



Parshat Vayeitze

For the week ending 11 Kislev 5760
19 & 20 November 1999

Overview

Fleeing from Esav, Yaakov leaves Be'er Sheva and sets out for Charan, the home of his mother's family. After a 14 year stint in the Academy 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 Beit Hamikdash. He sleeps there and dreams of angels going up and down a ladder between Heaven and earth. Hashem promises him the Land of Israel, that he will found a great nation and that he will enjoy Divine protection. Yaakov wakes and vows to build an altar there and tithe all that he will receive. Then he travels to Charan 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 fools Yaakov, substituting Rachel's older sister, Leah. Yaakov commits himself to work another seven years in order to also marry Rachel. Leah bears four sons — Reuven, Shimon, Levi and Yehuda — the first Tribes of Israel. Rachel is barren, and in an attempt to give Yaakov children, she gives her handmaiden Bilhah to Yaakov as a wife. Bilhah bears Dan and Naftali. Leah also gives Yaakov her handmaiden Zilpah, who bears Gad and Asher. Leah then bears Yissachar, Zevulun, and a daughter, Dina. Hashem finally blesses Rachel with a son, Yosef. Yaakov decides to leave Lavan, but Lavan, aware of the wealth Yaakov has made for him, is reluctant to let him go, and concludes a contract of employment with him. Lavan tries unsuccessfully to swindle Yaakov, but Yaakov becomes extremely wealthy. Six years later, Yaakov, aware that Lavan has become resentful of his wealth, flees with his family. Lavan pursues them but is warned by Hashem not to harm them. Yaakov and Lavan agree to a covenant and Lavan returns home. Yaakov continues on his way to face his brother Esav.

Insights

IT'S ALL FOR THE BEST!

“And it was in the morning, that behold it was Leah!” (29:25)

The king was unhappy with his Prime Minister. Every time there was a problem in the country, whether it was a minor hiccup or a major disaster, the Prime Minister would say, “It’s all for the best!” The king would cringe before the Prime Minister’s irrepressible optimism, and scowl. One day things came to a head. The king was out hunting. An ill-aimed sword wielded by one of his courtiers sliced off the king’s little finger. As the king shrieked and howled in pain, the Prime Minister chirped, “It’s all for the best!” The king was livid. “Take him and throw him in the dungeons!” ordered the king. “I can’t stand his infernal cheerfulness one moment longer!”

The days past, and the months too. The Prime Minister languished in jail for a year. And then two. It looked like he would finish up his days with nothing to console him save his irrepressible optimism.

It just so happened that one day the king went out on a hunting party with his court. Unbeknownst to them, a dangerous tribe of pigmy cannibals had invaded the king’s northern border — exactly where the hunting party found themselves. It was all over in a few seconds. The trap sprung and the entire hunting party was trussed up in a gigantic net that the pygmies had strung across the forest path. One by one they were extracted from the net and interred in the pygmy stockade. The following morning they were all destined to be a five-star pygmy cannibal breakfast.

Day broke, and one by one the luckless courtiers were led to the pot. The pygmies, of course, saved the greatest delicacy for desert. Finally it was the turn of the king. They led him from the stockade out into the unforgiving glare of the morning sun. They tied his legs together. Just when they were about to tie his hands

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together, one of the pygmies let out a squeal of alarm. The king had no pinkie. Where his little finger was supposed to be was...nothing. Now, everyone knows that in *hilchot* Pygmy, only a perfect and whole human maybe eaten. Someone who has even the slightest physical blemish is invalid.

Unceremoniously, the pygmies sent the king back to his palace. He immediately rushed to the prison and ordered the release of the prime minister. Telling him of his miraculous escape, the king begged forgiveness from his prime minister. But all the prime minister would say was "It's all for the best!" The king looked at the prime minister with great remorse and said, "I just took away two years of your life — how can you say it's all for the best?!" "If I hadn't been in prison," replied the prime minister, "I'd have been out hunting with you!"

When Rachel saw her sister Leah standing under the wedding canopy with Yaakov, her intended husband, she must have felt like her life was coming to an end. And yet she was silent. She must have thought that Yaakov would never marry her, after her betrayal of his confidence. He would probably resign himself to marriage with Leah and accept it as Divine Providence.

Besides, it was highly unlikely that Yaakov would marry two sisters. And yet she was silent.

But Yaakov did marry her. And they had two children, Yosef and Binyamin.

Every stone in the *ephod* (breastplate) of the *kohen gadol* represented one of the tribes of Israel. The stone of Binyamin was called "*yashpneh*." These same Hebrew letters also spell "*yesh peh*." There is a mouth, a mouth closed in silence.

Esther was also from the tribe of Binyamin. She saved the Jewish People by silence. By not revealing her Jewishness to King Achashverosh, she was able to thwart Haman's plan of genocide.

Esther didn't get her power of silence from nowhere. It came from Rachel. When Rachel stood and watched the *chupah* of her sister in silence, she planted a power into her offspring which would eventually save the entire Jewish People.

"It's all for the best!"

Source:

It's All For The Best - Story heard from Rabbi Eliezer Shore

Haftarah: Hoshea 12:13 - 14:10

NO GLAMOUR

For a nation with a history rich with miracles, many Biblical events seem to lack one ingredient: Glamour. Where was the knight in shining armor in the episode of Yaakov's marriage? Yaakov was made to work 14 years in order to marry his chosen partner, Rachel.

Where was the mighty warrior in the story of the Exodus? Moshe, although the greatest prophet who ever lived, was far from being a mighty warrior or charismatic leader. It is to these humble beginnings that the prophet Hoshea refers the Jewish people. Sometimes we may have to work hard like Yaakov and other times we may witness miracles akin to those of the Exodus, but there are no guarantees of victory. Our leaders have not been given supernatural powers which can be used at our whim. If through our haughtiness we forget G-d and follow our desires, then our nation will become weak

enough to be driven away by the wind. However, the gates of repentance are always open no matter how far we have strayed. If we return to G-d completely then we will merit His special protection.

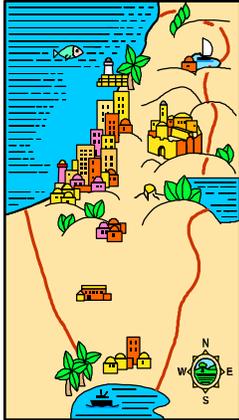
JUST DO IT?

"And now they sin more and make for themselves molten images...they slaughter men and kiss calves" (Hoshea 13:2)

Adam was placed above the animal kingdom when he was given free will, the ability to rise above animalistic instinct. When "just do it" becomes the byword of society, then humanity has lost its spiritual essence. This is what Hoshea tells Israel: "They slaughter men and kiss calves" — they have sacrificed their most noble human quality in their worship of animal instinct.

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael



HAR HAZEITIM - MOUNT OF OLIVES

This famous mountain, referred to in the Talmud as *Har Hamishcha* (Mount of Oil), was where the Red Heifer was slaughtered and burned so that its ashes could be used in purifying Jews who had become ritually impure through contact with the dead. Ironically, it is today most identified with the dead because its slope east of the Temple Mount contains the oldest Jewish cemetery in the world.

It is on this mountain where the Redeemer's feet shall stand, says the Prophet Zechariah (14:1-4) in his vision of the climactic battle which will take place at the end of days when all the nations gather to make war against Jerusalem, and "Har Hazeitim shall be split along the middle by a great valley running from east to west."