



Parshas Vayitzei 2022, close to G-d

This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna and Shaul Ben Berta.

This week's Parsha Perspective is dedicated in memory of my dear aunt, Lynne, Leah Mintche Bas Ya'akov Yosef. She returned her soul to her maker this past week. May her memory be a blessing for our family.

This week's Parsha Perspective is dedicated in memory of Yosef Ben Zev Wolf, whose Yahrzeit is tomorrow, the 8th of Kislev. May his neshama have an aliyah and his memory be a blessing for his family.

This week's Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

Our Parsha begins with Ya'akov fleeing Beer Sheva to escape Esav's anger and rage. On his way to Charan, he rested overnight on the future home of the Beis Hamikdash, Mt. Moriah. He dreamt of a ladder reaching the heavens with angels ascending and descending it.

G-d then appeared to Ya'akov and told him that He would give the land he was sleeping on to his children and guard him until he returned to Canaan. The following day, Ya'akov woke up, recognized this mountain's holiness, and named it **Beis E-l - the house of G-d**.

When Ya'akov arrived in Charan, he saw Rachel, Lavan's younger daughter, by the city well with her father's sheep. But, a large rock blocked access to the

well's opening. So Ya'akov single-handedly rolled off the massive stone that sat atop the well and gave water to the sheep.

Rachel ran home to her father and told him that his nephew had come to town, and Lavan went out to greet Ya'akov and invited him to stay in his house. Lavan also offered Ya'akov the job of tending to his cattle and asked him what he would like as payment. Ya'akov answered him that he wished to marry the youngest daughter, Rachel. Lavan replied that he must work seven years in exchange for her hand in marriage.

After seven years of work, Lavan arranged a wedding but switched his daughters, giving Leah instead of Rachel. Ya'akov realized what had happened the following day, but it was already too late, so he worked another seven years to marry Rachel.

Our Parsha has the births of eleven of the twelve children of Ya'akov; **Leah** gave birth to **Reuven, Shimon, Levi, Yeudah, Yssachar, and Zevulun. Zilpah**, Leah's maidservant, gave birth to **Gad and Asher**. Rachel gave birth to **Yosef**, and her maidservant **Bilhah** gave birth to **Dan and Naftali**.

I just returned from an amazing and uplifting trip to Israel, and this parsha perspective directly reflects my experience there!

A question comes to mind: The Kabbalah explains that Ya'akov's vision of the angels and the ladder was no small matter. In fact, it is one of our tradition's most revealing and expressive revelations and visions. We do not find a similar vision level to Avraham or Yitzchak. Why did G-d reveal Himself to Ya'akov so openly and directly?

The Daas Zkenim (*a commentary by a collection of rabbis from France and Germany in the 12th and 13th centuries*) gives an interesting explanation. They write that G-d revealed Himself in such an open manner because Ya'akov would fulfill G-d's promise to Avraham and Yitzchak.

Multiple times, G-d swore to Avraham and Yitzchak that their descendants would amount to the stars in the sky and the sand of the earth. Yet, that oath has not been fulfilled; both Avraham and Yitzchak only had one son who will continue their legacies. But G-d had a different plan for Ya'akov; he would have many sons and finally begin to fulfill G-d's promise.

However, the Rabbeinu Bachya (*Rav Bachya Ben Asher, a 14th-century commentary incorporating literal translations with mystical interpretations*) gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He writes that G-d appears to Ya'akov in a revealed manner to ease his transition and solidify his confidence.

The Rabbeinu Bachya explains that Avraham and Yitzchak sacrificed in their youth to justify G-d's openness with them. Avraham recognized that there must be a G-d at **just 3 years old** and challenged all those around him to believe in one G-d.

Yitzchak was the first to be circumcised at eight days old, purifying him from that moment on. But his main sacrifice was going willingly with his father to be a human offering to G-d at the Akidah.

But Ya'akov seemingly had no major acts of sacrifice, no great demonstrations of belief, no real reason for G-d to be candid and open with him. Yet, for that reason, G-d demonstrated and showed Ya'akov that He would be with him until he returned to Israel.

The Pasuk details his vision vividly (28:13 - 15), *"And behold, G-d was standing over him and said: I am the Lord, the G-d of Avraham and the G-d of Yitzchak. The the ground which you are lying on, I will give to you and your descendants. **Your descendants shall be like the dust of the earth and spread out to the west, east, north and south.** All the families of the world shall be blessed by you and your descendants. **Remember that I am with you. I will protect you wherever you go and bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised.**"*

The Kabbalah explains that as the angels were ascending and descending the ladder, there was a moment when it seemed that Ya'akov was alone. **But it cannot be further from the truth;** G-d was standing over and protecting Ya'akov as the angels got positioned.

The reason for G-d's candidness is to teach Ya'akov and all his future descendants that His relationship with them is not dependent on their actions. Although it can seem that G-d is distant from us, that is a far cry from reality.

If we just open our eyes, we will see His guiding hand dictating our every move. If we open our hearts, we will enter the loving embrace of our Creator, Maker, and Father in Heaven.

It may be difficult, but no action can prevent us from feeling G-d's love and desire. Everyone can experience this connection and enter the caring embrace and warmth of our Father in Heaven.

This profound and fundamental lesson is so relevant in our day and age. We live in a fast-paced society with an evolving culture experiencing the world on an individual scale.

This may lead and push us from recognizing G-d as our sole provider of life, meaning, and purpose. But that does not deter G-d from keeping His promise and fulfilling His pledge to Ya'akov, *"The the ground which you are lying on, I will give to you and your descendants. I will protect you wherever you go and bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised."*

"If you find yourself struggling with faith, you are in the company of Ya'akov who became Yisroel, the father in faith of us all."

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*