

VAYEITZEI

DIVREI TORAH

• The Torah records that Yaakov left Be'er Sheva and went to Charan. (28:10). These two clauses are not necessary, and Rashi therefore comments from a Midrash, that when a righteous person leaves a city, it leaves a missing element in that city. But I wonder why Rashi doesn't stick with the simple P'shat, the literal text. Yaakov left Canaan for one reason: to flee from Eisav who wanted to kill him. The fact that he travelled to Charan was for an unrelated reason. He went there to find a wife. The push and pull in his journey were for unrelated factors that were upon Yaakov. And both were from his mother. Rivka told Yaakov that Eisav wanted to kill him, a fact that she did not tell Yitzchak. Then Rivka did discuss with her husband the subject of a wife for Yaakov, necessitating his departure from home. And she would never see Yaakov again in her life.

• He left Be'er Sheva, but he didn't live there; he lived in Chevron. Be'er Sheva is quite a distance from Chevron. Rabbeinu Bachya wrote that both Avraham and Yitzchak had built an Altar in Be'er Sheva, and Yaakov went there to offer sacrifices to Hashem. The Maharsha, the Rokeach, the Siftei Kohen, and the Alshich all say that the Yeshiva of Shem VaEiver was in Be'er Sheva, and this fits well with the Midrash that Yaakov went there to study before setting out to Charan. But what did Yaakov learn there that he did not receive from decades learning with his father? Other rabbis offer that Yaakov learned there various Halachot that dealt with the relationship between a Jew and the non-Jewish world.

• In Yaakov's dream, who were these angels who ascended and descended upon the ladder? These were the angels of Eretz Yisrael who ascended and were replaced by angels of Outside of Eretz Yisrael, whose job was to protect Yaakov on his journey elsewhere. This shows us that Hashem is active both in and outside of Eretz Yisrael. The sanctity of Eretz Yisrael is far superior to those lands not in Israel, but it is possible to plant the seeds of Torah anyplace in the World. We Jews have demonstrated this in our extensive travels in our current lengthy Exile. Jews today are located throughout the world, further expanding the existence of Torah across the entire globe.

• Beit El (Luz) became holy as a result

of Yaakov's stay there overnight. Targum Yonatan identified Beit El as the place in which the Beit HaMikdash was to be built. Today Beit El is located a few miles north of Yerushalayim. No matter which location is accurate, we have to confess that we are not sure where the Torah's Beit El is situated. This is common. Today, the town of Kiryat Sefer is located as part of Greater Modiin. The State of Israel did not allow the Chareidim society to officially call their city Kiryat Sefer because in our Scripture Kiryat Sefer is located near Chevron. So the outcome is that all the people who live there all call their hometown Kiryat Sefer while all the traffic signs call the place Modiin Ilite (Upper Modiin).

• All of a sudden Yaakov is alone... totally by himself. Hashem speaks to him and makes him a deal. Keep the Torah and Hashem will protect him. Was it a prophecy? But Hashem's words gave Yaakov tremendous confidence that he would succeed in his mission. The first task was to find Lavan, his relative, his mother's brother. No address. No streets. Just go to the local well and ask there. Wait for some shepherds and start a conversation, and lo and behold, Lavan's younger daughter shows up at that well at the exact time that Yaakov is there. Huge confidence builder. There is no such thing as coincidence in the Torah.

• When Eliezer came, he was loaded. He brought camels, and jewelry. Really loaded. The deal was consummated immediately. Yaakov came alone, really alone, no jewelry, no camels. Just by himself. "Hi. I am a relative, a truly DISTANT relative. Can I stay for a while? Can I marry four of the young ladies in your house?" No deal was so immediate because of Yaakov's condition upon arrival. One has to realize the stark contrast between Eliezer's mission and the different conditions upon Yaakov's arrival. Lavan was probably in disbelief at what and who arrived at his doorstep. I think we should give some credit to Lavan for being so accepting of his new guest.

• Lavan does deceive Yaakov on the wedding night. When Rivka and Yaakov deceived Yitzchak in last week's reading, they needed the right development to succeed, and that was provided by Hashem in making Yitzchak lose his eyesight. Here how did Lavan succeed? It must be the assistance of Rachel when she gave the secret signs to her sister to deceive Yaakov in the darkness of the wedding night. In Seder Olam, the author stated that Leah and Rachel were actually twins and very close to each other. Normal regular commentary has the two sisters quite distant in age, even as much as almost ten

years different, with Leah being the older daughter. Having them much closer in age helps us accept the fact that Rachel was that helpful and caring for her sister.

• MIDRASH. When Yaakov left home, he did carry jewelry and many gifts for his new wife and her family. Eisav sent his adult son to go after Yaakov and kill him. Elifaz caught up to his uncle but didn't want to kill him. Yaakov helped him by giving him all the gifts he had packed. And tell his father that he did kill him because a "poor person is considered dead." That part of the Midrash is well known. The Midrash though, continued. On the journey, Yaakov saw a man riding his horse attempting to cross a river. The man lost his balance and fell off his horse and drowned. Yaakov was able to retrieve the dead body and gained whatever the dead man was carrying, and this helped Yaakov continue on his journey.

Questions by RED

From the text

1. When Yaakov slept that night on the road, what vision did he have? (28:12)

2. How did Lavan deceive Yaakov at Yaakov's wedding? (29:23)

3. What reward did Leah receive for giving her Duda'im to Rachel? (30:17)

4. Why did Rachel name her son Yosef? (30:24)

5. Where did Rachel hide her father's Terafim (idols)? (31:34)

From Rashi

6. "He (Yaakov) prayed and spent the night there..." (28:11). What did he pray?

7. Who were the angels who ascended and descended on the ladder? (28:12)

8. What were the Duda'im that Reuven found and was bringing to his mother? (30:14)

9. Why did Rachel steal her father's Terafim (idols) (31:19)

10. Why was the place where Yaakov returned to Eretz Yisrael called Machanayim (two2 camps)? (32:3)

From the Rabbis

11. Yaakov was away from home for 36 years and thereby sinned for not honoring his parents. How was he punished?

12. What do we see that happened to Yaakov that showed him that it was time to return home?

13. Who eventually broke the treaty that Yaakov had made with Lavan, years later?

Midrash

14. What does the Midrash tell us about Hashem being on the ladder in the beginning of the Parsha?

Haftara - Hoshei'a

15. Hoshei'a delivers a "doom and gloom" vision for Israel. But what is Hashem ready to do at the end?

Relationships

a) Menashe - Mupim

b) Zevulun - Sered

c) Yehuda - Kehat

d) Cham - Canaan

e) Yefet - Ashkenaz

ANSWERS

1. A ladder extending from Earth to Heaven, and angels went up and down.

2. He replaced Rachel with Leah on the wedding night.

3. She became pregnant with her fifth son.

4. Yosef means to "add". That Hashem should give her another son.

5. In the camel's packsaddle.

6. He instituted the Ma'ariv service.

7. The angels of Eretz Yisrael were leaving Yaakov, being replaced by the angels of Outside of Eretz Yisrael, who were to protect Yaakov on his journey.

8. They were mandrakes, and supposedly had potency to help a woman become pregnant.

9. To keep her father from worshiping idols.

10. Two camps of angels. These were of Outside of Eretz Yisrael coming to escort Yaakov to Canaan and pass him over to angels of Eretz Yisrael who were to escort Yaakov back home.

11. Yaakov was to miss Yosef for over twenty years.

12. At the beginning of the Parsha, Yaakov dreamt about angels. Now he is dreaming about sheep (31:10).

13. Bil'am , who crossed the line and came to curse Bnei Yisrael.

14. That Hashem is close with Yaakov.

15. To forgive Bnei Yisrael who is ready to repent.

Relationships

a) First Cousins (sons of Yosef and Binyamin)

b) Father & Son

c) Uncle & Nephew

d) Father & Son

e) Grandfather & Grandson