

Read: Ephesians 4-5:21

Week 7 - PARASHA VAYETZE (And He Left)
Genesis 28:10–32:2; Hosea 12:13–14:10; John 4:1–26

“Spiritual Awakening”

Two weeks ago in our Reading, **Isaac**, the son of Sarah and Abraham, **carried on the legacy of his parents’ faith and obedience to Adonai**. After his mother died, Abraham sent his servant to bring home a wife for Yitzchak from among Abraham’s kinsmen.

Last week, in Reading Toldot (“Toldot” - Generations – a person’s deeds and achievements), Isaac’s wife Rebecca had a difficult pregnancy as the twin boys jostled within her. When she inquired of the Lord, He told her that two nations were in her womb and the elder (Esau) would serve the younger (Jacob). Together we learned about “Pitchfork Perfect Prayer” through the 19 year prayerful struggle of Rebecca’s bareness and Isaac’s promise, in unity.

We learned an incredible Lesson, that **just because we pray once and do not receive an answer does not mean we should stop praying! God wants us to bring our requests to Him in the unity of faith.**

The Hebrew expression used in **Genesis 25:21** for **prayer (atar עֵתָר)**, which can also mean **to dig**, is related to the Hebrew word for **pitchfork (eter)**. The Talmud (Jewish Oral Law) explains the connection: “As a pitchfork turns the sheaves of grain from one position to another, so does the prayer of the righteous turn the HEART of the Holy One and/or the HEART of the Prayer, blessed be He/he, from the **attribute of anger** to the **attribute of mercy**.”

Jacob’s **prayer** penetrated the foundation of heaven, and just as grain is turned over with a **pitchfork**, so too was God’s judgment of barrenness upon Rebekah “*turned over*” and **reversed by God’s mercy because of prayer**.

Sarah, Abraham’s wife, came up with her own solution for her barrenness — she suggested a surrogate mother — Hagar. In her own efforts, she received Ishmael. Hannah, another barren woman, went to the Temple and cried out to the Lord for a child and she received the prophet Samuel.

Rebekah did neither. Instead, she **turned to her husband who was her spiritual covering to entreat the Lord on her behalf**, and God answered Isaac’s **prayers** for the miraculous gift of new life. Rebekah found herself pregnant with not just one child — but twins — **a double portion!**

This week, Parasha **Vayetze (נצט)** describes Jacob’s travels to and his life in Haran, his mother's homeland, to find a wife and to flee the murderous plot of his brother Esau.

Genesis 28:10-32:3

Jacob's Dream

¹⁰ Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran.

Jacob Leaves His Comfort Zone

We may recall that **Jacob was not a rough and tough adventurer like his brother, Esau**. He had a quiet personality from birth, preferring to be at home rather than out in the woods hunting for game.

So, the call to leave his home for another land (like his grandfather Abraham, and his father Isaac) may have caused much anxiety — perhaps doubly so since he was running to save his life, at his mother’s insistence.

On the other hand, Jacob had just received an extraordinary blessing from his father Isaac of “*heaven’s dew and earth’s richness, an abundance of grain and new wine*” with a promise of nations serving and bowing down to him **Genesis 27:28–29**.

So Jacob set out for Haran, much blessed. Even so, instead of his comfortable bed or a warm inn at the side of the road, **he spent his first night sleeping on the cold, hard ground without any kind of physical shelter and only stones for a pillow**.

Vayeitzei (“*and he went out*”), which describes the **20 years Jacob spent on the outside** — outside of the Holy Land, and outside of the “tents of learning” within which he had been sheltered for the first half of his life.

AND JACOB WENT OUT FROM BE’ER SHEVA, AND HE WENT TO CHARAN (GENESIS 28:10)

The story of Jacob’s journey to Charan is the story of every soul’s descent to the physical world.

. . . journeys to **Charan** (literally, “**Wrath**”): a place of lies, deceptions, struggle and hard-ship; a place in which material concerns consume one’s days and nights, sapping one’s energy, confusing one’s priorities, and all but obscuring the purpose for which one has come there in the first place . . .

... Had Jacob remained in the Holy Land, the life of this pious scholar who lived 3,500 years ago would have been of no significance to us today.

The soul, too, achieves its enduring significance only upon its descent into “Charan.” Only as a physical being, invested within a physical body and inhabiting a physical environment, can it fulfill the purpose of its creation, which is to build “a dwelling for G-d in the physical world.”

(From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Genesis 28:11

¹¹ And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep.

AND HE ENCOUNTERED THE PLACE (28:11)

“The place” is Mount Moriah (the “Temple Mount” in Jerusalem, where Abraham had bound Isaac upon the altar and where King Solomon would erect the Holy Temple).

(Rashi)

G-d is the place of His world, but His world is not His place.

(Midrash Rabbah)

Genesis 28:12

¹² And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!

A LADDER STOOD ON THE EARTH, AND THE TOP OF IT REACHED TO HEAVEN (28:12)

This is prayer.

Jacob Receives His Spiritual Inheritance

“And he dreamed, and beheld a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.” Genesis 28:12

Any anxiety Jacob had that night must have fled his spirit when the Lord appeared to him in a dream. Standing at the top of a ladder that reached into the heavens, with angels going up and down it, God promised to give Jacob the same inheritance He gave Abraham and Isaac — the land upon which he lay:

“And, behold, the LORD [YHVH – (declaring *the* hidden name of nearly 600 years, the “*True Meaning*” of God’s name, “*Behold the Hands of the Man with Raised Hands, Behold the Nail Pierced Hands of the Man with Raised Hands*”)] stood beside him, and said: 'I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac. The land upon which you lie, to you will I give it, and to your seed.’” Genesis 28:13

It is clear through this Scripture that **the Divine title deed to this land belongs to the seed of Jacob (Israel)** and not the seed of his brother, Esau, who is the forefather of many of the Arabic people currently living in the Land.

Genesis 28:13

¹³ And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, “I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. ¹⁴ Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and **in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.**”

It’s easy to see (*origin of*) these descendants of Esau still hat(*ing*) their “brother Jacob” and seek to kill his descendants - the Jewish People.

Jacob awoke from his dream filled with awe, delighting in the presence of the One True God; and for that reason, he called the place **Bethel or Beit–El** (House of God).

In truth, though, any place can become a “house of God” when His holy Presence invades the space.

The ancient Jewish rabbis viewed this pivotal encounter with God as Jacob’s SPIRITUAL AWAKENING. It is here that he entered the role of spiritual forefather, moving forward in the promises given to his grandfather, Abraham — not only to receive the land, but also to bear fruit and bring blessing to generation after generation of all peoples of the earth:

“Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. **All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.**” Genesis 28:14

Genesis 28:15-17

¹⁵ Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." ¹⁶ Then Jacob **awoke from his sleep** and said, "**Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.**" ¹⁷ And he was afraid and said, "**How awesome is this place!** This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

What perhaps began as a journey of obedience to His parents now became a journey with God Himself:

"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." Genesis 28:15

While Abraham and Isaac had their own **very personal encounters with God**, until this time, it seems that Jacob had no such encounter. But as God reveals His power and presence, Jacob responds with clarity and a simple faith, saying:

"If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's household, then the Lord will be my God." Genesis 28:20-21

In accepting the Lordship of Adonai over his life, Jacob is not waiting for riches before he serves Him and he also makes this commitment to Him:

"This stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that You give me I will give You a tenth." (Genesis 28:22)

When we honor the Lord's real presence in our lives and reinvest our resources back into His work through tithing and serving, we acknowledge that He is Lord over our lives, that He provides us protection, food, clothing and shelter and that He alone is worthy of adoration and praise all the time, everywhere.

Genesis 28:18-22

¹⁸ So early in the morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. ¹⁹ He called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz at the first. ²⁰ **Then Jacob made a vow**, saying, "**If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear,** ²¹ **so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God,** ²² **and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you.**"

Jacob takes "**the stone** which he had put under his head" and **designates it as an altar by pouring oil on it.**

JACOB... TOOK THE STONE ... AND SET IT AS A MONUMENT; AND HE Poured OIL ON ITS HEAD (28:18)

... But in order for the monument to be a house of G-d one requires oil . . .

... **Oil** thus represents a persons . . . submission to G-d . . .

... to walk away from fourteen years of in- depth Torah study to begin dealing with the material world, as Jacob did with his move to Charan (literally, "Wrath"), **requires a great deal of oil** (submission to God) . . .

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

THIS... SHALL BE THE HOUSE OF G-D (28:22)

Not like **Abraham**, with whom it is called a "**mountain**" (Genesis 22:14); not like **Isaac**, with whom it is called a "**field**" (Genesis 24:63); but like **Jacob**, who called it a "**house**".

Matthew 16:18

¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter ("a stone" or "a boulder" or "a movable stone"), and on this rock (a (large mass of) rock – a non-movable stone) I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Why did God choose new names for some people? It was to let them know they were destined for a new mission in life. The new name was a way to reveal the divine plan and also to assure them that God's plan would be fulfilled in them.

Genesis 29:1-25

Jacob Marries Leah and Rachel

29 Then Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the east. ² As he looked, he saw a well in the field, and behold, three flocks of sheep lying beside it, for out of that well the flocks were watered. The stone on the well's mouth was large, ³ and when all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place over the mouth of the well.

⁴ Jacob said to them, "My brothers, where do you come from?" They said, "We are from Haran." ⁵ He said to them, "Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?" They said, "We know him." ⁶ He said to them, "Is it well with him?" They said, "It is well; and see, Rachel his daughter is coming with the sheep!" ⁷ He said, "Behold, it is still high day; it is not time for the livestock to be gathered together. Water the sheep and go, pasture them." ⁸ But they said, "We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together and the stone is rolled from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep."

⁹ While he was still speaking with them, **Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess.** ¹⁰ Now as soon as Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, **Jacob came near and rolled the stone from the well's mouth** and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. ¹¹ Then Jacob kissed Rachel and wept aloud. ¹² And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's kinsman, and that he was Rebekah's son, and she ran and told her father.

Jacob Encounters Living Water

"And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother." **Genesis 29:10**

By the time that Jacob arrives at his uncle Laban's land, it seems that **he had undergone a remarkable transformation.** Earlier on, he had been described as a tent-dweller, in contrast to his rugged brother Esau who was an outdoorsman.

Traditionally in Judaism, Jacob is described as a scholar.

Yet, suddenly it seems that he actually possesses remarkable strength. He is able to single-handedly move the heavy stone off of a community well in order to water his uncle's sheep.

Either he possessed this strength all along,
or it developed as he journeyed in faith and obedience.

If the second is true, then he is an example to all of us how we can be transformed in our walk with Adonai.

Much is made of this meeting at the well in Judaism's oral tradition, and there are several interpretations, each perhaps building on the other.

Among them, the well is thought to represent Zion, and the three flocks Babylon, Persia, and Greece, imperial powers that drew from the well the wealth of Israel and the Holy Temple.

In this interpretation, the rolling back of the stone represents the future messianic age when exile will end and God redeems His people.

The well is also interpreted as being the water of Torah, from which (*God's people*) draws in order to learn how to rule.

Water is a rich symbol, in Jeremiah 2:13, **God calls Himself the "spring of living water."** Life flows from Him.

Along this vein of thinking, then, the water in the well can also be seen to **represent Jesus**, who proclaimed, "Whoever believes in Me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." **John 7:38**

It is only through **Jesus, the source of living water,** that anyone can come to the Father to receive the gift of salvation.

"Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." **John 14:6**

The rolling away of the stone perhaps also reminds us of the miraculous rolling away of another stone — the one that covered Yeshua's burial place. When that stone was rolled away, the resurrection of Yeshua was revealed.

Prophetically, once Israel sees Yeshua as the Messiah who died, was buried, and rose again, then resurrection life will come to the entire world.

"For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?" **Romans 11:15**

So many people are thirsting today for a real relationship with the Living God. This is why it is so important that we bring the Word of God from Jerusalem to the nations. **Isaiah 2:3**

"O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water." **Psalms 63:1**

Genesis 29:13-14

13 As soon as Laban heard the news about Jacob, his sister's son, he ran to meet him and embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his house. Jacob told Laban all these things, **14** and Laban said to him, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh!" And he stayed with him a month.

Heard the News – the Good News of the Messiah

Genesis 29:15-25

15 Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?" **16** Now Laban had two daughters. The name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. **17** Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful in form and appearance. **18** Jacob loved Rachel. And he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." **19** Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me." **20** So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.

21 Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed." **22** So Laban gathered together all the people of the place and made a feast. **23** But in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and he went in to her. **24** (Laban gave his female servant Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her servant.) **25** And in the morning, behold, it was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?"

AND IT CAME TO PASS, THAT IN THE MORNING, BEHOLD, IT WAS LEAH (29:25)

All that night, Leah was impersonating Rachel. When Jacob woke in the morning and saw that she was Leah, he said to her: "Daughter of The Deceiver! **Why have you deceived me?**" **Said she to him: "And you, did you not deceive your father, when he asked you, 'Are you my son Esau?'"**

Destiny and the Love of Jacob's Life

In an encounter that is reminiscent of Abraham's servant finding a bride for Isaac at a well, Jacob meets his bride-to-be at a well, perhaps the very same well.

It is a divine appointment. Jacob falls in love at first sight, understanding that she is his destiny or from God or soul mate predestined by God.

He is so smitten by the beautiful Rachel, daughter of his uncle Laban, that he agrees to work seven years for her hand in marriage (although, instead he was tricked into working 14 years by Laban):

"And Jacob loved Rachel; and he said: 'I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter.'" **Genesis 29:18**

This work agreement shows **Jacob's great integrity as a man who is not relying on God to simply hand him every good thing on a silver platter**, as his father's blessing back home or God's promises at Bethel might suggest. Nor did he go back to his father to ask for money.

Genesis 29:26-30

26 Laban said, "It is not so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn." **27** Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years." **28** Jacob did so, and completed her week. **Then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife.** **29** (Laban gave his female servant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel to be her servant.) **30** So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and **he loved Rachel more than Leah**, and served Laban for another seven years.

AND HE SERVED WITH HIM YET ANOTHER SEVEN YEARS (29:30)

Jacob served Laban as **faithfully** in the second seven years as he did in the first, even though he had been tricked into them by Laban's deception.

(Rashi)

Genesis 29:31-32

Jacob's Children

31 When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. **32** And Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben, for she said, "Because the Lord has looked upon my affliction; for now my husband will love me."

"And Leah conceived, and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben; for she said: 'Because the LORD has looked upon my affliction; for now my husband will love me.'" **Genesis 29:32**

In one case, Jacob overruled a naming decision. When Rachel knew she was about to die giving birth to her second son, she called him **Ben-Oni** (son of my sorrow). Jacob changed his name to **Ben-Yamin** — Benjamin (son at my right hand) to better reflect his destiny.

Each of the children received names that reflected family hopes or circumstances (but you will have to read the Torah portion for this Shabbat to discover why they were given these names):

1. Reuben—See, a son, 2. Simeon—Hearing, 3. Levi—Joined; attached, 4. Judah—Yah be praised, 5. Dan—Judge, 6. Naphtali—My wrestling, 7. Gad—Troop; invader; good fortune, 8. Asher—Happy, 9. Issachar—Man of hire, 10. Zebulun—Dwelling, 11. Dinah—Judged or Vindicated, 12. Joseph—Increaser or God will increase, 13. Benjamin—Son of my right hand

Genesis 29:33-36

³³ She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Because the Lord has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also." And she called his name Simeon. ³⁴ Again she conceived and bore a son, and said, "Now this time my husband will be attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore his name was called Levi. ³⁵ And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, "This time I will praise the Lord." Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she ceased bearing.

Genesis 30:1-3

When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister. She said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I shall die!" ² Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" ³ Then she said, "Here is my servant Bilhah; go in to her, so that she may give birth on my behalf, that even I may have children through her."

Rachel remains barren and is jealous of her fruitful sister. **Following Sarah's example**, she urges Jacob to marry her handmaid, Bilhah, so "that I may also have children, by her."

Genesis 30:4-21

⁴ So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her. ⁵ And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. ⁶ Then Rachel said, "God has judged me, and has also heard my voice and given me a son." Therefore she called his name Dan. ⁷ Rachel's servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. ⁸ Then Rachel said, "With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister and have prevailed." So she called his name Naphtali.

⁹ When Leah saw that she had ceased bearing children, she took her servant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. ¹⁰ Then Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son. ¹¹ And Leah said, "Good fortune has come!" so she called his name Gad. ¹² Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. ¹³ And Leah said, "Happy am I! For women have called me happy." So she called his name Asher.

¹⁴ In the days of wheat harvest Reuben went and found mandrakes in the field and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes." ¹⁵ But she said to her, "Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son's mandrakes also?" Rachel said, "Then he may lie with you tonight in exchange for your son's mandrakes." ¹⁶ When Jacob came from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, "You must come in to me, for I have hired you with my son's mandrakes." So he lay with her that night. ¹⁷ And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. ¹⁸ Leah said, "God has given me my wages because I gave my servant to my husband." So she called his name Issachar.

¹⁹ And Leah conceived again, and she bore Jacob a sixth son. ²⁰ Then Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good endowment; now my husband will honor me, because I have borne him six sons." So she called his name Zebulun. ²¹ Afterward she bore a daughter and called her name Dinah.

AND AFTERWARDS SHE BORE A DAUGHTER AND CALLED HER NAME DINAH (30:21)

Leah (said) . . . Six have issued from me and four from the handmaids, making ten.

(Midrash Rabbah; Rashi)

Genesis 30:21-24

²² Then **God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb.** ²³ She conceived and bore a son and said, "God has taken away my reproach." ²⁴ And she called his name Joseph, saying, "May the Lord add to me another son!"

G-d remembered Rachel; and G-d hearkened to her [prayers], and opened her womb.

And she conceived, and bore a son...And she called his name Joseph, to say: "G-d shall add ('yosef') another son to me."

Genesis 30:24-43

Jacob's Prosperity

²⁵ As soon as Rachel had borne Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that I may go to my own home and country. ²⁶ Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, that I may go, for you know the service that I have given you." ²⁷ But Laban said to him, "If I have found favor in your sight, I have learned by divination that the Lord has blessed me because of you. ²⁸ Name your wages, and I will give it." ²⁹ Jacob said to him, "You yourself know how I have served you, and how your livestock has fared with me. ³⁰ For you

had little before I came, and it has increased abundantly, and the Lord has blessed you wherever I turned. But now when shall I provide for my own household also?" ³¹ He said, "What shall I give you?" Jacob said, "You shall not give me anything. If you will do this for me, I will again pasture your flock and keep it: ³² let me pass through all your flock today, removing from it every speckled and spotted sheep and every black lamb, and the spotted and speckled among the goats, and they shall be my wages. ³³ So my honesty will answer for me later, when you come to look into my wages with you. Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats and black among the lambs, if found with me, shall be counted stolen." ³⁴ Laban said, "Good! Let it be as you have said." ³⁵ But that day Laban removed the male goats that were striped and spotted, and all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had white on it, and every lamb that was black, and put them in the charge of his sons. ³⁶ And he set a distance of three days' journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob pastured the rest of Laban's flock.

³⁷ Then Jacob took fresh sticks of poplar and almond and plane trees, and peeled white streaks in them, exposing the white of the sticks. ³⁸ He set the sticks that he had peeled in front of the flocks in the troughs, that is, the watering places, where the flocks came to drink. And since they bred when they came to drink, ³⁹ the flocks bred in front of the sticks and so the flocks brought forth striped, speckled, and spotted. ⁴⁰ And Jacob separated the lambs and set the faces of the flocks toward the striped and all the black in the flock of Laban. He put his own drives apart and did not put them with Laban's flock. ⁴¹ Whenever the stronger of the flock were breeding, Jacob would lay the sticks in the troughs before the eyes of the flock, that they might breed among the sticks, ⁴² but for the feebler of the flock he would not lay them there. So the feebler would be Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's. ⁴³ Thus the man increased greatly and had large flocks, female servants and male servants, and camels and donkeys.

For 20 years in Harran, Jacob worked hard, paying his own way. He protected and nurtured the flocks and herds of Laban as an honest servant, prospering both himself and Laban.

Laban, however, was not the model father-in-law, nor was he an honest, upright businessman. Not only did Laban trick Jacob into first marrying Rachel's older sister, Leah, but Laban also tried to cheat Jacob out of his fair wages several times.

Laban's name in Hebrew means "white."

Names in Biblical times often revealed the character and destiny of the name bearer, and in this case, there may have been a connection to leprosy. Even so, we must be wise and discern a person's character, not being deceived by someone that appears to be clean or pure, since even the devil himself can appear as an angel of light **2 Corinthians 11:14**.

Genesis 31:1-23 **Jacob Flees from Laban**

Now Jacob heard that the sons of Laban were saying, "Jacob has taken all that was our father's, and from what was our father's he has gained all this wealth." ² And Jacob saw that Laban did not regard him with favor as before. ³ Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you."

⁴ So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah into the field where his flock was ⁵ and said to them, "I see that your father does not regard me with favor as he did before. But the God of my father has been with me. ⁶ **You know that I have served your father with all my strength, ⁷ yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times. But God did not permit him to harm me.** ⁸ If he said, 'The spotted shall be your wages,' then all the flock bore spotted; and if he said, 'The striped shall be your wages,' then all the flock bore striped. ⁹ Thus God has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me. ¹⁰ In the breeding season of the flock I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream that the goats that mated with the flock were striped, spotted, and mottled. ¹¹ Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I am!' ¹² And he said, 'Lift up your eyes and see, all the goats that mate with the flock are striped, spotted, and mottled, for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. ¹³ I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now arise, go out from this land and return to the land of your kindred.'" ¹⁴ Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, "Is there any portion or inheritance left to us in our father's house? ¹⁵ Are we not regarded by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and he has indeed devoured our money. ¹⁶ All the wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children. Now then, whatever God has said to you, do."

¹⁷ So Jacob arose and set his sons and his wives on camels. ¹⁸ He drove away all his livestock, all his property that he had gained, the livestock in his possession that he had acquired in Paddan-aram, to go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac. ¹⁹ Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel stole her father's household gods. ²⁰ And Jacob tricked Laban the Aramean, by not telling him that he intended to flee. ²¹ He fled with all that he had and arose and crossed the Euphrates, and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead. ²² When it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled, ²³ he took his kinsmen with him and pursued him for seven days and followed close after him into the hill country of Gilead.

AND IT WAS TOLD TO LABAN... THAT JACOB HAD FLED... AND HE PURSUED AFTER HIM A SEVEN DAYS' JOURNEY; AND OVERTOOK HIM IN THE MOUNTAIN OF GILAD (31:22-23)

In other words, there are two types of "sparks of holiness" that a person redeems in the course of his life. **The first** are those which he consciously pursues, having recognized the potential for sanctity and goodness in an object or event in his life. **The second** are those which pursue him . . . So his redemption of these "sparks" can only come about unwittingly, when his involvement with them is forced upon him by circumstances beyond his control.

Genesis 31:24

24 But God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream by night and said to him, “Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.”

That night Laban has a **dream** in which G-d warns him against harming Jacob.

Joel 2:28

The Lord Will Pour Out His Spirit

28 “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; **your sons and your daughters shall prophesy**, your **old men** shall **dream dreams**, and your **young men** shall **see visions**.”

Illustration: Jesus and the *Mount of Transfiguration* – Matthew 17:1-13

Do you have Dreams?

Genesis 31:25-32

25 And Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban with his kinsmen pitched tents in the hill country of Gilead. **26** And Laban said to Jacob, “What have you done, that you have tricked me and driven away my daughters like captives of the sword? **27** Why did you flee secretly and trick me, and did not tell me, so that I might have sent you away with mirth and songs, with tambourine and lyre? **28** And why did you not permit me to kiss my sons and my daughters farewell? Now you have done foolishly. **29** It is in my power to do you harm. But the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, ‘Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.’ **30** And now you have gone away because you longed greatly for your father’s house, but why did you steal my gods?” **31** Jacob answered and said to Laban, “Because I was afraid, for I thought that you would take your daughters from me by force. **32** **Anyone with whom you find your gods shall not live.** In the presence of our kinsmen point out what I have that is yours, and take it.” Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

“ANYONE WITH WHOM YOU FIND YOUR GODS, LET HIM NOT LIVE” FOR JACOB KNEW NOT THAT RACHEL HAD STOLEN THEM (31:32)

It was because of these words spoken by Jacob that Rachel died in childbirth shortly thereafter.

(Midrash Rabbah)

Genesis 31:33-42

33 So Laban went into Jacob’s tent and into Leah’s tent and into the tent of the two female servants, but he did not find them. And he went out of Leah’s tent and entered Rachel’s. **34** Now Rachel had taken the household gods and put them in the camel’s saddle and sat on them. Laban felt all about the tent, but did not find them. **35** And she said to her father, “Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the way of women is upon me.” So he searched but did not find the household gods.

36 Then Jacob became angry and berated Laban. Jacob said to Laban, “What is my offense? What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued me? **37** For you have felt through all my goods; what have you found of all your household goods? Set it here before my kinsmen and your kinsmen, that they may decide between us two. **38** These twenty years I have been with you. Your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, and I have not eaten the rams of your flocks. **39** What was torn by wild beasts I did not bring to you. I bore the loss of it myself. From my hand you required it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. **40** There I was: by day the heat consumed me, and the cold by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes. **41** **These twenty years I have been in your house.** I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times. **42** If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. **God saw my affliction and the labor of my hands and rebuked you last night.**”

Genesis 31:43-55

43 Then Laban answered and said to Jacob, “The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine. But what can I do this day for these my daughters or for their children whom they have borne? **44** Come now, let us make a covenant, you and I. And let it be a witness between you and me.” **45** So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. **46** And Jacob said to his kinsmen, “Gather stones.” And they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there by the heap. **47** Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha but Jacob called it Galeed **48** Laban said, “This heap is a witness between you and me today.” Therefore he named it Galeed, **49** and Mizpah, for he said, “The Lord watch between you and me, when we are out of one another’s sight. **50** If you oppress my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters, although no one is with us, see, God is witness between you and me.” **51** Then Laban said to Jacob, “See this heap and the pillar, which I have set between you and me. **52** This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I will not pass over this heap to you, and you will not pass over this heap and this pillar to me, to do harm. **53** The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us.” So Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac, **54** and Jacob offered a sacrifice in the hill country and called his kinsmen to eat bread. They ate bread and spent the night in the hill country. **55** Early in the morning Laban arose and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned home.

Genesis 32:1-3

Jacob Fears Esau

Jacob went on his way, and the angels of **God met him**.² And when Jacob saw them he said, “This is God's camp!” So he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

³ And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom,

After twenty years in Charan (literally, “Wrath”), G-d appears to Jacob and tells him that it is time to go home.

And Jacob went on his way. And angels of G-d met him to escort him into the Holy Land.

At the end of this Reading, Jacob begins his journey home. In the next Reading, **Jacob prepares to encounter his rival brother Esau after 20 years of estrangement**.

On the way, Jacob will also encounter a Divine messenger who will change his name from **Yaacov** (Jacob — referring to the heel of the foot) to **Yisrael** (Israel — one who struggles with God).

Today, the ancient rivalry between the brothers still seems to remain, but that is not the only struggle the Jewish People face. They also struggle with understanding the prophetic Scriptures and the issue of who Messiah really is.

Timeline of Jacob's Sojourn in Haran (referenced to Jacob's age)

- **Jacob** and Esau were born when **Isaac was 60 years old (Ge 25:26)**, approximately 15 years before the death of Abraham (Ge 21:5, Ge 25:7).
- Now, in view of **Ge 26:1**, we can infer that Isaac went to Gerar after Abraham died, that is, when **Jacob** was more than **15 years old**.
- **Jacob** was **40 years old** at the time of **Ge 26:34**.
- **Age 57 - Jacob** leaves Canaan and comes to Haran
- **Age 64 - Jacob** marries Leah and Rachel, begins having children
- **Age 65 - Jacob** begins having children by Leah
- **Age 76 - Jacob** probably has last of children by Leah (Dinah)
- Isaac and Rebecca's son Jacob was sent to Padan-aram (home of Rebecca's brother Laban) to avoid the wrath of his brother Esau. **Jacob came to Padan-aram** when he was $91 - 14 = 77$ years old.
- **Jacob** was about **91 years old** when Joseph was born. As we read in Ge 37:3, Joseph was a "son of his old age". While Benjamin was younger than Joseph, he was just a little child at the time of Ge 37:3, when Jacob regarded Joseph as a son of his old age.
- The passage in which Isaac sends **Jacob** to Padan-aram (**Ge 28**) takes place later. The age of **Jacob** at that time could be calculated as follows:
 - Isaac lived 180 years (**Ge 35:28**). Thus, **Jacob** was about **120 years old when Isaac died**. Joseph was about 29 years old at that time.
 - Now, Joseph was 30 years old "when he stood before Pharaoh" (Ge 41:46).
 - Joseph was about $30 + 7 + (7 - 5) = 39$ years old when **Jacob** was 130 years old when he came to Egypt (Ge 47:9).
 - As stated in **Ge 47:28**, **Jacob died 147 years old** and he lived 17 years in Egypt.

<http://hiswordsarepure.com/TheLifeOfJacob.htm>
<https://sites.google.com/site/calendarstudies/genesis-28-9>

Next Week's Reading & Location:

Week 8 - PARASHA VAYISHLACH (And He Sent)
Genesis 32:4 (3)–36:43; Obadiah 1:1–21; Ephesians 4:1–32

Upcoming Event:

Hanukkah (Jesus' Conception) 2019
Sunday, December 22nd to Monday, December 30th