

RED ALERT!

VAYEITZEI

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DIVREI TORAH

- Rashi comments on the first verse that when a Tzadik, a righteous person leaves a city, the glory of the city suffers a great deal. The Oznayim LaTorah questions the validity of that statement in this case. When Yaakov left that city, Yitzchak was still there the whole time he was gone. Wouldn't the city still have its glory with Yitzchak present? He answers that the glory would still have its glory if Yitzchak was active and healthy. But now Yitzchak was blind and housebound. He was no longer active and could no longer have an influence on the people of that city. In essence, in his declining years nobody took notice of his presence. When Yaakov left, and leaving an aged, declining father in his past, the city definitely felt its loss. Yitzchak's condition made Yaakov's absence more seriously felt.

- The Midrash states that when Yaakov left town, he did not go directly to Padan Aram. He first went to learn at the Yeshiva of Sheim and Eiver. Yaakov had lived his entire life at home, learning with father Yitzchak. What subjects did he now

learn in this Yeshiva that he did not learn with his father? The standard answer was he needed to learn how to deal with non-Jews. Oznayim LaTorah wrote that he now needed to learn how to act properly as a husband. He needed to learn about married life. I see much wisdom from this interpretation. Today, in most all of male Yeshivas, nothing is taught to the young men about how to treat your wife. The Rambam wrote in his Code of Jewish Law, some gems of wisdom to discuss with all single young men and women on the subject, and it is well worth the time to learn them.

- During the Dream of the Ladder, Hashem made some promises to Yaakov as Yaakov was leaving Eretz Yisrael and venturing outside his isolated monotheistic environment. In response, Yaakov acknowledged to act according to Hashem's directives. He furthermore pledged to donate back to Hashem one tenth of his earnings (28:22). In today's world, we also try to maintain that rule: to give to Tzedaka a tenth of our earnings. Halachists ask the question whether this rule is a Torah law or a Rabbinic law or is it just a custom. I believe that giving a tenth is a custom. I feel this is so because the ritual is quite flexible. We give according to our means. The Vilna Gaon, in the 18th century, wrote an ethical will to his sons in which he suggested to them

to give 20% of their earnings to Tzedaka.

- When the Torah introduces Lavan to us (29:5), he is called Lavan the son of Nachor. But we know that that's not true. Nachor was Lavan's grandfather; his father was Betuel, Nachor's son. But the Torah is dealing with Nachor's Yichus, his pedigree. Nachor was the Patriarch of that family. He was the general. All the people of that area knew about and recognized the Patriarch Nachor. He was the general and head of that tribe. And later when Lavan and Yaakov discussed their issues, Lavan said: May the god of Nachor's judge between us (31:53). Every day in our prayers, we identify ourselves to Hashem as the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, as if they were alive in leading our people.

- Leah was Yaakov's first wife, but she was feeling as if she was hated by her husband. This was not true. She was loved by Yaakov, but not as loved as Rachel was in Yaakov's life. I feel that Yaakov loved all of his wives, albeit not equally. He did love Rachel more than all the others. [Note: A woman once came into my office and stated bluntly to me that her husband loved his first wife much more than he loved her. The first wife had died several years before she met her current husband. She made the comment nonchalantly and without

any bitterness. After all, she explained that she was alright with this because the deceased wife was really not her competition. She was dead. And a man can love two women in his life. Even if it is not equally.]

- Yaakov was a veteran in dealing with Lavan. Lavan was a deceitful, greedy person from day one. After Lavan had switched wives on Yaakov, he was willing to give Rachel to Yaakov as a wife "on credit". He felt he could trust Yaakov to work an additional seven years. Really, when you think about it, Yaakov should not have been required to work any additional time to marry Rachel. He already fulfilled that deal. He worked FOR RACHEL. It was Lavan who substituted Leah for Rachel. Yaakov was not obligated to work at all for Leah. That was Lavan's decision, to give Leah to Yaakov. Yaakov must have been so much in love with Rachel that he quickly agreed with Lavan's offer. Yaakov realized that he would gain substantially by sticking around and not uprooting his quickly growing family.

- Lavan already influenced Yaakov greatly. In this Parsha, Yaakov had two dreams. In the first dream, there was a ladder stretching from earth to heaven with angels ascending and descending. It was a meaningful and spiritual dream. The second dream was Lavan's influence on him.

Yaakov's mind was completely immersed in the flocks. He dreamed of spotted and speckled he-goats mounting the flock. Lavan was successful in transforming Yaakov from a spiritual person to a man whose thoughts were now about material wealth. He abandoned spirituality completely. It was immediately after this dream of material gain that Hashem appeared to Yaakov and told him that it is time to "Get up now and leave this land!" (31:13).

- MIDRASH. When Leah named her first son Reuven, the Talmud (B'rachot 7b) states that Leah was pointing out the greatness of this son. When Eisav sold the Birthright to Yaakov, Eisav caused a big deal over the results of the sale. When Reuven would lose his Birthright to Yosef, Reuven not only did not complain, but he was the son who protected Yosef, when Reuven stopped his brothers from killing Yosef by suggesting that they throw Yosef in the pit. It was Reuven's plan to take Yosef from the pit and return him to their father.

Questions by RED

From the text

1. What did Hashem promise Yaakov in the Dream of the Ladder? (28:15)
2. What name did Yaakov give the place where he had the dream? (28:19)

3. What did Yaakov pledge to Lavan in order to marry Lavan's daughter? (29:18)

4. What is the meaning of the name Shimon? (29:33)

5. What did Yaakov "steal" from Lavan? (31:20)

From Rashi

6. Where on the map of Israel did Yaakov experience the Dream of the Ladder? (28:15)

7. Why did Yaakov cry when he met Rachel at the well? (29:11)

8. What did Rachel do to earn Hashem's kindness for Him to permit her to become pregnant? (30:22)

9. Why did Rachel steal her father's Terafim? (31:20)

10. Why did Rachel die when she was so young? (31:32)

From the Rabbis

11. How did Lavan justify to Yaakov that he had to substitute Leah for Rachel on the wedding night? (Rav Hoffman)

12. Did Yaakov pray for Rachel to become pregnant? (Ramban)

13. How did Yaakov know how to get the sheep to give birth to abnormally colored animals? (Rabbeinu Bachya)

Midrash

14. How was Yaakov punished for being away from his parents for so many years?

Haftara - Hoshei'a

15. Which tribe in particular is admonished by Hoshei'a?

Relationships

- a) Shimon - Yocheved
- b) Dina - Zerach
- c) Yavan - Canaan
- d) Binyamin - Mupim
- e) Pinchas - Uri

ANSWERS

1. That Hashem will protect Yaakov everywhere that he will go, and Hashem will return him to Israel.
2. Beit El
3. That Yaakov would work for Lavan for seven years.
4. That Hashem heard that Leah was unloved. The word Shimon comes from the Hebrew word "to hear".
5. Lavan's heart, by not telling him that he and his family were leaving.
6. On top of Mt. Moriah.

7.

- 1) Because Yaakov saw, through a divine spirit, that Yaakov and Rachel would not be buried together, and
 - 2) that Yaakov came to Charan empty handed, with no gifts for her and her family.
 8. She gave her sister the signs that Yaakov had given Rachel.
 9. Rachel wanted to separate her father from worshiping idols.
 10. Because Yaakov said to Lavan that the person who stole Lavan's Terafim shall die.
 11. The community compelled him to do it. The city did not permit a younger daughter to marry before the older daughter.
 12. Yes, he did. But he admonished his wife for thinking that he could influence Hashem.
 13. An angel told him.
 14. Yaakov would become separated from his son Yosef for the same number of years.
 15. Efrayim
- ## Relationships
- a) Uncle & Niece
 - b) Aunt & Nephew
 - c) First Cousins
 - d) Father & Son
 - e) Second Cousins