

Parsha Q&A



Parshas Vayitze

For the week ending 9 Kislev 5759
27 & 28 November 1998

Parsha Questions

1. When Yaakov traveled to Charan, the Torah stresses that he departed from Be'er Sheva. Why?
2. On the night of his dream, Yaakov did something he hadn't done in 14 years. What?
3. In his dream, Yaakov saw angels going up and down. What were the missions of these angels?
4. Hashem compressed the entire land of Israel underneath the sleeping Yaakov. What did this symbolize?
5. Why did Yaakov rebuke the shepherds?
6. Why was Rachel tending her father's sheep; that is, why didn't her brothers tend the sheep as was customary in those days?
7. Why did Yaakov cry when he met Rachel?
8. Who was Elifaz, and why didn't he kill Yaakov when he had the chance?
9. Why did Lavan run to greet Yaakov?
10. Why were Leah's eyes tender?
11. How old was Yaakov when he married Leah and Rachel?
12. Why did Rachel envy Leah?
13. Who was Yaakov's fifth son?
14. How do you say "dudaim" in Arabic?
15. "Hashem remembered Rachel" (30:22). What did He remember?
16. What does "Yosef" mean? Why was he named that?
17. How many times did Lavan change Yaakov's wages?
18. Where are there two Aramaic words in this week's Parsha?
19. Who was Bilhah's father? Who was Zilpah's father?
20. Who escorted Yaakov into Eretz Yisrael?

Sherlox Holmes and the Mystery of Reuven

"Little Falswell will have an inferiority complex when he grows up," said world famous detective Sherlox Holmes.

"How do you figure?" asked Watstein.

"His mother constantly compares him to her other children. Comparing siblings always causes problems."

"Speaking of problems with mothers and children," said Watstein, "Help me with this problematic text concerning Leah and her son Reuven: 'And she called him Reuven, for she said: G-d has seen my affliction...' " (Bereishis 29:32).

"What's problematic?" asked Sherlox.

"Rashi's comment. According to Rashi, Reuven stands for 'reu ben' — 'look at the difference;' with this name, Leah prophetically declared: 'Look at the difference between my righteous first born, Reuven, and Yitzchak's evil firstborn, Esav.' "

"Do you deny Leah her natural right as a mother to brag about her children?"

"No. But I deny the right of anyone to say that Rashi quotes a midrash for no reason! The verse itself clearly gives a reason for Reuven's name! Why, then, does Rashi bring a midrashic reason for no apparent reason?"

"Comparing siblings always causes problems," said Sherlox.

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Answer

“Compare Reuven’s naming to that of his brothers,” said Sherlock. “Notice anything?”

“Hmm,” said Watstein, thumbing through the text. “Now that you mention it, I notice an oddity regarding the order of the naming.”

“Continue,” said Sherlock.

“At the birth of Yaakov’s other sons, the reason for the name is stated first. Then the name is stated: ‘This time I will praise (odeh) G-d, therefore she called him Yehuda,’ or ‘G-d has judged me (dan-ani)...therefore she called him Dan.’ ” (Bereishis 29:35 30:5) Reuven is the one exception!”

“Exactly,” said Sherlock. “Regarding Reuven the order is reversed: Leah first names him — ‘and she called him Reuven’ — and only as an “afterthought” does she give a reason — ‘for G-d has seen my affliction....’ Thus the text indicates that her decision to name him Reuven preceded the stated reason. She must have had another, unstated reason.”

“I see,” said Watstein. “By reversing the order, the text hints that the name Reuven came first and that the stated reason was secondary. Leah would have named him Reuven regardless of the stated reason, because she had another reason not stated in the text. Rashi answers the question: What was her other reason?”

“Spoken with reason,” said Sherlock.

(Source: *Haemek Dava; Sherlock*” is by Reuven Subar, inspired by Dr. Avigdor Bonchek’s “What’s Bothering Rashi”)

I Did Not Know That!

And Lavan gathered all the people of the place and made a feast (lit. drinking repast). (Bereishis 29:22)

Lavan wanted Yaakov to get intoxicated so that he could more easily fool him into marrying Leah. That’s why he made a festive meal which included alcoholic beverages. But when Yaakov married Rachel, Lavan made no feast at all.

Da’as Zekeinim Miba’alei Hatsofot

Recommended Reading List

Ramban

28:12	Yaakov’s Dream
29:2	Three Flocks
30:2	Yaakov’s Anger
31:19	The <i>Terafim</i>

Sforno

28:12-13	Yaakov’s Dream
29:6	A Proper Guest
29:11	Why Yaakov Cried
31:32	Yaakov’s Curse
32:1	A Father’s Blessing

Answers to this Week’s Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 28:10 - The departure of a righteous person leaves a noticeable void in that place.
2. 28:11 - Sleep at night lying down.
3. 28:12 - The ascending angels accompanied Yaakov in *Eretz Canaan*. The descending angels accompanied Yaakov outside of the Land.
4. 28:13 - That the Land would be easy for his descendants to conquer.
5. 29:7 - He thought they were loafing, stopping work early in the day.
6. 30:27 - Her brothers weren’t born yet.
7. 29:11 - He saw prophetically that they would not be buried together; or because he was penniless.
8. 29:11 - Elifaz was Esav’s son who chased Yaakov in order to kill him. But because Elifaz had grown up under the tutelage of Yitzchak, he relented.
9. 29:13 - He thought Yaakov was carrying money.
10. 29:17 - She cried continually because she thought she was destined to marry Esav.
11. 29:21 - Eighty-four.
12. 30:1 - She envied her *mitzvos*, thinking they were the reason Leah merited having children.
13. 30:5 - Dan.
14. 30:14 - Jasmine (*Yasmin*).
15. 30:22 - That Rachel gave Leah the “signs of recognition” that Yaakov had taught her, so that Leah wouldn’t be embarrassed.
16. 30:24 - “Yosef” means “He will add.” Rachel prayed to Hashem for another son, in addition to Yosef.
17. 31:7 - One hundred times.
18. 31:41 - *Yagar Sahadusa*, meaning “wall of testimony.”
19. 31:50 - Lavan.
20. 32:1 - The angels of *Eretz Yisrael*.