

Covenant & Conversation

FAMILY EDITION

INSPIRED BY THE TEACHINGS OF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Jonathan Sacks
THE RABBI SACKS LEGACY

Vayishlach: Resilience

DEVELOPED BY SHOSH HILL

parsha recap

Yaakov is on his journey back to the Land of Canaan, having left Lavan's home along with his wives, children, and flocks. After 22 years away from home, it is time to make peace with his brother. He sends messengers to Eisav, but learns that Eisav is coming to meet him with 400 men. Fearing a battle, Yaakov divides his family into two camps for safety. He then prays to God for help, and sends Eisav a large gift of cattle.

That night, Yaakov wrestles with a mysterious figure until dawn. We understand this to be Eisav's guardian angel. The angel injures Yaakov's thigh, but Yaakov will not give up until he receives a blessing. The angel gives him a new name, Yisrael.

- Why did Yaakov want to make peace with Eisav now, after so many years?
- Why do you think an angel fought with Yaakov?
- Why did Yaakov want a blessing so badly that he wouldn't let go until he received it?

a closer look

לֹא אֲשַׁלֵּחֲךָ כִּי אִם־בֵּרַכְתָּנִי

"I will not let you go unless you bless me." (BEREISHIT 32:26)

RABBI SACKS TEACHES US:

'*I will not let you go until you bless me*: These words of Yaakov to the angel lie at the very core of surviving crisis. Each of us knows from personal experience that events that seemed disappointing, painful, even humiliating at the time, can be the most important in our lives. Through them we learned how to try harder next time; or they taught us a truth about ourselves; or they shifted our life into a new and more fruitful direction. We learn, not from our successes but from our failures. We mature and grow strong and become more understanding and forgiving through the mistakes we make. A protected life is a fragile and superficial life. Strength comes from knowing the worst and refusing to give in. Jacob/Israel has bequeathed us many gifts, but few more valuable than the obstinacy and resilience that can face hard times and say of them: "I will not let you go until you bless me." I will not give up or move on until I have extracted something positive from this pain and turned it into blessing.'

Source: *Surviving Crisis*, Vayishlach, Covenant & Conversation:

moral matters

LET'S DISCUSS!

- Do you think it is easier to learn from **success** or from **failure**? Why do you think this?
- Rabbi Sacks suggests that hard moments can teach us something about ourselves. What kinds of things might we **learn from struggles**?
- Why do you think Yaakov only gets his new name **after** a struggle?