



# Parshas Vayitzei

For the week ending 12 Kislev 5757  
22 & 23 November 1996

This issue is dedicated in memory of Edward Koppel - Yisrael Isser ben Alexander Koppel (12th Kislev 5729)  
by his daughter Cheryl Steinberg and grandchildren Elana Miriam and Yisrael Isser

## Overview

**F**leeing from Eisav, Yaakov leaves Be'er Sheva and sets out towards Haran, the home of his mother's family. After a fourteen year stopover in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever, he resumes his journey and comes to Mount Moriah, the place where his father Yitzchak was brought as an offering, and the future site of the *Beis Hamikdash*. He lays down to sleep and has a prophetic dream of angels ascending and descending on a ladder between heaven and earth. Hashem promises him the Land of Israel, that he will father a great nation and he will be guarded by Divine protection everywhere. Yaakov awakes and vows to build an altar there and tithe all that he will receive. Then he travels to Haran and meets his cousin Rachel at the well. He arranges with her father, Lavan, to work seven years for her hand in marriage, but Lavan deceives Yaakov, and substitutes Rachel's elder sister, Leah. Yaakov then commits himself to work another seven years in order to also marry Rachel. Leah bears him four sons — Reuven, Shimon, Levi and Yehuda — the first Tribes of Israel. Rachel is jealous that she cannot conceive, and gives her handmaiden Bilhah to Yaakov. Bilhah bears Dan and Naftali. Leah also gives Yaakov her handmaiden Zilpah, who bears Gad and Asher. Leah now gives birth to Yissachar, Zevulun, and a daughter, Dina. Hashem finally blesses Rachel with a son, Yosef. Yaakov decides to leave Lavan, but Lavan, aware of how much wealth Yaakov has made for him, is reluctant to let him go, and concludes a contract of employment with him. Lavan tries again to swindle Yaakov, but is unsuccessful, and Yaakov becomes extremely wealthy. Twenty years later, Yaakov, aware that Lavan has become resentful of his wealth, takes advantage of his father-in-law's temporary absence, and flees with his family. Lavan pursues them but is warned by Hashem not to harm them. A covenant is agreed upon by Yaakov and Lavan, and Lavan returns home. Yaakov continues on his way to face his brother Eisav.

## Insights

### WHAT'S IN A NAME

**“She conceived and bore a son and declared ‘This time let me gratefully praise Hashem,’ therefore she called his name Yehuda....” (29:35)**

When someone does something good to you, how many times do you say ‘Thank you’?

Once? Twice? Maybe three times? How about whenever you see them? How about for the rest of your life? *How about for all eternity?*

The Talmud tells us that from the day that Hashem created the universe, no-one gave thanks to Him until Leah thanked Him for her fourth child. (Rabbi Yochanan in the name of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai — *Berachos 7b*)

**How could it possibly be that before Leah no one had ever thanked Hashem?**

Were Avraham, Sarah, Yitzchak, Rivka and Yaakov all ingrates?

Also, why did Leah herself wait until her fourth child to thank Hashem? Weren't three children enough of a blessing?

The answer is that Leah knew through prophetic insight that there were destined to be 12 tribes of Israel. Since Yaakov had four wives, when Leah bore her *fourth* child she realized that Hashem had given her more than her fair share. ( *Rashi* )

It was this realization that she had been given more than she deserved that awoke in Leah the recognition that she really didn't 'deserve' any of her children; **that everything in life is a gigantic gift from the Master of the Universe.**

It wasn't that no-one had thanked Hashem *at all* until Leah, rather no one had thanked Him as Leah did.

With this fourth child, Leah wanted to say 'Thank you' to Hashem in a unique and wonderful way. She called the baby 'Yehuda,' which comes from the root 'to thank.' So that throughout all the generations till the end of time, whenever anyone would call their son Yehuda, they would be perpetuating the praise and the gratitude that Leah felt for Hashem when she named her son ' Yehuda.'

*Adapted from Mizmor Lesodah by Rabbi Daniel Travis*

### STONE TALK

**“And he took from the stones of the place, and he placed them around his head, and he lay down in that place.” (28:11)**

The Midrash tells us that the twelve stones all wanted the merit of being *the* stone on which the great *tzaddik*, Yaakov, would lay his head.

A few verses later the Torah talks of *one* stone, implying that the stones had subsequently all become one. What is the significance of the stones being transformed into one?

The twelve stones represent the twelve tribes of Israel. The argument between the stones was about which tribe was the essence of the Jewish People.

Was it Levi and his descendants of the priesthood who performed the service in the Holy Temple? Or was it Yissachar who would learn Torah? Or was it Zevulun who through his business acumen would support Yissachar so that he could concentrate on Torah study?

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Each of the stones claimed that *it* was the essence of the Jewish People, until Hashem took them all and made them into one. For no one part of the Jewish People is its essence. Rather, the essence of Israel is unity, for only in unity can it fulfill its purpose, which is to reflect the Oneness of the Creator who Unites everything into One.

(Heard from Rabbi Calev Gestetner)

### ULTIMATE NAME-DROPPING

**“It is in my power to do you all harm; but the G-d of your father addressed me last night, saying, ‘Beware of speaking with Yaakov either good or bad.’” (31:29)**

If Lavan was trying to frighten Yaakov by telling him “*It is in my power to do you all harm...*,” why does he then destroy his credibility by admitting that Hashem told him to “*Beware of speaking with Yaakov either good or bad?*” Such is the way of those who lust for status in the eyes of others.

They are quite prepared to trip themselves up just to ‘drop’ an important name. And Lavan could not resist the ultimate name-dropping — telling Yaakov that Hashem had spoken to him — even though it would completely emasculate his threats.

(Heard from Rabbi Mordechai Perlman)

## Haftorah: Hoshea 11:7 - 14:10

### HEALTH FOOD

**“For the ways of Hashem are just — the righteous will walk in them, but the evil will stumble on them.” (14:10)**

There was once an outstandingly generous man who stinted neither money nor effort in welcoming guests into his home. Once, he made a large banquet for anyone who wanted to come, and laid on the most sumptuous and expensive foods.

One of the guests had a fragile constitution. Nevertheless, he set about gorging himself on all the delights. Not surprisingly, the result was that he became seriously ill.

The man was furious with the host, accusing him of ruining people’s health.

The host replied “*Please ask the other guests if the food has upset their health. Unfortunately, your health is frail. That’s why the food upset you. This banquet was provided only for people who are healthy.*”

The spiritually blind say that Hashem hates people, weighing them down with the burdensome yoke of *mitzvos*; that He creates only obstacles to a life of freedom.

What a colossal mistake! The *tzaddik* not only sees himself as enriched and ennobled by keeping *mitzvos*, but *he derives his very sustenance and life-force from them.*

That is what the prophet is telling us here: “*The ways of Hashem are just*” and “*the righteous will walk in them,*” — i.e., the righteous will

### THE DAYS OF OUR LIVES

**“So Yaakov worked seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him a few days because of his love for her.” (29:20)**

A man enters a restaurant and asks the waiter “*What’s good today?*” When the waiter replies “*The fish is excellent!*” the man smiles and says “*Great! I love fish!*” Really all this man is saying is that *he loves himself*, because if he really loved fish he would be walking up and down outside the restaurant with a placard saying “*THIS RESTAURANT MURDERS FISH!*”

Every worldly love, whether a love for an object or a person, every conventional love, is not a pure love of the one who loves for the object of his affections, but rather the reverse — *the lover loves himself.* The object of his affections is merely the means to his own self-gratification.

When love consists of taking, of self-gratifying, then, necessarily, every hour without the love-object is endless craving.

However in a love which is giving, the fulfillment of the love starts when the giving starts. “*Yaakov worked seven years for Rachel.*” From the moment Yaakov started working he was giving to Rachel — and thus “...they (the years) seemed to him a few days because of his love for her.”

The “True Life Romance” hero protests to his ‘beloved’ — “*Darling, every minute since I saw you last has been an eternity! The minutes have been like years, the hours like centuries...*” How different is soap-opera sentiment from the *timeless* love of Yaakov for Rachel!

A ‘love’ which takes, expands time, but a *giving* love compresses it.

(Adapted from Rabbi Eliya Lopian)

thrive on them. But for those who view the ways of Hashem as a heavy burden “*the evil will stumble on them*” — the spiritually blind see *mitzvos* as nothing more than a killjoy.

The radiance of the *tzaddikim*, however, testifies to the quality of the ‘diet.’

(Kochav m’Yaakov in Mayana shel Torah)

### A FRIEND IN HIGH PLACES

**“You corrupted yourself, Israel, for your help is only through Me.” (13:9)**

A great king once asked one of the sages of Israel why it was, that at the time of the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, so many thousand of Jews were slain.

The sage replied that the Jewish People had always trusted that Hashem would save them, and He had always protected them. They had never concerned themselves with the strategies of war: rather they had always poured out their hearts in prayer and offerings.

Therefore, when the Jewish People sinned and consequently lost Hashem’s protection, they were bereft of any defense at all. They fell before their enemies like the standing crop before the scythe, like lambs abandoned by their shepherd, torn by the teeth of wolves.

The Jewish People are the lamb amongst the 70 wolves. The lamb is not protected by F-16s or the military might of any world-power — however broad its shoulders may be. The Jewish People have only one Friend. But He is the only Friend we need.

(Based on Ahavas Yehonason in Mayana shel Torah)



INSIGHTS INTO THE ZEMIROS  
SUNG AT THE SHABBOS TABLE  
THROUGHOUT THE GENERATIONS.

MAH YEDIDUS - םשש ןח  
“HOW BELOVED...”

A semblance of the World to Come  
the Shabbos day of rest

מעין עולם הבא  
יום שבת מנוחה

May'ain olam haba  
yom Shabbos menucha

The word *may'ain* (מעין) as we pronounce it in this song is understood as “a taste of” and refers to the Shabbos experience as a microcosm of the ultimate joy of the World to Come.

The very same letters, however, from the word “*ma'ayan*” which means a spring. this communicates the concept of our earthly Shabbos connected to the World to Come from which, like a spring, flows an experience of eternal joy.

Both interpretations are complementary. We receive a taste of the World to Come on Shabbos because we actually plug into the spiritual spring flowing from it.

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