VAYEITZEI

7th of 54 sedras;
7th of 12 in B'reishit



Written on 235.3 lines, ranks 12th

Vayeitzei is one single very long (closed) Parsha. It's being a S'TUMA fits with the fact that it is a continu-ation of the To-l'dot story. It is the Torah's longest Parsha S'tuma; Mikeitz is a single P'tucha parsha

FYI: The Torah has 54 sedras and contains a total of 674 parshiyot - That's an average of 12.48 parshiyot per sedra. Vayeitzei and Mikeitz are each one parsha only. Balak is two parshiyot. At the other end of the range is Ki Teitzei with 44 parshiyot. Vayeitzei's single parsha is almost 12 times the average number of p'sukim per parsha.

148 p'sukim - ranks 6th in the Torah

2021 words - ranks 4th in the Torah

7512 letters - ranks 5th in the Torah

Ranks 3rd in B'reishit in P/W/L

MITZVOT

Vayeitzei has none of the 613 mitzvot

It is one of 17 mitzva-less sedras

Nonetheless, there are messages, mussar, and lessons to be learned from sedras without mitzvot.

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Kohen - First Aliya - 13 p'sukim - 28:10-22

[S> 28:10 (148)] Yaakov leaves Be'er Sheva and goes to Charan.

SDT: There are different explana-tions concerning the wording of this pasuk, as to why the Torah mentions Yaakov's departure (especially having mentioned it a couple of times at the end of To-l'dot). Rashi explains that a prominent person not only influences his surroundings, but his absence from a place is also felt, in a negative way. Therefore, the Torah not only tells us that Yaakov went to Charan; it also tells us that he left Be'er Sheva, and his absence was felt - even though Yitzchak (and Rivka) remained there. (Perhaps, especially because Yitzchak and Rivka remained in Be'er Sheva - they would feel Yaakov's absence the most!)

Another explanation - In leaving Be'er Sheva, Yaakov was fulfilling the wishes of his mother Rivka, who feared that Eisav would kill Yaakov if he remained. In going to Charan,

Yaakov was fulfilling the wishes of his father, Yitzchak (and also his mother's), who sent him there to find a wife. The pasuk tells us of Yaakov's departure from Be'er Sheva AND his journey to Charan, to show us that it was important to satisfy the wishes of BOTH his parents. (Rivka did not tell Yitzchak about the danger to Yaakov if he were to remain home.)

He encounters "The Place" (it is unidentified in the text, but is traditionally considered to be Har Moriah, the site of the Akeida, and the location of the future Beit HaMikdash) and stays the night. He dreams of a ladder with its feet planted on the ground and whose top reaches the heavens. Angels are ascending and descending the ladder.

VAYIFGA BAMAKOM... KI VA HASHEMESH - and he encountered the Place... for the Sun had set. VAYIFGA is related to P'GI'A, which is a synonym for Praying (based on Yirmiyahu 7:16). From here the Gemara teaches us that the fixing of Arvit (a.k.a. Maariv) is attributed to Yaakov Avinu.

SDT: The S'fat Emet points out that the ladder in Yaakov's dream is described first as having its feet planted on the ground (representing worldliness and/or basic decency) and then its head reaching the heavens (representing spiritual pursuits). This is consistent with the famous maxim - DERECH ERETZ KODMA LATORAH, worldliness (should) precedes Torah.

In the dream, G-d appears to Yaakov at the head of the ladder and reiterates to him the promises He made to Avraham and Yitzchak. These oft-repeated promises have consistently included the possession of the Land and the "countless" nature of their descendants. This prophecy also includes G-d's promise of protection for Yaakov on his sojourn.

Yaakov awakens from his sleep and acknowledges the sanctity of the Place. When Yaakov awakens in the morning, he takes the stone (formerly referred to in the plural) that was at his head, and erects it as a monument, which he then anoints. He names the place Beit El. Yaakov vows allegiance to G-d.

SDT: "And I will return to my father's home and HaShem will be for me, G-d." Ramban explains the connection between Yaakov's return home with his "acquisition of G-d". The Gemara in Ketuvot states that he who lives in Eretz Yisrael is like one who has G-d; he who lives outside Israel is like one without G-d. Yaakov's return from Lavan's house to his father's was a physical and spiritual Aliya - as is Aliya to Eretz Yisrael in our own time.

Avraham Avinu was born in Chutz LaAretz and was commanded by G-d

to go and live in Eretz Yisrael, the land that he and his descendants would receive from G-d in perpetuity.

Yitzchak Avinu was born and raised in Eretz Yisrael, lived here all his life, never having stepped foot outside the Land, and was "reminded" of that fact by G-d, when Yitzchak might have left because of a famine (as did his father).

Yaakov Avinu was born in Eretz Yisrael and left the land for an extended time. In Parshat Vayishlach, we find his returning to Eretz Yisrael is both a physical return and a spiritual one.

Jews - as far as Eretz Yisrael is concerned - have one of three role models to emulate. You are either born in Israel and live your whole life here. Or you come on Aliya from the place of your birth, or - if you were born in Israel (or lived here at one time) and left to live elsewhere, you work your way back to Eretz Yisrael.

And the Gemara/Rambam's point: Coming on Aliya is not just a mitzva, it is the way a G-dless person acquires G-d for himself.

Levi - Second Aliya - 17 p'sukim - 29:1-17

Assured of G-d's protection upon leaving the Land (something Yaakov had reason to be unsure of), his pace quickens. He sees a well in a field, with three flocks of sheep gathered around. The well is covered by a large rock. It was the practice of the shepherds to gather at the same time each day so that they would have the manpower necessary to remove the rock and then replace it after the sheep drank. (This, to prevent water from being stolen by one shepherd or another.) Yaakov asks the shepherds who they are and why they gather so early in the afternoon to water their sheep.

When they tell him that they work for Lavan, Yaakov asks about his uncle's wellbeing. The shepherds point out the approaching Rachel, daughter of Lavan. They explain to Yaakov that they must cooperate with each other in order to physically remove the stone from the well. Just then, Yaakov sees Rachel, his cousin, and approaches the rock and single-handedly removes it from the mouth of the well in order to give water to his uncle's sheep. Yaakov kisses Rachel and weeps bitterly. (He weeps because he sees with Ru'ach HaKodesh that they are destined not to be buried together.)

Yaakov tells Rachel who he is - what their relationship is - she runs off to tell her father. When Lavan hears, he runs to welcome Yaakov, and brings him home to hear "the whole story". Lavan "offers" Yaakov a job and tells him "to name his price". Lavan had two daughters - Leah, the older one and Rachel, the younger one. Leah had "weak" (sensitive) eyes and Rachel was very beautiful.

Shlishi - Third Aliya - 31 p'sukim - 29:18-30:13

Yaakov loves Rachel and offers to work for seven years in exchange for her hand in marriage. Lavan agrees and the time flies by in Yaakov's eyes because of his great excitement. At the end of the seven years, Yaakov asks that the marriage take place.

SDT: Towards the end of Parshat To-l'dot, Rivka Imeinu hears (with Ru'ach HaKodesh) that Eisav intends to kill Yaakov. She tells Yaakov that he should go to her brother in Charan and stay there YAMIM ACHADIM. That seems to mean, for a few days. Asks the GR"A, how can seven years be called YAMIM ACHADIM? He gives a DRASH to answer that question. First of all, YAMIM in the Torah does not only mean 'days'. In a number of places, YAMIM means SHANIM, years. Second, the Midrash tells of Shabbat complaining to HKBH that it is alone - the other days of the week all have partners: Sunday & Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday, Thursday & Friday, but it, Shabbat is ECHAD, a lonely one day. HaShem consoled it by saying that Bnei Yisrael would be its partner. The GR"A then points out that a year has 50-55 Shabbatot, so YAMIM ACHADIM can be a year of Shabbatot, which comes out to be seven years with contain about 354 Shabbatot. Thus YAMIM ACHADIM, with YAMIM meaning years and ACHADIM meaning Shabbatot, the ECHAD among the days of the week, matches SEVEN YEARS.

Lavan gathers the locals for the wedding festivities and substitutes Leah for Rachel (with, we are taught, the cooperation of the girls).

SDT: Although Lavan was the deceiver, and had his own motives, our Sources indicate that it was Rachel who facilitated the switch, motivated by love and compassion for her sister. Rachel gave her private "signals" to Leah to save her from a probable marriage to Eisav, Yaakov's biological elder. This compassion serves her descendants well many years later, when she "intercedes" before G-d following the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash. Tradition tells us that G-d "softened" the punishment with a promise of our return, only after Rachel pleaded before Him. According to Tradition, the Avot and Moshe Rabeinu had not succeeded in their pleas on behalf of the people.

When Yaakov confronts Lavan about the deceit, Lavan says that it is improper to marry off the younger before the older. (This is the minhag in many communities, despite its Lavanic origin.)

Yaakov agrees to work an additional seven years for Rachel. Zilpa and Bilha are the hand-maidens of Leah and Rachel respectively (commentaries say they too were daughters of Lavan,

from a PILEGESH - there are other opinions as to who exactly they were, including a Midrash that says they were nieces of Devora, Rivka's nursemaid). Yaakov showed his obviously greater love of Rachel. As a result, G-d made Leah fertile and Rachel barren.

Next the Torah tells us, in rapid succession, of the births of Reuven, Shimon, Levi, Yehuda. Leah names each son (Levi was named by Yaakov or perhaps by an angel) with a name that expresses her thanks to G-d and her feelings under the unusual circumstances of her life.

Rachel, jealous of Leah, complains to Yaakov that she has no children. Yaakov gets angry with her, saying that it is G-d's doing, not his.

Rachel gives Bilha to Yaakov to have children whom she will raise as her own. Dan and Naftali are born. Leah, realizing that she has stopped having children, gives Zilpa to Yaakov. Gad and Asher are the results.

Notice the rapid fashion the Torah employs to tell us of the build-up of Yaakov's family. With Avraham and Yitzchak having such a difficult time fathering children, Yaakov has 8 sons in a span of 16 p'sukim!

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 14 p'sukim - 30:14-27

Rachel begs Reuven to give her the special (fertility) herbs (DUDA'IM, mandrake) that he had gathered for his mother, Leah. When Leah complains to her, Rachel promises that Yaakov could sleep with her that night in exchange for the herbs. When Yaakov returns from the fields, it is Leah who goes out to greet him - something Yaakov questions, and Leah explains. G-d answers Leah's prayers of despair, and she gives birth to Yissachar and then Zevulun. Then Leah gives birth to a girl, Dina. Finally, G-d "remembers" Rachel and she becomes pregnant.

She gives birth and names her son Yosef, praying that she will have yet another son (giving her not fewer than the handmaidens had. Leah has also prayed to G-d that her sister should not be shamed by having fewer sons than the hand-maidens.)

After Yosef is born, Yaakov asks his leave of Lavan. He desires to return to his fathers' home. He asks for his wives, children, and compensation for all the work he has done for Lavan. Lavan acknowledges that he has been blessed because of Yaakov.

Chamishi - 5th Aliya - 32 p'sukim - 30:28-31:16

They make an arrangement by which Yaakov will be paid. Lavan repeatedly attempts to minimize the births of the goats and sheep that will be Yaakov's. G-d has other plans and Yaakov becomes very wealthy. The details of

the speckled, banded, spotted animals and how which gave birth to what, are obscure. The bottom line is that Lavan attempts to cheat Yaakov (again) and is completely unsuccessful.

Lavan's sons feel that Yaakov has cheated their father. G-d tells Yaakov to return to his birth-place. Yaakov calls to his wives and explains the situation to them. He tells them of being instructed by an angel as to what to do with the animals. Rachel and Leah feel as strangers in their father's house, as if they have no share in Lavan's wealth, and they will do as G-d commands.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 26 p'sukim - 31:17-42

Yaakov prepares to leave. Meanwhile, Rachel takes her father's TERAFIM in his absence. When Lavan becomes aware of Yaakov's departure, he sets out in pursuit. G-d appears to Lavan in a dream and warns him not to harm Yaakov in any way. When Lavan catches up to Yaakov, he confronts him about the unannounced departure and the missing terafim.

Rav Aryeh Kaplan z"l in The Living Torah, explains Terafim according to different opinions. Some say they were idols that were worshiped. This opinion adds that Rachel took them to save her father from the sin of idolatry. Others are of the opinion that they were meditative devices that would enable Lavan to divine the whereabouts of Yaakov. Thus Rachel's motive was to prevent Lavan from pursuing Yaakov & Co.

Yaakov answers in kind, expressing his anger at Lavan's repeated attempts to cheat him. As to the terafim, Yaakov permits Lavan to search for them and boldly declares that the one who took them shall not live. Lavan fails to find his terafim because Rachel convinces him not to search her person or belongings. Had it not been for G-d's protection, Yaakov tells Lavan, you would have left me with nothing.

In the Hagada we read/say: VAYEIRED MITZRAIMA (Yaakov went down into Egypt), and this is qualified by, ANOOS AL PI HADIBUR, usually translated as "Forced by Divine Decree". There is another explanation offered: It was Yaakov's DIBUR, his statement, that forced himself down into Egypt. How so? He inadvertently condemned Rachel to an early death by his words to Lavan. This can be construed as killing B'SHOGEIG. Punishment (and atonement) for that is EXILE. (Really, to a city of refuge, but for this DRASH, exile to Egypt will do.) Not only does this explanation fit the DIBUR part, but it can also explain why the Hagada connects Yaakov's descent into Egypt with Lavan.

Another explanation of a connection between Yaakov's time with Lavan

and his (Yaakov's) descent into Mitzrayim goes like this: Lavan's switching of Leah for Rachel planted the seeds of jealousy between Rachel and Leah. This led to the friction between Leah's sons - Yosef's Brothers - and Rachel's son, Yosef. That resulted in Yosef being sold into slavery in Egypt, which in turn brought Yaakov and family down to Egypt.

Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya - 15 p'sukim - 31:43-32:3

Lavan answers that the women are his daughters, that the children are his (grand)children, and the animals are his as well. Yaakov and Lavan make a pact and form a mound of rocks as a sign of their agreement. Yaakov offers a sacrifice to G-d and swears to the covenant. In the morning, Lavan kisses his children and grandchildren, blesses them, and returns home.

Yaakov continues on his journey and encounters angels (of Eretz Yisrael - the sedra thus comes full circle - he left Eretz Yisrael with Vayeitzei and now is about to return to the Land). On the way, Yaakov names the place Machanayim.

Last 3 p'sukim are repeated for Maftir.

Haftara 28+2* p'sukim - Hoshei'a 12:13-14:10

** Sources suggest concluding the haftara with Yoel 2:26-27, in order to end the haftara on a better note than Hoshei'a ends with.*

S'faradim read the 17-pasuk portion of Hoshei'a that precedes the Ashkenazi reading, 11:7-12:12. Chabad do also, but they continue for two more p'sukim - namely, the first two p'sukim of the Ashkenazi reading.

This concluding portion of the book(let) of Hoshei'a begins with reference to Yaakov's journey to Aram to find (and work on behalf of) a wife (wives) - hence its obvious connection to the sedra. The prophet points out to the People of Israel their humble origins, in an attempt to put things in perspective and restore their faith and reliance upon G-d.

The last 9 p'sukim of the haftara are also the first 9 p'sukim of the haftara of Shabbat Shuva.

UNSHALMA FARIM S'FATEINU "... so will we offer the words of our lips instead of bulls." This is the textual link between prayer and korbanot. Remember, the origin of Maariv is found in the sedra.

CLARIFICATION:

UNSHALMA FARIM S'FATEINU does not mean that there is a trade-off between Korbanot and T'fila (sacrifices and prayer). It does not mean that when there are no korbanot, we pray and when there are korbanot, we don't. Not so! Prayer predates

korbanot. Prayer existed before and DURING and after, and IYH when the Beit HaMikdash will be rebuilt. We will always have prayer. The text will be different for some of the prayers, depending upon whether we have a Mikdash or not, and other reasons. But there always was, is, and will be prayer.

The meaning of the words of Hoshei'a tell us that between Beit HaMikdashes (Batei Mikdash), our T'filot do double duty. They continue to be prayer, and they (temporarily) take the place of the korbanot, as well. We daven Shacharit at the same time as the morning Tamid was brought. We daven Mincha at the time when the afternoon Tamid was brought. We daven Musaf when the Musafim were brought in the Mikdash. (Actually, Musaf's fate might be different from the three davenings of the day.) The gemara makes it clear that davening is more than korbanot. Davening is asking G-d for mercy (and many other things). It is praising Him, thanking Him, acknowledging that everything comes from Him.

Imagine how exciting and special it will be to daven Shacharit WHEN the Avoda is being done in the Mikdash, not just at the same time it used to be done. May we merit that, speedily in our time.