



## Va'yetzei ~ And He Went Out

B'reshith 28:10-32:3

Beit Emet ~ Vancouver, WA

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In this week's *parsha* we read the second chapter in the life of our father Ya'aqob (Jacob). And, we continue the story of the birth of a nation; or, as we read last week, the "**toldot**" or "**birthings**" or the "**fruit**" of the generations of Avraham and Yitzaq, who would become the Children of Yisra'el. And in our *parsha* this week, we need to pay special attention to the principle we learned about before, of "**Ma'aseh avot siman le'vanim**"; or, in English, "**The deeds of the fathers (our ancestors) are signposts to the children**".

Rabbi Eliyahu Touger writes this week, in [The Garden of Torah – Yaakov's Journey](#), "*Yaakov's journey to Charan serves as an analogy for the descent of our souls into our bodies. In the spiritual realm, our souls experience direct revelations of G-dliness. Nevertheless, they 'go out' from that realm and descend into bodies to live in this material world. Following the pattern set by our Patriarch Yaakov, every soul confronts the challenge of physical existence. As a person matures, he establishes a family, creating an environment in which his values are expressed. Similarly, through contact with the world at large, he refines and elevates the G-dly life-force invested in creation.*"

Rav Touger goes on to add, "*This pattern is also reflected in the exiles of the Jewish people at large. Our people have been forced to leave the holiness of Eretz Yisrael and journey among the nations. Throughout the centuries, despite the challenges presented by the societies in which we dwelt, we have held true to our spiritual heritage, have maintained a tradition of family life, and have elevated the material substance of the world, showing how it is G-d's dwelling. On the way to Charan, Yaakov experienced a vision of G-d in which G-d promised him: 'I will return you to this soil.' This indicates that Yaakov's mission (to go to Charan) and the mission of the Jewish people at large (to make the world a dwelling for G-d) are not ends in themselves. Yaakov was not intended to stay in Charan forever, and our exile too will come to an end. For every Jew's true place is in Eretz Yisrael.*"

So, the events we are studying now are to be examples to us, as we walk out our lives and destiny. And, this week, Ya'aqob begins that journey; the journey that will bring forth the fathers of the twelve tribes and we'll see the birthings (**toldot**) of the nation named with Ya'aqob's soon to be new name, Yisra'el. As we study these *parashot* (*Torah portions*), let's keep in mind that Ya'aqob's history and heritage are so important to us today. He is our father, and his inheritance is ours, if we seek it. Remember what the prophet admonished Yehudah, and all of us, in **Yeshayahu / Isaiah 58:13-14**; "**If you do turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My set-apart**

*day, and shall call the Sabbath 'a delight,' the set-apart day of YHVH 'esteemed,' and shall esteem it, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in YHVH. And I shall cause you to ride on the heights of the earth, and feed you with the inheritance of Ya'aqob your father. For the mouth of YHVH has spoken!"*

Now, let's begin our parsha this week with B'reshith / **Genesis 28:10-22; And Ya'aqob went out from Be'ersheba and went toward Haran. And he came upon a place and stopped over for the night, for the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed and saw a ladder set up on the earth, and its top reached to the heavens, and saw messengers of Elohim going up and coming down on it. And see, YHVH stood above it and said, "I am YHVH Elohim of Abraham your father and the Elohim of Yitsaq. The land on which you are lying, I give it to you and your seed. And your seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and you shall break forth to the west and to the east, to the north and the south. And all the clans of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your seed. And see, I am with you and shall guard you wherever you go, and shall bring you back to this land. For I am not going to leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."** And Ya'aqob awoke from his sleep and said, "Truly, YHVH is in this place, and I did not know it." And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of Elohim, and this is the gate of the heavens!" And Ya'aqob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a standing column, and poured oil on top of it. And he called the name of that place Beit El, however, the name of that city had been Luz previously. And Ya'aqob made a vow, saying, "Seeing Elohim is with me, and has kept me in this way that I am going, and has given me bread to eat and a garment to put on – when I have returned to my father's house in peace, and YHVH has been my Elohim, then this stone which I have set as a standing column shall be Elohim's house, and of all that You give me, I shall certainly give a tenth to You."

Now, last week we saw Ya'aqob taking the birthright of the first-born from Esau, and receiving the first-born blessing from Yitzaq. This week he leaves Be'ersheva to go to Haran. Remember, "**Be'ersheva**" in Hebrew literally means the "**seventh well**", or in Hebrew thought, it is a picture of the "**Fountain of Divine Knowledge**". We also learned in past *parashot* that "**Haran**" means "**the Crossroads**" and symbolizes "**choosing**" or "**making choices**". And, in addition, if you read the link above to Rabbi Touger's teaching, he ties in the connection of "**Haran**" to "**anger**"; specifically "**arousing HaShem's anger**".

Next, we read in the ISR Scriptures that "**he came upon a place....**" The KJV says that "**he lighted upon a certain place....**" In the Hebrew it states that, "**Va'yifga ba'maqowm**" or "**and he encountered that place**". Now, the Hebrew word here for "**place**" is "**maqowm**", which means "**place**" or "**station**". "**Maqowm**" is from the root word "**quwm**", meaning; **to rise up, arise**, also to be "**proven**" or "**to establish**". In fact it is translated as "**rise up**" or "**arise**" 451 times in Scripture and as "**confirm**", "**perform**" and "**establish**" 65 times. So, Ya'aqob has come to and encountered this place, this "**maqowm**", where the Words of HaShem are "**confirmed**", "**proven**" and "**established**".

Next, we read in most English translations that he took one of the stones (some translations say that he took "*of the stones*") from that place and put at his head, or as his *pillows* [KJV]. There's a whole Hebrew word thing going on here that we need to look at in order to understand what is happening. First it says, "**he took**". The word here is "**laqach**", which means "**to take**", "**accept**" or "**marry**". Next is "**m'eben'y**", or "**of stones**".

Now, we read that Ya'aqob put them at his head. Some translations say, "for pillows". The KJV puts that in italics to note that it was added. However, from the Hebrew Torah phrase actually reads, "**v'asam m'rashatah**" or that "**he arranged them around his head.**" And, this is not added. O.K., let's sum up for a minute what the Torah is telling us here. He **takes** or "accepts" some of the stones and arranges them around his head before he goes to sleep. The rabbis teach that he placed twelve stones around his head. Now, we're not given the exact number of stones that Ya'aqob placed around his head. However, what I find interesting here, is that the numeric value of the phrase "**m'eben'y**" or "**of stones**" is 103, which equals "**ha kokavim**" or "**the stars**".

In two weeks, we'll read about one of Ya'aqob's son, Yosef and his dream in **B'reshith / Genesis 37:9-11**; ***And he dreamed still another dream and related it to his brothers, and said, "See, I have dreamed another dream, and see, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars bowed down to me." And he related it to his father and his brothers. And his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall we, your mother and I and your brothers, indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?" And his brothers envied him, but his father guarded the word.*** You'll remember that it was Ya'aqob who interpreted the dream and the eleven stars were his other sons, who would become, along with Yosef, the tribes of Yisra'el. He knew what this meant, quite possibly from his having placed the stones around his head here at Beth El.

Now, Ya'aqob sleeps and he has a dream. He sees a "**ladder**"; in Hebrew "**sullam**", which is from the root "**sala**" meaning to "**lift-up**" or "**exalt**". And, this ladder was "**mutzav erez**", or was "**rooted in the land**" and "**reached to Heaven**". It didn't just reach from the earth to Heaven; it was "**rooted**" in the land. It was connected to the Land. Now, the "**messengers**" ("**malaki**") of Elohim were ascending and descending upon it. This brings at least two things to mind. First, why does it state that the messengers were "**ascending**" and "**descending**" in that order? Logic would say that they descended from Heaven, then ascended back. The rabbis teach that the ladder being rooted in the land means that first, our prayers are carried up to HaShem by the messengers that He has placed to guard us. Then, they will return with His provision.

Now, according to the Hebrew, Ya'aqob sees Elohim standing over him. And He tells him "**I am YHVH Elohim of Avraham your father and the Elohim of Yitzaq.**" Why do you suppose HaShem tells Ya'aqob that He was the Elohim of his father Avraham? Yitzaq was his father. Because Avraham is the father of all Hebrews, the people Yah created for Himself, as a "**light to the world**".

Then, HaShem tells Ya'aqob in **B'reshith / Genesis 28:13b-15**; ***"The land on which you are lying, I give it to you and your seed. And your seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and you shall break forth to the west and to the east, to the north and the south. And all the clans of the earth shall be blessed (mixed) in you and in your seed. And see, I am with you and shall guard you wherever you go, and shall bring you back to this land. For I am not going to leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."*** Here Elohim repeats the promises made to Avraham and Yitzaq, with the addition of prophesying of the future dispersions of both "**Houses of Yisra'el**" in that they will break forth in all directions. And, just as we read in *Parsha Lech Lecha*, four weeks ago, the Torah states, "**V'ani braku bekah kol mishpachot ha-adamah.**" or, as translated into English by the ISR folks "**And all the clans of the earth shall be blessed (mixed) in you and in your seed.**" Next, He tells Ya'aqob that He is with him, guarding him and will bring him back to Eretz Yisra'el. And, that He will not leave Ya'aqob until all is done. The Stone Edition TaNaK ends it this way from the Hebrew, "**.... for I will not forsake you until I will have done what I have spoken about you.**" This has implications for Ya'aqob personally and for us, his seed, his fruit.

Now, Ya'aqob does indeed return from exile; not once, but twice. He returns from Haran 21 years later a wealthy man with eleven of his sons and the twelfth on the way. Then, while still in Mitzrayim, as he is dying, he asks Yosef to promise to bring his body home to Eretz Yisra'el to be buried with Avraham and Yitsaq. So, he is taken from his grave in the world and brought back to Eretz Yisra'el. What a picture! Where have we heard something similar before, regarding us? In the "Valley of Dry Bones" in **Yehezqel / Ezekiel 37:12-13**; ***"Therefore prophesy, and you shall say to them, 'Thus said the Master YHVH, 'See, O My people, I am opening your graves, and shall bring you up from your graves, and shall bring you into the land of Yisra'el. And you shall know that I am YHVH, when I open your graves, O My people, and bring you up from your graves.'"***

Then, in **B'reshith / Genesis 28:16-22** we read; ***And Ya'aqob awoke from his sleep and said, "Truly, YHVH is in this place, and I did not know it." And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of Elohim, and this is the gate of the heavens!" And Ya'aqob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a standing column, and poured oil on top of it. And he called the name of that place Beit El, however, the name of that city had been Luz previously. And Ya'aqob made a vow, saying, "Seeing Elohim is with me, and has kept me in this way that I am going, and has given me bread to eat and a garment to put on – when I have returned to my father's house in peace, and YHVH has been my Elohim, then this stone which I have set as a standing column shall be Elohim's house, and of all that You give me, I shall certainly give a tenth to You."***

There are a couple things we need to see here. We read that Ya'aqob takes "**the stone**" that had been around his head all night and stands it up as a standing column and pours oil on top of it. That's right; in the Hebrew Torah, the "**stone**" here is singular in **verse 18**, but plural back in **verse 11**. And, the connotation is plural back in **verse 10**. How would you arrange one stone around your head? Somehow, these stones (*perhaps twelve of them, as the sages suggest*) united into one stone. In Jewish teaching, this speaks to the fact that Ya'aqob's 12 sons would form one nation, Yisra'el.

Ya'aqob calls this place the "**House of Elohim**" or "**Beit El**" and the "**Gate of the Heavens**". This place, Scripture says, was previously called "**Luz**". Now **Luz** means "**almond tree**". The almond tree, if you'll remember, was where Aharon's staff came from and is the sign of the authority of the Levites and the priesthood to be the spiritual leaders of Yisra'el. Also, the golden Lampstand (*menorah*) was fashioned to represent the almond tree. *Now there's a study we could do sometime.*

Beit El is the most mentioned city in Scripture besides Yerushalayim. And, it is very near Yerushalayim. The ruins believed to be of Beit El / Luz are about 9 miles north of the Temple Mount. This is within the land of Benjamin. Now, there is another city called **Luz** that is mentioned in the Book of **Shoftim (Judges)**. This city is well north and east of the Beit El / Luz that we are reading about. As the Children of Israel were subduing the Land, we read in **Shoftim 1:22-26**; ***And the house of Yoseph also went up against Beit El, and YHVH was with them. And the house of Yoseph sent men to spy out Beit El – now the name of the city was formerly Luz. And the watchmen saw a man coming out of the city, and they said to him, "Please show us the entrance to the city, and we shall show you kindness." So he showed them the entrance to the city, and they smote the city with the edge of the sword. But the man and all his clan they let go, and the man went to the land of the Hittites and built a city, and called its name Luz, which is its name to this day.***

Now, there is a Midrash (*teaching*) elucidated by Rashi, the theme of which is that both Beit El and Yerushalayim were, at that moment in time, one and the same. This means that the mountain at

Beit El was Mt. Moriah, the Temple Mount. There are several excellent commentaries that offer insights into this thought. I would suggest some study before the idea is discounted. And also, if one studies **Yehezqel / Ezekiel, chapters 40 – 47**, you get the idea that, in the Reign of Mashiach, these two cities will be one in those days. Today, the suburbs of Jerusalem extend very close to ancient Beit El. And of course, given the increase in the population of Yerushalayim during the Messianic millennium, the area of Beit El will easily be absorbed by Yerushalayim.

There's something else here of note. Ya'aqob also called this place, "**the Gate of the Heavens**". In addition to the "**House of Elohim**", Ya'aqob saw this place as a "**gate**" to the Heavenly. The Hebrew word used here is "**sha'ar**". I found it interesting that Ya'aqob didn't see it as a "**door**" (**deleth** in Hebrew). Rabbi Adlerstein gives the reason in his commentary on [Parsha Vayeitzei](#) explains that "**doors**" are meant to *allow in* individuals who are given permission to enter. But, "**gates**" are public entrances. To this, I would add **Yeshayahu / Isaiah 2:1-3; The word that Yeshayahu the son of Amos saw concerning Yehudah and Yerushalayim: And it shall be in the latter days that the mountain of the House of YHVH is established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills. And all nations shall flow to it. And many peoples shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of YHVH, to the House of the Elohim of Ya'aqob, and let Him teach us His ways, and let us walk in His paths, for out of Tzion comes forth the Torah, and the Word of YHVH from Yerushalayim."**

Here's another little interesting factoid. Even though the Mishkan (*Tabernacle*) was in Shiloh for 369 years, the Ark of the Covenant was in Beit El for a number of those years, as we read in **Shoft'im / Judges 21:26-28**, as B'nei Yisra'el is preparing for the third battle against the tribe of Binyamin; **And all the children of Yisra'el, even all the people, went up and came to Beit El and wept, and sat there before YHVH and fasted that day until evening. And they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before YHVH. And the children of Yisra'el asked of YHVH – the ark of the covenant of Elohim was there in those days, and Pinehas son of El'azar, son of Aharon, stood before it in those days – saying, "Should I yet again go out to battle against the children of my brother Binyamin, or should I cease?" And YHVH said, "Go up, for tomorrow I give them into your hand."** I don't know if you noticed; but, Pinchas being at Beit El and the end of the time of the Judges in Yisra'el, means that he lived to be over 300 years old, at a time when 110 was a ripe old age, as that was Yehoshua's age at his death.

So, back in our *parsha*, Ya'aqob acknowledges HaShem for His provision and makes a vow that when he returns to his father in peace and Yah has been his Elohim, the column he erected will be, for him, the House of Elohim and he will tithe of all he has. We'll see next week that he indeed comes back to Beit El, as Yisra'el, and builds an altar there.

Now, let's move to **B'reshith / Genesis 29:1-14; And Ya'aqob moved on and came to the land of the people of the East. And he looked and saw a well in the field, and saw three flocks of sheep lying by it, for out of that well they watered the flocks, and a large stone was on the well's mouth. And all the flocks would be gathered there, then they would roll the stone from the well's mouth and water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the well's mouth. So Ya'aqob said to them, "My brothers, where are you from?" And they said, "We are from Haran." And he said to them, "Do you know Laban son of Nahor?" And they said, "We know him." So he said to them, "Is he well?" And they said, "Well. And see, his daughter Rahel is coming with the sheep." And he said, "See, it is still high day, not the time for the livestock to be gathered together. Water the sheep, and go and feed them." But they said, "We are not allowed until all the flocks are gathered together, and they have rolled the stone from the well's mouth, then we shall water the sheep." While he was still speaking with them, Rahel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess. And it came to be, when**

*Ya'aqob saw Rahel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Ya'aqob went near and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. And Ya'aqob kissed Rahel, and lifted up his voice and wept. And when Ya'aqob told Rahel that he was her father's relative and that he was Rivka's son, she ran and told her father. And it came to be, when Laban heard the report about Ya'aqob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house. Then he told Laban all these matters. And Laban said to him, "You are indeed my bone and my flesh." And he stayed with him for a month.*

Ya'aqob comes to the land of the people of the East. We know that this is the ancestral home of Avraham and of Ya'aqob's mother Rivka. But, why would Torah say East? The Hebrew word used here is "**qedem**" and is more often used to mean "**that which was before**" or "**from ancient time**", "**antiquity**" or "**from of old**". This would describe the land of Avraham's origin.

Then, he sees a well in the field. First let's look at this field. As we read last week, Yitzaq sent Ya'aqob to Paddan Aram, which is where Haran is located. Now Paddan Aram literally means "**field of exaltation**" or "**exalted field**". This was indeed a special place. If you'll remember Avraham sent Eliezer, his trusted servant, to Paddan Aram to find Rivka for Yitzaq. Now, Ya'aqob goes to Paddan Aram to find a wife. This well, where Ya'aqob meets Rachel, could very well be the same well where Eliezer met Rivka.

Now here, he sees three flocks of sheep lying near the well and we are told that a large stone was on the well's mouth. We also get a narrative about how the flocks are watered. When all the sheep are gathered, then the stone would be rolled away, the flocks watered and the well closed. Before I go on, I need to go over a couple of things. This whole section of our parsha is so cool. First, the rabbis point out that in the Hebrew, it is stressed that the stone used to close the well was indeed *very large*. Now, this type of well closure was common. It was probably the only source of water for the city and they wanted to keep it secure. Plus, it was likely owned by Laban, in that this city was founded by Avraham's father Terah and Laban was the patriarch at this time. Then the rabbis also point out that the Hebrew words used to describe the three flocks "*lying by the well*", or "*beside it*" as some translations read, carries the connotation that they were fully dependent on it. As we've seen before, in Hebrew thought, "**wisdom**" is symbolized by the water underground. It is buried, hidden, and accessible only to those willing to go to the effort to bring it to the surface. All of this indicates that this was a very important well, both to the people of Haran and to the Torah's allegory of ancient wisdom.

Remember too, that all the flocks needed to be present for the wellspring of wisdom to be opened. But, when Ya'aqob arrives, there were only three present. One thought on this number we're given is that these three flocks represent the flocks, or children, of Shem, Ham and Yapheth (*Noach's sons*), since they repopulated the world. Remember, these were people of "**qedem**" or "**antiquity**". Now, we're not told here how many flocks in total there were. But, when Rachel showed up with her father's flock, even though it was still early in the day, Ya'aqob asks the men of the city to open the well. But, even though they are from Haran, they tell him they are not allowed. They say that when all the flocks have gathered, the proverbial "**they**" will open the well and the flocks will be watered. Those present don't have the strength or the authority to open the well. But, even as they spoke, Rachel came to the well with her father's sheep. And seeing her with Laban's sheep, Ya'aqob rolls away the huge stone and waters the sheep. You see, Laban's flock contained all of Yisra'el. Because through his house (Leah, Rachel and their two hand-maidens), from his flock, would come all Twelve Tribes of Yisra'el. So, when these sheep are gathered among all the flocks of the earth, the well-spring of HaShem's Wisdom opens and gives them "**Living Water**".

Then, Ya'aqob kisses and greets Rachel with tears. He no doubt relived the story that his parents must have told him of how Rivka came out to the well and was met by Eliezer. And, he no doubt knew that he was looking at his future wife. She runs to tell her father. I'm sure when Laban hears that Ya'aqob, Yitzaq and Rivka's son, is here and showed such strength and authority in opening the well, he thought, *"My wealthy family is here! My ship has come in!"* I'm sure that Laban was more than a little disappointed to see only Ya'aqob, empty-handed, with only his walking stick and no change of clothes. Now, remember that "**Laban**" means "**white**". And, you can either take that as "**pure**" or "**white**" as in "**leprous**" or "**dead**".

From the verses that follow, the month that Ya'aqob spent with Laban must have been a truly blessed one. For we read in **B'reshith / Genesis 29:15**; ***Then Laban said to Ya'aqob, "Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for naught? Let me know, what should your wages be?"*** It's obvious from the text that already Ya'aqob was serving Laban and things were already going well for him. Then in **verses 16-31**; ***And Laban had two daughters, the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rahel. And Leah's eyes were weak, but Rahel was lovely of form and appearance. And Ya'aqob loved Rahel, so he said, "Let me serve you seven years for Rahel your younger daughter." And Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me." So Ya'aqob served seven years for Rahel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her. Then Ya'aqob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my days are completed, and let me go in to her." And Laban gathered all the men of the place and made a feast. And it came to be in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter and brought her to Ya'aqob. And he went in to her. And Laban gave his female servant Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a female servant. And in the morning it came to be, that see, it was Leah. So he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rahel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?" And Laban said, "It is not done this way in our place, to give the younger before the first-born. Complete the week of this one, then we give you this one too, for the service which you shall serve with me still another seven years." And Ya'aqob did so and completed her week. Then he gave him his daughter Rahel too, as wife. And Laban gave his female servant Bilhah to his daughter Rahel as a female servant. And he also went in to Rahel, and he also loved Rahel more than Leah. And he served with Laban still another seven years. And YHVH saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rahel was barren.***

Torah tells us here that Laban had two daughters, Leah the eldest and Rachel the youngest. Leah's name means "**weary**" or "**grieving**". Now the popular English translations say that Leah's eyes were weak. However, the Hebrew words here are "**rak**" (**tender**) and "**Ayin**" (**eye**), as in "**tender-hearted**". An interesting side note here is that the rabbis interpret her name as an abbreviation of "**M'Leah**", which means "**full**". Now Leah is spelled "**Lamed-aleph-hey**". **Lamed** means to "**learn**" or "**teach**", **aleph** is the "**ox**", meaning "**strength**" or "**master**" and **hey** means "**to behold**" or "**revelation**". This adds great depth to her name; Leah's name relates to "**being taught the Master's revelation**". It's interesting that if you add "**Mem**" (as in M'Leah) or **water**, symbolizing the **Word**, to one who is weary, or grieving, they become full. Also, the numeric value of her name is 36 which equals the phrases "**in His hands**" and "**with His power**". Leah is a name worthy of a Matriarch, as she would give birth to six of Ya'aqob's 12 sons (*Reuben, Shimon, Levi, Yehudah, Yissakar and Zebulun*) and to *Dinah*, their daughter.

Now, the name Rachel means "**ewe**" or "**sheep**". Torah tells us that she was "**yapheh to'ar**" or "**beautiful of form**" or **shape** and that she was "**yapheh mar'eh**" or "**as beautiful as a vision**". We're told that Ya'aqob loved her. The word is "**ahav**" and it means "**to love**", "**desire**" and the Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon says to "**breathe after**". Now that's intense. The rabbis teach that Leah

was not “**hated**” by Ya’aqob. It’s just that his love and passion for Rachel was so intense that she felt hated. The Hebrew word used here is a form of the word “**sane**” which implies “**unloved**” as in not loved as much as another. Also, Rachel is spelled “*Reish-chet-lamed*”. *Reish* means “**head**” or “**beginning**”. *Chet* means “**fear of HaShem**” or “**fear of Heaven**” and also “**life**”. And *lamed* is the “**shepherd’s staff**” and means to “**learn**” or “**teach**”. So, Rachel’s name would mean “*the beginning of fear (life) is learning (knowledge or wisdom)*”. As **Tehillim / Psalms 111:10a** says; “**The fear of YHVH is the beginning of wisdom,....**” and **Mishle (Proverbs) 1:7** says; “**The fear of YHVH is the beginning of knowledge; a Fools despise wisdom and discipline.**” It’s no coincidence that Rachel, *the sheep*, was the mother of *Yoseph*, as well as *Benjamin*. Her name’s numeric value is 238 which equals “**and He blessed**”, “**and multiply you**”, “**first-fruits**” and “**and will bless**”. These are the words that Ya’aqob would later use to bless Ephraim and Manasheh, Yoseph’s sons.

Many people wonder how Leah could have been substituted for Rachel on the wedding night and Ya’aqob not have noticed. It’s not likely that Ya’aqob would have been ignorant of the custom of the eldest having to be married first, as Laban was a relative that shared the same roots as Avraham, Yitzaq and Ya’aqob. Perhaps, when Rachel was promised to Ya’aqob seven years earlier, it was expected that Leah would have been married by the time this promise was to be fulfilled. By the night of the wedding, whatever was about to happen would certainly have required Rachel’s co-operation. [Chana Weisberg](#) writes, “*In Leah’s hour of need, Rachel performed the greatest act of self-sacrifice by relinquishing her own destined husband in order to spare Leah degradation. As her swindling father veils Leah, replacing Rachel as Jacob’s bride, Rachel not only remains silent, but aids her sister with the deception.*” And, while there is much commentary written about this wedding; Rabbi Joseph Hertz, in the Hertz Chumash, comments that on the similarities and connection between Leah being substituted for Rachel and how Ya’aqob was substituted for Esau in order to receive Yitzaq’s blessing. The sages also have suggested that Leah may have been the bride intended for Esau. But, upon his rejection of the birthright, Ya’aqob was destined to make tikkun (repair) by having to marry Esau’s intended, along with his soul-mate Rachel, as both women were to be the mothers of the nation Yisra’el.

Now, while we’re remembering our matriarchs, let’s not forget two other “*Moms*” that are very important to Kol Yisra’el. In fact, Rashi and numerous other Jewish sages taught that these two women were also daughters of Laban. First, there’s **Zilpah**, whose name literally means to “**trickle as myrrh**” a way of gently adding a strong spice, a little at a time. **Zilpah** is spelled “*Zayin-lamed-pey-hey*”. The numeric value of her name is 122 which equals “**and they shall flee**”, “**in its appointed season**”, “**and they went up**” and “**He will make wonderful**”. Zilpah bore Ya’aqob two sons, *Gad* and *Asher*.

Finally, we have **Bilhah**. Her name means “**troubled**” or “**to trouble**”. Bilhah is spelled “*Beit-lamed-hey-hey*”. The numeric value of Bilhah’s name is 42 which equals “**Eloah**”, “**My esteem**” and “**in his heart**”. She bore two sons to Ya’acob; *Dan* and *Naphtali*.

Now, **B’reshith / Genesis 30** deals with the bearing of Ya’aqob’s children; all except Benjamin, as he would be born a little later. Here’s a brief look at their names:

**Re’uven** - Behold, a son (named this as a reminder of the firstborn son).

**Shimon** – Hearing (named this because HaShem heard the prayer for another son).

**Levi** – Joining of the Heart (named because Leah thought this child would join her and Ya’aqob).

**Yehudah** – Praise (named this as the family praised Yah for another boy).

**Dan** – Judge (named this as HaShem judged in Rachel's favor and gave her a child).

**Naphtali** - Wrestling (named this as a symbol of the wrestling between Rahel and Leah for Ya'aqob's favor and love).

**Gad** – Fortune (named as a testimony to good fortune, or blessing, found by Zilpah, Leah's handmaid).

**Asher** – Happy (named this because this child would bring much happiness to Leah).

**Yissakar** – Hire or Reward (named this as a testimony that HaShem had rewarded Leah for giving her handmaid to Ya'aqob to have relations with).

**Zebulun** – Living Together (named this as hope that this son would cause Leah and Ya'aqob to live together).

**Dinah** – Judgment (the 7<sup>th</sup> child of Leah).

**Yoseph** - May He Add (named this as a prayer to HaShem, "*Elohim has taken away my reproach*" and that another son would be added to Rachel).

**Binyamin** – Son of the Right-hand (named this by Ya'aqob at the death of Rachel [the curse of Gen. 31:32 fulfilled in Gen. 35:16-17]).

After serving two, seven year periods for his wives, Ya'aqob agrees to work six more years for his wages, or flocks. Rabbi Avraham Greenbaum, in his teaching referenced below, points out that Ya'aqob's main work, and that of his wives, is "**breeding**". They breed children and flocks. And, HaShem blessed Ya'aqob beyond measure in all his work. Let's continue with **B'reshith / Genesis 30:25:43**; ***And it came to be, when Rahel had borne Yoseph, that Ya'aqob said to Laban, "Send me on my way, to go to my own place and to my land. Give my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go, for you yourself know my service which I have done for you." And Laban said to him, "If I have found favor in your eyes, please stay, for I have diligently watched that YHVH has blessed me for your sake." And he said, "Name me your wages, and I give it." So he said to him, "You know how I have served you and how your livestock has been with me. For the little you had before I came has increased greatly, and YHVH has blessed you since my coming. But now, when am I to provide for my own house too?" And he said, "What do I give you?" And Ya'aqob said, "Give me naught! If you do this for me, I shall again feed and guard your flocks. Let me pass through all your flock today, removing from there all the speckled and spotted sheep, and all the black ones among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the goats. And these shall be my wages. And my righteousness shall answer for me in time to come, when you come concerning my wages: every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and black among the lambs, it is stolen if it is with me." And Laban said, "See, let it be according to your word!" And on that day he set aside the male goats that were speckled and spotted, and all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had some white in it, and all the black ones among the lambs, and gave them into the hand of his sons. And he put three days' journey between himself and Ya'aqob, and Ya'aqob fed the rest of Laban's flocks. And Ya'aqob took for himself rods of green poplar and of the almond and chestnut trees, peeled white strips in them, and exposed the white which was in the rods. And he set the rods which he had peeled before the flocks in the gutters, in the watering troughs where***

*the flocks came to drink, and they conceived when they came to drink. So the flocks conceived before the rods, and the flocks brought forth streaked, speckled, and spotted. And Ya'aqob separated the lambs, and made the flocks face toward the streaked and all the black in the flock of Laban, but he put his own flocks by themselves and did not put them with Laban's flock. And it came to be, whenever the strong ones of the flock conceived, that Ya'aqob placed the rods before the eyes of the flock in the gutters, so they would conceive among the rods. But when the flocks were weak, he did not put them in, so the weak ones were Laban's and the strong ones Ya'aqob's. Thus the man increased very much, and had many flocks, and female and male servants, and camels and donkeys.*

So, first a deal is struck for Ya'aqob's wages. He is to receive any speckled, spotted and black sheep, as well as any speckled or spotted goats that are born among Laban's herd. Laban must have been excited at this "**deal**". He was more than willing to pay Ya'aqob with the rarest of sheep and goats, as these types of offspring are very rare, except in specific breeds. How could Laban lose?

Now, there is confusion regarding the verses that follow among some. All the striped rods or poles. What was Ya'aqob up to? More deceit? Well, not really. There are many explanations about what he was up to. But, whatever it was, the answer behind it is in the verses that follow. We read in **B'reshith / Genesis 31:1-13; And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, "Ya'aqob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what belonged to our father he has made all this wealth." And Ya'aqob would look at the face of Laban and see that it was not toward him as before. And YHVH said to Ya'aqob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives. And I am with you." And Ya'aqob sent and called Rahel and Leah to the field, to his flock, and said to them, "I see your father's face, that it is not toward me as before, but the Elohim of my father has been with me. And you know that I have served your father with all my strength. Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but Elohim did not allow him to do evil to me. When he said this, 'The speckled are your wages,' then all the flocks bore speckled. And when he said this, 'The streaked are your wages,' then all the flocks bore streaked. So Elohim has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me. And it came to be, at the time when the flocks conceived, that I lifted my eyes and looked in a dream and saw the rams which leaped upon the flocks were streaked, speckled, and mottled. And the messenger of Elohim spoke to me in a dream, saying, 'Ya'aqob.' And I said, 'Here I am.' And He said, 'Lift your eyes now and see, all the rams which leap on the flocks are streaked, speckled, and mottled, for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. I am the El of Beyth El, where you anointed the standing column and where you made a vow to Me. Now rise up, get out of this land, and return to the land of your relatives.'** "

As Ya'aqob explains the situation to Leah and Rachel, he tells them that it was the messenger of HaShem that showed him what would happen, and no doubt what to do, as he dreamed. HaShem circumvents Laban to bless Ya'aqob and calls him to go home with his wives and children. There's that circumventing thing again.

Ya'aqob does not tell Laban that he is leaving, causing one more confrontation between them. However, HaShem visits Laban ahead of their meeting and warns him not to do harm or speak either evil or good to Ya'aqob. So, Laban and Ya'aqob make a treaty and set a boundary between them.

I want to close today with some of what Rabbi Avraham Greenbaum taught this week in his series "[Torah for the Nations – Vayeitzei](#)". He writes, "*The building of Jacob's House could be*

*accomplished only through struggles of many kinds -- for truth, Jacob's quality, is born out of struggle on all levels, material and spiritual. In order to build his House, Jacob had to struggle with two major antagonists: Esau and Laban. Esau embodies the threat to the Holy House from the forces of excess and evil in the material world, ASIYAH. The encounter with Esau is a central theme in next week's parsha: VAYISHLACH. In this week's parsha of VAYEITZEI, the focus is on Jacob's encounter with Laban, whose threat to the Holy House is from the forces of excess in the spiritual worlds. Thus while Esau is portrayed as a HUNTER-WARRIOR, Laban is portrayed as a PRIEST (Rashi on Gen. 24:21, Gen. 31:30ff)".*

*He continues, "To build his House, Jacob had to rescue the sparks of holiness that were still to be found in the land of the Sons of the East (Gen. 29:19), literally the 'Sons of OLD'. These sparks of holiness were embodied in Rachel and Leah and their handmaidens, who were to mother the Souls of Israel. In order to rescue them, Jacob had to struggle with Laban, the High Priest of the "Old World", the unrectified World of TOHU (confusion) created by G-d to spawn the realm of evil with which man has to struggle in order to attain his destiny... Laban is the arch swindler and deceiver, symbolizing the force in creation that conceals G-dliness through our quirks of false-consciousness that make evil seem like good and good seem like evil".*

Let Ya'aqob's deeds indeed be signposts to us, his children. His legacy is our promise. As his exile was temporary, ours will come to an end also. The Zohar describes Ya'aqob as the "*chosen one of the Patriarchs*". Avraham and Yitzaq both had sons (Yishma'el and Esau) who walked contrary to their fathers' faith. Ya'aqob's holiness encompassed all of his children. *If we will keep HaShem's commands, we will be fed with the inheritance of Ya'aqob.*

***Baruch HaShem & Shabbat Shalom!***