

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 9 Kislev 5782. Tonight you may say Kiddush Levanah.

TORAH DIALOGUE

(p. 106 Hz) (p. 164 S) (p. 134 Hi) (p. 144 AS)

VAYEITZEI וַיֵּצֵא Genesis 28:10

[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis (RED),
Rabbi Emeritus and Sephardic Minyan Rabbi
Young Israel of Hollywood-Ft. Lauderdale]

1. This Parshah is a concise narrative about Yaakov's life in Lavan's home. He lived there for twenty years, marries four women, has twelve children, and prospers in every which way. His father-in-law, Lavan, benefitted also. Lavan succeeds financially and personally. There is a great deal of tension and drama in the story. Wages, working conditions, and Yaakov's navigating the scene while marrying and having children is at center stage. In the beginning Yaakov dreams about angels. Under Lavan's conniving and deceitful ways, Yaakov is now dreaming about speckled and striped sheep. Lavan is succeeding in transforming Yaakov from a spiritual being into a materialistic one. Immediately at this point, Hashem intercedes and instructs Yaakov to go back to Canaan, to be with his father. This is the meaning of the Haggadah referring to Lavan as one who attempted to "uproot it all." It seems that Yaakov is no match for Lavan. With Hashem's guidance, Yaakov prospers and leaves as an accomplished businessman and flourishing Patriarch. (RED)

2. Angels appear at the beginning of the Parshah and at the end. As Yaakov leaves the Holy Land, his angels, the angels of Eretz Yisrael ascend the ladder to Heaven, leaving Yaakov. New angels, the angels of Chutz La'Aretz, angels of outside Israel, come to escort and protect Yaakov. At the end of the Parshah, the angels of outside Eretz Yisrael are replaced by the angels of Eretz Yisrael. Yaakov is well protected. [When we sing Shalom Aleichem on Friday night, we can ask to whom are we saying Shalom Aleichem and to whom are we bidding farewell in saying Tzeitchem L'Shalom? The older Belzer Rebbe once explained that we greet the Shabbat angels and bid farewell to the angels of the weekday. With this type of an explanation, we can assume that there are many angels in our world. Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz zt"l wrote in his book "The Thirteen Pettaled Rose," that every time we say a Berachah, we create an angel whose sole job is to transmit that Berachah to the Almighty's throne.]

3. Beit El is the place where Yaakov has his dream. The reference, according to all commentators, is to Yerushalayim and to the Temple Mount, the future place of the Holy Temple. (In the Book of Yehoshua, 16:2, the prophet differentiates between Luz and Beit El). This Beit El is not the name of the city. It is a reference to Beit Elo-him, the Holy Temple. Yaakov had a spiritual dream. He links the experience to a very special place, the future Holy Temple. The history of that spot in the world is reflective of the many occurrences there, which include the aborted sacrifice of Yitzchak, the Akeidah. Which came first, the occurrences or

the divine holiness? It could be the occurrences. What establishes the holiness of a synagogue sanctuary? It is the usage of this spot in the world which has created the sanctity of the place.

4. In Chapter 29 verse 10, the Torah identifies Lavan as Yaakov's mother's brother three times. We probably knew that fact, so why is the Torah emphasizing it? It could be that the Torah is identifying Lavan in this fashion because it is his claim to fame in our world. Otherwise he would not be in the story. The Torah does this other times as well, specifically in the case of Yitro, who is constantly referred to as Moshe's father-in-law. Furthermore, had it not been that he was Yaakov's mother's brother, Yaakov would not have had much to do with him. This also demonstrates that Yaakov's love for his mother and his mother's family was very important to him.

5. The meaning of the Hebrew word Rachel, רַחֵל, is an ewe, a female sheep. Professor Casuto wrote that the word Leah, לֵאָה, is related to a word in Arabic which means a type of deer. (There was no Arabic language at that time. The earliest appearance of Arabic was around 2,000 years ago, well after the Biblical period.) Bilhah and Zilpah are Aramaic derived words. Unlike the Patriarchal names, the Torah makes no attempt to define these Matriarchal names. The Torah makes a clear statement that Rachel was more beautiful than her sister Leah. Leah's eyes were "weak." The Ibn Ezra quotes a Karaite who claimed that the word Rakkot was missing an Aleph, which would make the word Arukkot, or large. Ibn Ezra makes fun of the Karaite, even though the Talmud quotes a Talmudic personality who said the same thing as the Karaite. Perhaps the Ibn Ezra was unaware of the Talmud.

6. When Rachel saw that she was barren, she gave her husband her handmaiden as another wife, commenting that "I will become built up through her." (30:3) This reflects what Sarah did with Hagar years before. Obviously this was an accepted practice in those days. The outcome was very different. Hagar's son, Yishmael, was a patriarchal independent soul, as his mother was royalty, a daughter of the Pharaoh in Egypt. Bilhah and Zilpah were the half sisters of Rachel and Leah. No ego here. Even though their sons were equal tribal leaders to the other sons of Yaakov, they were treated differently in the family, not possessing the prestigious position in the family as their other brothers. In any event, the wives involved were definitely "built up" as a result of the arranged marriages. Much is commented upon in the Talmud as we should not favor one son over another, as this contributed to the animosity among brothers. Yet we do note that there was no equality among brothers in any of these families.

7. Dinah was Yaakov's only daughter. Or maybe not. In Chapter 37, verse 32, Yaakov refused to be comforted over the loss of Yosef when his sons AND DAUGHTERS came to comfort him. It is possible that the daughters mentioned here are daughters-in-law. Yet it is possible that Yaakov really did have additional daughters, but they are not recorded in the

Torah because no tribes emanated from them. Dinah is the only daughter recorded by name because of what happened to her in Parshat Vayishlach, Chapter 34. Dinah was an extrovert, like her mother, but the Midrash paints her with a suspicious tone. When Dinah first met Shechem, she bared her shoulder in order to attract his attention. I do not know why the Midrash portrayed her in such a way. Thomas Mann, the famous 20th century German writer, followed suit in his book "Joseph and His Brothers" and must have seen that Midrash. I believe that the Midrash was reacting to the opening line of that portion where it says that "Dinah went out," implying that she went out looking for attention.

8. MIDRASH. The Torah mentions that Rachel stole her father's Teraphim, seemingly idols. The Midrash explains that an OV was a magical item that predicted the future. A person slaughtered a firstborn animal and tore off its head and soaked it in salt. He then inscribed an impure name and placed the name under its tongue. He would light incense in front of it and would listen for a voice to emanate from it. Rachel stole it in order to not allow it to inform Lavan that Yaakov had gone. Another opinion was that Rachel wanted to remove idolatry from her father's house.

HAFTORAH

(p. 118 Hz) (p. 188 S) (p. 834 Hi) (p. 1139 AS)

HOSHEA הוֹשֵׁעַ 11:7

This week's haftorah is devoted to the rebuke of the Jewish people for falling into idolatrous practices. This serious national offense traces back to the days of the Jewish King Yeravam ben N'vat, the first king over the ten tribes after the split in the Jewish kingdom. During the early part of the reign of Shlomo's son Rechavam, Hashem revealed through the prophet Achiya that ten of the Jewish tribes would leave the iron hand of Rechavam and be led by Yeravam. The tribes of Yehudah and Binyamin would remain under the reign of Rechavam, the scion of David Hamelech. In those days the influence of Shlomo Hamelech's idolatrous wives threatened to corrupt the entire Jewish nation, and Hashem responded by removing most of the Jewish nation from under Shlomo's influence. Unfortunately their new leader Yeravam misused his privilege and instead of preventing the spread of idolatry, he actually developed it beyond the point of return. Eventually Hashem was left with no choice but to exile the major portion of the Jewish people to bring matters under control. In our haftorah, the prophet Hoshea turns to the remaining Jewish tribes and beckons them to return to Hashem and not follow their brothers' corrupt ways. (R. Dovid Siegel.)

QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT VAYEITZEI 5782

by Rabbi Edward Davis

I. From the Text

1. What did Yaakov dream about as he slept for the last time in the Promised Land? (28:12)
2. What was Lavan's response to why he switched Leah for Rachel at the wedding night? (29:26)

3. What action did Rachel take when she was barren? (30:3)
4. How many children did Yaakov end up with in Lavan's house?
5. What was Lavan's major complaint to Yaakov at the end of this Sidrah? (32:27) It was not an accusation that Yaakov had stolen his idols.

II. From Rashi

6. Which prayer did Yaakov institute? (28:11)
7. Why did Yaakov cry when he met Rachel? (29:11)
8. Why did Leah name her fourth son Yehudah (thanking Hashem) and not earlier? (29:35)
9. What was the meaning of the name Gal'ed? (31:47)
10. Why was the name of the place, and its meaning, where Yaakov met angels upon his return to Canaan? (32:3)

III. From the Rabbis

11. According to the Midrash, Yaakov learned for 14 years in the Yeshiva of Shem & Eiver. What did he learn there? (Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky)
12. On what day of the calendar year was Yosef born? (Rosh Hashanah 11a)
13. When Yaakov left Lavan's house with his wives, children, and wealth, did he leave openly or secretly? (Abravanel)

IV. Midrash

14. Yaakov said that he would donate one tenth of his earnings to Hashem, including children. Which child was dedicated to Hashem?

V. Haftorah. Hoshea

15. What other Haftorah is incorporated in today's Haftorah?

VI. Relationships

- a) Ephraim - Orde
- b) Moshe - Pinchas
- c) Calev - Uri
- d) Yavan - Tarshish
- e) Miriam - Korach

ANSWERS:

1. He saw a ladder with angels ascending and descending.
 2. Lavan said: This is not done in our place, to give the younger before the older.
 3. She gave her handmaiden Bilhah to Yaakov as a wife so that she will be "built up" through her. (As Sarah had done.)
 4. 12: 11 sons and 1 daughter.
 5. That Yaakov stole Lavan's heart by fleeing with Lavan's daughters and grandchildren.
 6. Ma'ariv.
 7. He saw (in the divine spirit) that he would not be buried with her.
 8. With her fourth son, she will have more than her fair share.
 9. The mound is a witness.
 10. Machanaim. The angels of outside Eretz Yisrael now left Yaakov and angels of Eretz Yisrael greeted him.
 11. Up until now Yaakov learned with his father, isolated and insulated. Now he learned how to be spiritually solid amongst idolatrous and dishonest people.
 12. On Rosh Hashanah.
 13. He left openly, figuring that anyone who saw him would figure that he was leaving with Lavan's knowledge and consent.
 14. Levi.
 15. Shabbat Shuva.
- ##### Relationships
- a) First Cousins
 - b) Great Uncle Moshe
 - c) Grandfather Calev
 - d) Father Yavan
 - e) First Cousins