

## **Dvar Torah** by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

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### **Vayeitzei**

In last week's Parsha of Toldot, Rivka's double dealings enable Yaakov to receive both the blessing of material well-being in addition to the blessing of spiritual well-being, as Rambam and other commentaries explain. For Yaakov to successfully lay claim to both blessings, he must demonstrate in this week's Parsha of Vayeitzei that there is no dichotomy between the physical and spiritual worlds. As patriarch, he symbolizes the unity that Torah represents which in essence is sanctifying the mundane aspects of our physical world under the canopy of Torah.

At the beginning of this Parsha we see this concept portrayed before us in a slanting format. After his 14 years in the Yeshiva of Eiver, Yaakov is now poised to plunge directly into the material and corrupt world of Lavan, and to rely upon the brachot of Yitzchak to come out unscathed all around. But G-d forces him to detour from this direct road by making the sun set early (Rashi 28:11) and he winds up sleeping on Mount Moriah, receiving prophecy from G-d and

then going back to sleep (28:18).

Rashi in next week's parsha (32:32), quoting the Talmud in Chulin 91b, shares with us a deep insight into the forced stopover of Yaakov. The number of minutes the sun sets prematurely for Yaakov to sleep on Mount Moriah is equal to the time that the sun rises early for Yaakov to help him defeat the Angel of Eisav and be healed from the wound inflicted on his thigh. Somehow, this is a direct link bridging these two pivotal moments in the development of the Children of Israel.

The angel of Eisav comes to contest the blessing of material sustenance which Yaakov has amassed during the time that he dwelt with Lavan. Yaakov will be victorious in having Eisav confirm that very blessing of wealth that he had so bitterly opposed for twenty years, only because, during this interlude, Yaakov had implemented the lessons he had learned twenty years earlier on Mount Moriah when the sun set prematurely.

What are these lessons? Rabbi Eli Stern suggests that firstly, the imagery of a ladder that is portrayed in Yaakov's dream, bridges the gap between the dichotomous words of spiritual well-being and material well-being. Secondly, it is this sleep-

ing at that holy spot of Mount Moriah that Yaakov internalizes the idea that there are not two dichotomous worlds but rather one harmonious continuum, material and spiritual, requiring constant sanctification. "He lay down in that place" (28:11). The word "place" - MAKOM in Hebrew is used to denote the connection with G-d. It is here that he understands that G-d is present everywhere and that nothing in this material world is void of His intervention.

Throughout the entire twenty years with Lavan, the den of materialism, Yaakov remains righteous and truthful, never wavering his honesty, remaining loyal to the Torah way. The Parsha ends with Yaakov dreaming again, not about angels but this time about sheep. He has successfully succeeded in sanctifying the world of Lavan and using it to grow closer to G-d.

Yaakov has demonstrated in synthesizing both worlds, sanctifying the material world with the spiritual world, setting an example for future generations.