

V'yishlach וַיִּשְׁלַח

He sent

“Jacob’s Maturation (Part 2)”

Genesis 32:3-36:43
Hosea 11:7-12:12 (A)
Obadiah 1:1-21 (S)

When considering last week’s Torah reading, *V’yeitzei* (Genesis 28:10-32:2), the continuing account of this week’s reading, *V’yishlach*, naturally came to mind. Within *V’yeitzei*, we encountered the life of Jacob for approximately twenty years, and noting the itinerary, Jacob goes from Bethel to Mahanaim. For the next period of Jacob’s life that is covered in *V’yishlach* (Genesis 32:3-36:43), we witness the return trip beginning at Mahanaim and ending at Bethel. During this significant move, we see how Jacob had largely gone from being from a young, inexperienced, brash, and fleshy man—to a mature elder, who in spite of his humanity, had become tempered and seasoned in his walk with God. In many respects, most of us can identify with the process of Jacob’s maturation, as he moved toward being more spiritually inclined. Let us see what additional maturation and seasoning takes place during this critical chapter of his life.

As Jacob began his return back to the Land of Canaan, the narrative informs us that he expected some kind of violent confrontation with his estranged brother Esau (Genesis 32:3-23). Jacob had just endured his final parting from his father-in-law, Laban (Genesis 31). Later Jacob found himself the presence of angels, who have come to prepare him on the next leg of his journey (Genesis 32:1-2). He noted the angelic host, but named the place *Machanayim* (מַחֲנַיִם), meaning “two camps” (*BDB*),⁶² which seems rather odd if Jacob was surely serving the God of his grandfather Abraham and of his father Isaac—as all of those present together should be considered the camp of God. There seemed to have been something going through Jacob’s mind with the two-camp separation from Laban, followed by the camp distinction of his family and the host of angels. Such a division continued when Jacob prepared himself to encounter Esau, and he made the point of dividing his family and possessions into two camps:

“Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people who were with him, and the flocks and the herds and the camels, into two companies [*l’shnei machanot*, לְשְׁנֵי מַחֲנֹת]; for he said, ‘If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the company which is left will escape’” (Genesis 32:7-8).

Jacob had surely obeyed the request of the Lord to begin a return home to the Promised Land (Genesis 31:3), but in dividing out his family, and in sending messengers ahead to Esau with various gifts (Genesis 32:3-5), you do not get the impression that Jacob completely trusted in God. There was still an internal struggle that ensued between the mortal Jacob, and the Jacob who needed to place his life completely in God’s hands. Just read Jacob’s honest prayer before the Lord, as he confessed his various limitations:

“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 relatives, and I will prosper you,” **I am**

⁶² *BDB*, 334.

unworthy of all the lovingkindness and of all the faithfulness which You have shown to Your servant; for with my staff *only* I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two companies. Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, that he will come and attack me *and* the mothers with the children. For You said, “I will surely prosper you and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which is too great to be numbered” (Genesis 32:9-12).

It is recorded here that Jacob thought that he was innately unworthy or too small to be favored of God.⁶³ In more modern-day vernacular, we might think that Jacob was coming *to the end of himself*, realizing God’s ultimate sovereignty over his affairs. Having sensed the tension rising, as Jacob attempted to placate his brother Esau with various gifts, he had no choice but to turn toward the Holy One for protection and deliverance. Jacob had not seen Esau for quite some time, and admittedly thought that his anger toward him has not subsided.

If you have ever heard or read someone’s prayers, which implore for God’s intervening help, you detect the person has at least had to begin believing that only God and His power—rather than human strength and ability—can really provide what is needed. Here, Jacob goes back in his memory to remind the Lord about the promises from years before. *Jacob pulled out all the stops*. He realized that His needs were beyond his own ability. But still, his plan was to separate his family into two different camps, in order to prevent the possibility of loss of all to a revengeful Esau.

Jacob’s Wrestling Match

Even though he had just cried out to God, Jacob implemented his plan. He sent the livestock on ahead to appease his brother Esau (Genesis 32:13-21). Being left with the family, he began to follow the herds and came to the Jabbok River crossing. He sent his wives, concubines, and children across the river ford and stayed back to spend a night alone contemplating what was soon going to happen (Genesis 32:22-23). This was the infamous night that Jacob probably came to the “end of himself,” realizing that he must trust in the God of Abraham and Isaac. This was the significant moment when he stayed up all night wrestling with a supernatural being, and Jacob had his name changed to Israel:

“Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. And when he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob’s thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him. Then he said, ‘Let me go, for the dawn is breaking.’ **But he said, ‘I will not let you go unless you bless me.’ So he said to him, ‘What is your name?’ And he said, ‘Jacob.’ And he said, ‘Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed.’** Then Jacob asked him and said, ‘Please tell me your name.’ But he said, ‘Why is it that you ask my name?’ And he blessed him there. So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said, ‘I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved.’ Now the sun rose upon him just as he crossed over Peniel, and he was limping on his thigh” (Genesis 32:24-31).

Many conclusions have been drawn throughout history from this incident when Jacob was finally at a point in his life, being ready to turn all of his inclinations of self-sufficiency

⁶³ The Hebrew verb *qaton* (קטן) is actually used in Genesis 32:10, appearing in the Qal stem (simple action, active voice), meaning “be small, insignificant” (*BDB*, 881).

over to God. It should not be surprising that many readers have concluded, or at least suggested, that the “Man” (NKJV) who wrestled with him, was actually a pre-incarnate Yeshua.⁶⁴ The main event, though, is that Jacob wrestled all through the night with this supernatural being, until he received a desperately sought blessing: “I will not let you go unless you bless me” (Genesis 32:26). All that had to happen to Jacob, was a distinct “touch” to Jacob’s hip to dislocate it, creating a life-long limp.

When the requested blessing finally came, it came in the form of Jacob being renamed *Yisrael* (יִשְׂרָאֵל), for the distinct reason, “you have striven with beings divine and human, and have prevailed” (Genesis 32:28, TNIV). In the thought of J.H. Hertz, “The name is clearly a title of victory; probably ‘a champion of God’. The children of the Patriarch are *Israelites*, Champions of God, Contenders for the Divine, conquering by strength from Above.”⁶⁵ Those who follow after Jacob—**now Israel**—are to be those who conquer in God’s power, led by Him, and who actively accomplish His purposes, clearly something with future missional intentions (cf. Philippians 3:14). To remember what had transpired during the monumental evening, Jacob named the site of his encounter *Penu’El* (פְּנֵוֹאֵל) or “face of God” (BDB),⁶⁶ because “I have seen God face to face and I came out alive” (Genesis 32:31, Alter).

Oddly enough, the plan to send the livestock ahead and split up the camp, proceeded as conceived. Eventually, we find that Esau’s heart had already been softened toward his brother Jacob:

“But he himself passed on ahead of them and bowed down to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. **Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him**⁶⁷, and they wept” (Genesis 33:3-4).

⁶⁴ Cf. John Calvin: *Genesis*, trans. and ed. John King (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), pp 200-201; D. Stuart Briscoe, *The Preacher’s Commentary: Genesis*, Vol 1 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), pp 260-261.

⁶⁵ J.H. Hertz, ed., *Pentateuch & Haftorahs* (London: Soncino Press, 1960), 124.

Defined as either “*El persisteth, persevereth*” (BDB, 976) or “*El fights*” (HALOT, 1:442).

⁶⁶ BDB, 819.

⁶⁷ Heb. *v’yipol ‘al-tzava’rav v’yishaqeiHU v’yiv’khu* (וַיִּפֹּל עַל-צְוֹאֲרָוֹ וַיִּשָּׂקְחוּ וַיִּיבְּכּוּ).

Editor’s note: Be cautious and rather critical of teachings circulating in the Messianic community, which give too much significance to the notational dots over the verb *v’yishaqeiHU* (וַיִּשָּׂקְחוּ), “and kissed,” in Genesis 33:4. Generally speaking, it is attested in textual studies, how such dots,

“[M]ay have originated in the pre-Masoretic period to indicate letters of words that were considered questionable but left in the text. Similar points are used in this manner in the Dead Sea manuscripts and in early Samaritan manuscripts. It is striking that many of the letters and words thus marked are lacking in the Septuagint and Syriac translations of the Bible, and also from the Samaritan Pentateuch” (Page H. Kelley, Daniel S. Mynatt, and Timothy G. Crawford, eds., *The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 153).

In the scope of Rabbinic interpretation of Genesis 33:4, it is thought that the “dots over each letter of this word [וַיִּשָּׂקְחוּ], [serve as] an exegetical device that calls attention to hidden allusions. The Sages disagree regarding the significance of the dots in this verse. Some hold that Esau’s kisses were sincere; but R’Shimon bar Yochai says that, although it is an immutable rule that Esau hates Jacob, at that moment his mercy was aroused and he kissed Jacob with all his heart (*Rashi*)” (Scherman, *Chumash*, 177; cf. Sarna, in *Etz Hayim*, 203 making reference to *Genesis Rabbah* 78:9). Esau’s kissing Jacob might have been sincere, or might not have been sincere.

It is quite possible that the dots over *v’yishaqeiHU* carry an important meaning for readers of the Masoretic Hebrew text, inscribed by its editors and copyists. These would serve to point out something significant, no different than how today within English we might mark something with an asterisk *, an at sign @, or a pound/number sign #. There is no evidence, though, that the dots over *v’yishaqeiHU* were ever of Mosaic origin, and they would instead date much closer to the First Century B.C.E.-C.E.

Jacob, now renamed Israel, humbled himself before his brother Esau, and bowed seven times. A weeping brother, who appeared to be delighted when the reunion occurred, was quite gracious toward him. They kissed and the past basically seemed to be behind them.

Previously in Genesis 27:16, we see how Jacob had ably deceived his father Isaac, by his mother “put[ting] the skins of the young goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck.” Further, as a part of Isaac’s “blessing” of Esau after Jacob had stolen the birthright, he was told, “And your brother you shall serve; but it shall come about when you become restless, that you will break his yoke from your neck” (Genesis 27:40). Richard Elliot Friedman ably points out how here in Genesis 33:4 that reconciliation occurs “as Esau runs and embraces Jacob and ‘fell on his neck.’”⁶⁸ Referencing Genesis 27:26, and how while deceiving Isaac, Jacob was asked, “Please come close and kiss me, my son,” Nahum Sarna concludes,

“Esau’s undoubtedly sincere kiss—he seems genuinely moved by Jacob’s extravagant gesture—signals the conclusion of the chain of events precipitated by that other kiss, Jacob’s deceitful kiss, recounted in 27:27,⁶⁹ which played a crucial role in the original blessing.”⁷⁰

While Jacob wanting to give gifts to Esau did come as a result of some faithlessness, they were able to communicate to Esau that Jacob was generous and that he ultimately loved his brother. The sovereign God enabled some degree of peace to be established between the two brothers, and Esau was introduced to members of Jacob’s family (Genesis 33:5-8). Enough time had obviously transpired for Esau to forget much of the past, as he told Jacob, “I have plenty, my brother; let what you have be your own” (Genesis 33:9). While Jacob no longer had to worry about Esau desiring to murder him, and some degree of rapprochement was achieved, it was understandable that Jacob would still be rather cautious in his dealings with him.

But what does this mean in regard to Jacob’s dealings with God? Although Jacob may have had a cathartic moment with the Holy One at Peniel, he did still evidence a slight lack of faith in wanting to make sure that Esau was happy (Genesis 33:10-11). While the trials and tribulations in Jacob’s life had been used to tenderize him and make him more sensitive to the will of the Almighty, *completely turning oneself* over to Him did not happen instantaneously. Jacob did not immediately return home after this scene.

Return to Bethel

Jacob had been instructed by the Lord *shuv al-eretz avotekha* (שׁוּב אֶל-אֲרֶץ אֲבוֹתַיךָ), “Return to the land of your fathers” (Genesis 31:3). Simply coming across the Jordan River and settling in the Shechem area, did not comply with God’s request for him to return. In spite of this, Jacob was far closer to where he needed to be than where he had been, and we do see that Jacob was now far more compliant with the patterns established by his ancestors for correctly worshipping and serving God:

“And Jacob journeyed to Succoth; and built for himself a house, and made booths for his livestock, therefore the place is named Succoth. Now Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan-aram, and camped

⁶⁸ Richard Elliot Friedman, *Commentary on the Torah* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 114.

⁶⁹ “So he came close and kissed him; and when he smelled the smell of his garments, he blessed him and said, ‘See, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed’” (Genesis 27:27).

⁷⁰ Sarna, in *Etz Hayim*, 203.

before the city. And he bought the piece of land where he had pitched his tent from the hand of the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money. **Then he erected there an altar, and called it El-Elohe-Israel**" (Genesis 33:17-20).

After settling for a season in Succoth, Jacob moved across the Jordan River and up the valley to the land around Shechem. There he purchased a piece of land and settled. Jacob/Israel erected an altar (*mizbeiach*, מִזְבֵּיחַ), naming it *El Elohei Yisrael* (אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל), meaning God, the God of Israel. Jacob not only named the altar, but gave it the designation of his new name, Israel, that he had received after his all-night wrestling experience. The spiritual maturation process was slowly taking hold, as *Ya'akov* was identifying himself more as *Yisrael*.

But if we follow the account, we find that Jacob probably should have continued down the mountain highway, back into the land of his fathers, further south around Hebron and Beersheba. It is not until after calamities befell Jacob and his children in the land around Shechem via the incident with Dinah (Genesis 34), that the Holy One spoke to him once again, and commanded him to move south:

"Then God said to Jacob, 'Arise, go up to Bethel, and live there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.' So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, 'Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and purify yourselves, and change your garments; and let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and has been with me wherever I have gone. So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods which they had, and the rings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was near Shechem'" (Genesis 35:1-4).

Here we see some clues that Jacob was not quite ready for the trip south until after the incidents in Shechem had already occurred. Apparently, he still was allowing the household idols that Rachel and others had absconded from Laban (Genesis 31:30, 32) to continue to be in his midst. **Jacob had not cleaned house.** He certainly was moving in the right direction on the road to return, and was growing spiritually by worshipping the Lord at the altar in Shechem. But as we can see from the problems that erupted in the Shechem area, there were still some residual problems associated with him not entirely depending upon God. He had stopped in Shechem and began to intermingle with the Shechemites. *There is no recorded directive from God for Jacob to settle in the Shechem area.* This could have been a potentially devastating situation as the problems associated with Dinah erupted.

Jacob's sons, led by Simeon and Levi, took advantage of the men of Shechem after they had all agreed to join in with Jacob by performing circumcision rites that would allow them to identify with Abraham (Genesis 34:22, 24-25). The carnage was unreal, as they were caught totally unaware while experience great pain after the operation, being unable to really defend themselves. The murder of the Shechemites by his sons, made Jacob and his family odious in the sight of those in the region:

"Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, **'You have brought trouble on me, by making me odious among the inhabitants of the land,** among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and my men being few in number, they will gather together against me and attack me and I shall be destroyed, I and my household'" (Genesis 34:30).

Something needed to be done, and this occurred when the Holy One spoke to Jacob and told him to move to Bethel, where he should build an altar and settle:

"Then God said to Jacob, 'Arise, go up to Bethel, and live there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau'" (Genesis 35:1).

After all the years Jacob had been gone, his life was coming full circle. He was away in order to start his family. Now he had spent a season in Shechem, after finally coming back into the land west of the Jordan. Shechem turned out to be a disaster for him and his family, and now he was commanded by God to return to Bethel. Interestingly, the Holy One protected him on his final trek south to the place where he saw the angels ascending and descending on the ladder:

“As they journeyed, there was a great terror upon the cities which were around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob. So Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him. And he built an altar there, and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed Himself to him, when he fled from his brother... **Then God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and He blessed him. And God said to him, ‘Your name is Jacob; You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name.’ Thus He called him Israel. God also 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 forth from you. And the land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, and I will give the land to your descendants after you.** Then God went up from him in the place where He had spoken with him. And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He had spoken with him, a pillar of stone, and he poured out a libation on it; he also poured oil on it. So Jacob named the place where God had spoken with him, Bethel” (Genesis 35:5-7, 9-15).

This is an interesting passage that continues to show us that Jacob/Israel was maturing in his role as the inheritor of the blessings that were first bestowed upon Abraham and Isaac. Here as he returned to Bethel, God confirmed that his name is Israel, further describing many of the elements of His promises regarding posterity and the Land. As this encounter with God concluded and He departed, Jacob set up a pillar of stone, poured a libation on it, and anointed it with oil. This is a similar procedure that occurred many years before as he was departing the Land (Genesis 28:18). Is it possible that on his spiritual journey, Jacob was slowly learning more of the techniques to properly worship the God of Abraham and Isaac (cf. Exodus 29:38-40)?

Certainly, we are observing Jacob come back home—but more significantly Jacob *transition* from being a fleshly young man to now a maturing father and emerging leader. But as all who have been on a spiritual journey to maturity can attest, the trials of life continue, to further develop and refine godly character traits within us.

Just after this time at Bethel, Jacob continued on with his family down the road toward Hebron:

“Then they journeyed from Bethel; and when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and she suffered severe labor. And it came about when she was in severe labor that the midwife said to her, ‘Do not fear, for now you have another son.’ And it came about as her soul was departing (for she died), that she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). And Jacob set up a pillar over her grave; that is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day. Then Israel journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder” (Genesis 35:16-21).

Jacob was forced to endure the loss of his beloved Rachel on the road to Hebron, which no doubt had to serve as another critical step in his maturation process. Interestingly, “Jacob” put up a pillar to commemorate the place where Rachel was buried (Genesis

35:20), followed by “Israel” pitching his tent by the tower of Eder (Genesis 35:21). The text seems to be bouncing back and forth between naming him “Jacob,” and then followed by “Israel.” Is this a subtle way that the text communicates how **Jacob/Israel** might have still been struggling with ways of the flesh, versus ways of faith?⁷¹

We read a little further and discover that it is while Jacob’s family was living near the tower of Eder, that Reuben had sexual relations with his father’s concubine (Genesis 35:22). “*Israel*” is the one who finds out about it. We know from further on that this act had serious consequences for Reuben, who in fact, lost his birthright privileges (Genesis 49:3-4).

Finally, Jacob made it back to the tents of his father Isaac near Hebron. It is here that his journey, for this part of his life, came to a close. He returned soon enough for Isaac to die, and for Esau and Jacob together to bury him:

“And Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre of Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned. Now the days of Isaac were one hundred and eighty years. And Isaac breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people, an old man of ripe age; and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him” (Genesis 35:27-29).

As our Torah portion ends, we find that Jacob/Israel was finally settled in the area that had been promised to him and his descendants. His father Isaac had passed away. His brother Esau had moved away. And now Jacob took up his promised position as the leader of the family that would ultimately get much larger and eventually emerge into the nation of Israel.

Our Maturation

Having just read through *V’yeitzei* and *V’yishlach* in the past two weeks, we can definitely witness how Jacob had to mature, being seasoned by the various encounters and experiences he lived through. In many respects, he had modeled for those who will come after him, a life that began with a focus on self and self-interest—and steadily shifted toward a life focused on God and His will. Jacob epitomized the struggle that we have all had at one point or another.

It is encouraging to read that Jacob was ultimately known as **a man of faith**. Even after all of his conniving and struggles that he had to endure through, when the author of Hebrews lists great figures of faith, Jacob is listed among them:

“By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff” (Hebrews 11:21).⁷²

⁷¹ Editor’s note: While advocates of the JEDP documentary hypothesis would no doubt propose that usages of “Jacob” and “Israel” in such close proximity to one another in Genesis 35:20-21, point to different sources being employed in the composition of the Pentateuch, we have good cause to reject this. Immediately prior in the text, the narrative details much of the reason and destiny associated with Jacob being renamed Israel (Genesis 35:9-12). Rather than vs. 20 and 21 coming from two different “sources,” a conclusion that Jacob has yet to fully transition in his character, over to being Israel, is entirely reasonable.

For further consideration, consult the relevant sections of *A Survey of the Tanach for the Practical Messianic* by J.K. McKee.

⁷² Editor’s note: The author of Hebrews here relies on the Greek Septuagint in his view of Jacob “*leaning on the top of his staff*.” The Hebrew Masoretic Text of Genesis 47:31 reads with *rosh ha’mittah* (רֹאשׁ הַמִּטָּה) or “head of the bed,” whereas the Greek LXX has *epi to akron tēs hrabdou autou* (ἐπὶ τὸ ἄκρον τῆς ῥάβδου αὐτοῦ), “on the top of his staff.” These differences may come from the fact that the vowel markings for the Hebrew MT are Medieval in origin, and without them the Hebrew word for “staff,” *matteh* (מַטֵּה), is spelled with exactly the same

The Patriarch Jacob/Israel is remembered by future generations for his faith to bless his sons and grandsons after him. May we all finish this life and have a testimony of such faith, being known as those who to our dying day were witnessed as worshipping the Holy One. Then *and perhaps only then*, we will surely be able to pass on a testimony of significant spiritual transformation to our progeny!

V'yeishev וַיֵּשֶׁב He continued living “Conflict and Faith”

Genesis 37:1-40:23

Amos 2:6-3:8

In much of the Holy Scriptures, we witness how God often uses conflict to accomplish His will. Just witness how there is a contrast between elements such as light and darkness, good and evil, the Heavens and the Earth, and the flesh versus the Spirit—with them frequently being at odds.⁷³ As the Creator of time, space, and matter—God’s purposes for Planet Earth are subject to the immutable laws of the natural and spiritual realms and dimensions He fashioned. Every created thing has a purpose and a reason for existence, regardless of our mortal ability or inability to fully comprehend the minute or grandiose details of His grand design. This reality came into focus when I meditated upon the sibling rivalry among the sons of Jacob/Israel, which is detailed for us in this week’s Torah portion.

Conflict between people is one of the primary results of human beings inheriting a fallen sin nature in Adam (cf. Romans 5:12ff), and every Bible reader should be innately aware of the first fratricide in how Cain murdered his brother Abel (Genesis 4:1-15). For some reason, I could not help but reflect upon a passage from the Book of Ecclesiastes, which seemed to permeate my thoughts, as I contemplated the various conflicts and acts of oppression described in *V'yeishev*:

“Then I looked again at all the acts of oppression which were being done under the sun. And behold *I saw* the tears of the oppressed and *that* they had no one to comfort *them*; and on the side of their oppressors was power, but they had no one to comfort *them*. **So I congratulated the dead who are already dead more than the living who are still living. But better off than both of them is the one who has never existed, who has never seen the evil activity that is done under the sun.** I have seen that every labor and every skill which is done is *the result of* rivalry between a man and his neighbor. This too is vanity and striving after wind” (Ecclesiastes 4:1-4).

consonants, *mem* (מ), *tet* (ט), and *heh* (ה), as *mittah* (מִטָּה) or “bed.” The LXX follows the point of view that Jacob was leaning on his staff as he blessed his sons.

In the scope of meaning, this is a rather small point, but some in the Messianic community have used it to discount the reliability of Hebrews. For further discussion, consult the entry for the Epistle to the Hebrews in *A Survey of the Apostolic Scriptures for the Practical Messianic*, and the commentary *Hebrews for the Practical Messianic*, by J.K. McKee.

⁷³ For a useful handle on this, and a discussion of why physical matter is ultimately *not* inherently evil, consult the FAQ, “Dualism.”