

This week's Torah portion VaYishlach comes at the end of a week in which I had the pleasure and the privilege to be in Washington, D.C., for the second conference for rabbis for Human Rights. And while I was down there at the conference, it was an amazing conference. There was so much energy and so much aliveness and so many people who were devoted to fighting on behalf of those who have no one to fight for them.

Speaking for those who have no one to speak for them, and taking up the banner for the underprivileged and for the underrepresented. And so it was a it was great to be with other rabbis and other clergy and to hear perspectives that some of which were provocative and many of which were very inspiring and illuminating for me. And when I think about rabbis for Human Rights in general, the question of human rights.

I'm reminded of a quote that that I've read, and the quote says that an enemy is one whose story we have not heard. An enemy is one whose story we have not heard. And this week's parsha reflects a similar idea. The beginning of this week's parsha brings together two brothers who, from our perspective, clearly don't get along. Or at least it seems so.

Jacob and Esau. Jacob and Esau. And in this week's parsha, VaYishlach,

We begin with this meeting between these two, between Jacob and Esau. And the text tells us that Yakov prepares himself. The rabbis say that he prepared himself in three different ways, one of which was war. In other words, appeasement. And so Yakov is ready for the worst. He's hasn't been with his brother for over 20 years. His brother was swindled by Jacob.

And Ya'akov fears retribution. He is afraid that that Esau remembers. And Esau wants revenge. And in many ways, when I think about the story, I'm reminded of this saying an enemy is one whose story we have not heard. What becomes clear is that Jacob really doesn't know who Esau is. He doesn't know what Esau is coming from.

He doesn't really. He's not really interested in hearing the pain of Esau or the or the slight that Esau experienced. Yakov imagines the worst and prepares himself for the worst.

Before Yakov meets his brother, though, the text tells us that a mysterious encounter happens between Yakov and an ish malach, an angel, we're told we don't know the name of the angel, and so Ya'akov wrestles with Ish [???] that Jacob wrestles with an issue with certain man. And the Rabbis and Masters have said that this man is nothing less than the very archangel or the archetype of Esau.

The character of Issa has a kind of wrestling match before the wrestling match, with the spirit of Esau, of his brother. And I'd like to say today that that maybe the understanding of that wrestling match is that Jacob, in many ways had to wrestle with whom he thought Esau was, whom he thought Esau was, in order for him to be present.

To whom he saw. Is that in many ways Jacob's fear. Jacob's fear of the , Jacob's fear of the other manifests in this wrestling match. This internal wrestling match with.