּר לוֹ. וְכֵאלוּ הַמָּקוֹם נִשְׁהוּא בּוֹ  
מִזְבֵּחַ כְּפָרָה.

Our greatest sages would kiss the borders of Israel and its stones and roll in its dust. As the Psalmist declares, “Behold, Your servants hold her stones dear and cherish her dust” (Psalms 102:15).

Our sages taught: The sins of those who dwell in Israel are forgiven, as the passage states, “The inhabitant will not say, ‘I am sick’; the people who dwell there are absolved of sin” (Isaiah 33:24).

Even one who walks four cubits there will merit the World to Come. Those buried there receive atonement as if their burial place is an altar of atonement.

## TEXT 5B

*Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra,  
Genesis 33:18*

מי שיש לו בה חלק, חשוב הוא כחלק  
עולם הבא.

Owning a portion of this Land is like owning  
a portion of the World to Come.

## TEXT 5C

*Nachmanides, ad loc.*

לא רצה להיות אכסנאי בעיר, אבל רצה שתהיה  
תחילת ביאתו בארץ בתוך שלו, ולכן חנה בשדה  
וקנה המקום. וזה להחזיק בארץ.

Jacob did not want to be a guest in the city. He wanted his first entry into Israel to be on his own real estate. This is why he settled in a field and then purchased it to establish ownership in the land.





Jacob purchased land  
in order to own a piece  
of the beloved Holy  
Land of Israel.





*“Kesitah,”*  
*“maah”*

Ornaments

# TEXT 6

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Likutei  
Sichot 25, p. 182*

צו מסביר זיין וואס פאר א חשיבות קען  
זיין אין אזא תשלום, ברענגט רש"י מאמר  
רבי עקיבא "כשהלכתי לכרכי הים היו  
קורים למעה קשיטה" . . .

דער ווארט "קשיטה" [איז] פון לשון  
קישוטים. ווי קומט עס אז מ'זאל אנרופען  
א מעה - די קלענסטע מטבע - מיטן נאמען  
"קשיטה" (מלשון קישוטים)? זעט מען, אז  
ס'איז דא א פאל, אז אפילו ווען די שוויות  
פון די מטבעות מצד עצמן איז ניט גרויס,  
ווערן זיי אבער גענוצט אלס קישוטים (און  
זיי ווערן דערפאר אנגערופן "קשיטה").

און דאס זאגט דער פסוק, אז מצד דער  
חיבת הארץ בעיני יעקב, האט ער פאר א  
חלקה בארץ געצאלט מיט ספעציעלע  
חשוב'ע מטבעות - "מאה קשיטה", אזעלכע  
מעות וואס ווערן גענוצט אלס תכשיטים.

To explain the significance of this coin, Rashi  
quotes Rabbi Akiva, "When I traveled to the  
cities by the sea, they called the *maah*  
'*kesitah*.'"

The word *kesitah* connotes *kishutim*—  
ornaments. Why would the least valuable coin,  
the *maah*, be called an ornament? This  
demonstrates that sometimes, even if the  
monetary value of the coin is insignificant, it  
[can have sentimental value when it] is used as  
an adornment. They are, therefore, called  
ornaments.

[Using the foreign name *kesitah*] informs us  
that Jacob, out of love for the Land, used  
special coins to purchase a parcel of land in  
Israel, coins that doubled as ornaments.

## ANSWER

1. Rashi uses the word *kesitah*, ornaments, to demonstrate Jacob's love for the Land of Israel.



There is no such  
thing as a negligible  
compliment.  
Every compliment  
is worth giving.

# TEXT 7

*Talmud, Sanhedrin 110b*

רבי עקיבא אומר: באים הם לעולם הבא, שנאמר: "שומר פתאים ה'" (תהלים קטז, ו).

שכן קורין בכרכי הים לינוקא, פתא.

Rabbi Akiva said they are granted entry into the World to Come, as the passage states, "G-d guards *peta'im*" (Psalms 116:6).

In the cities by the sea, they call a child *patya*.



Rabbi Akiva traveled far  
and wide to discover novel  
ways to put fellow Jews in  
the best possible light.



## TEXT 8

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Likutei  
Sichot 25, p. 185*

אויף אזויפיל איז געווען חסידותיה דרבי עקיבא צו מזכה זיין אידן,  
אז עס איז פאר אים געווען כדאי די נסיעה אין "כרכי הים", אבי צו  
קענען מזכה זיין את ישראל און פסק'נען אז קטני בני רשעי ישראל  
באים הם לעולם הבא.

So intense was Rabbi Akiva's desire to favor Jews that his entire journey to the cities by the sea would have been worthwhile merely to favor the Jews: to gain the ability to determine that children of wicked Jewish parents have a share in the World to Come, even if they die young.



# TEXT 9

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, ibid.*

און דאס איז אויך רש"י דא מרמז - "אמר  
רבי עקיבא כשהלכתי לכרכי הים כו".

דאס איז די זעלבע הליכה לכרכי הים ביי  
וועלכע רבי עקיבא האט געהערט אז  
"קורין לינוקא פתיא" און דערמיט האט ער  
ארויסגעגעבן דעם פסק לזכותם של ישראל  
- "קטני כו' באים הם לעולם הבא".

איז ביי דער זעלבער הליכה לכרכי הים איז  
אויך ארויסגעקומען נאך אן ענין "רגיל  
לזכות", בזכותם של ישראל - די חביבות  
הארץ ביי יעקב'ן, אז ער האט געצאלט  
פאר דער חלקת השדה, וואס איז ביי אים  
געווען ניט מקום דירתו - "מאה קשיטה",  
מטבעות וואס זיינען קישוטים.

Rashi hints at this by saying, "Rabbi Akiva said,  
'When I traveled to the cities by the sea . . .'"

This was the same visit to the cities by the sea  
during which Rabbi Akiva heard people calling  
children *patya*, by which he determined that  
children have a share in the World to Come.

This same visit to the cities by the sea yielded  
yet another opportunity for Rabbi Akiva, the  
advocate of Jews, to highlight the favor of a  
Jew. He discovered [an albeit minor way to  
demonstrate] Jacob's love of Israel. Jacob  
purchased land he did not intend to use as his  
permanent home with a hundred *kesitah*—  
coins that doubled as ornaments.

## ANSWER

2. By telling us that it was Rabbi Akiva who discovered the import of the word *kesitah*, Rashi explains why the Torah says something nominally complimentary about Yaakov—to show that no compliment is unimportant.

# TEXT 10

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, ibid., p. 184*

דערמיט איז פארשטאנדיק וואס דער פסוק  
איז מוסיף "במאה קשיטה".

ווייל לויט שיטת רבי עקיבא - "שרגיל  
לזכות את ישראל" - דארף מען זוכן בא  
יעדער זאך, אפילו א רגיל, זכותים אויף  
אידן. און דערפאר, אף על פי אז דער צאלן  
"מאה קשיטה" איז ניט קיין געוואלדיקער  
חידוש, דארף מען דערציילן אויך דעם  
(קליינעם) זכות, מצד שהרגל נעשה טבע,  
צו רעדן בזכותם של ישראל.

We now understand why the Torah adds that  
Jacob paid a hundred *kesitah*.

According to Rabbi Akiva, who always sought to  
favor Jews, we must seek to highlight a Jew's  
strengths at every opportunity. [The Torah  
relates that Jacob] paid a hundred *kesitah*,  
though it is a minor compliment, because we  
must always share even minor compliments.  
When we get into the habit of speaking well of  
others, it eventually becomes [second] nature.



Traveling is about  
discovering new  
ways to see positive  
qualities in others,  
and how we bring  
those lessons home.

## KEY POINTS

1. Jacob loved the Holy Land so much that he insisted on purchasing even the land on which he pitched a temporary tent.
2. This conveys how important it is to cultivate a love for Israel in ourselves and our children.
3. Rabbi Akiva traveled and studied languages to find ways to cast Jews in the most favorable light. He used every opportunity to highlight even minor qualities of fellow Jews.
4. This teaches us to look for positive qualities in the people we meet on our travels and to bring these qualities home with us to implement in our daily lives.
5. It also teaches us that no compliment is negligible. Every positive quality we see in others should be highlighted.

