



Parshas Vayeitzei 2023, covenant of faith

The Parsha Perspective is in honor of our homeland, Eretz Yisroel. May G-d protect our brave soldiers as they eradicate our enemies. May G-d save all the hostages in Gaza from harm and return them immediately. May G-d comfort all those who lost family or friends in the horrific attack. May G-d grant a speedy recovery to all those injured in the attack.

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**.

However, a question comes to mind: The morning after G-d appeared and reminded Ya'akov that He would be with him throughout his journey, Ya'akov woke up and said he didn't know that G-d was there. The Pasuk writes (28:16), "Ya'akov woke up from his sleep and said, G-d is indeed present in this place, and I did not know it!" How did Ya'akov not realize that G-d was with him? What did G-d say or do that shocked Ya'akov and woke him up from his sleep?!

The Zohar on Parshas Vayeitzei explains that the vision Ya'akov had 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.

The Rabbeinu Bachya, Rav Bachya Ben Asher, writes that G-d appears to Ya'akov in such a revealed manner to ease his transition and solidify his confidence as he begins the next stage of his life.

The Rabbienu Bachya explains that Avraham and Yitzchak had acts of sacrifice 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 when he was born. 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 precise reason, G-d demonstrated and showed Ya'akov that He would be with him until he returned to the promised land.

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 Zohar 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 stood over and protected Ya'akov as the angels got positioned. The reason for G-d's candidness is to teach Ya'akov and his descendants that His relationship with them is not solely dependent on their actions.

Although it can seem that G-d is distant from us, that is a far cry from reality; if we 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 Father in Heaven. It may be difficult, but no action can prevent us from feeling G-d's love and desire. Every single person can experience this connection and feel the love and caring embrace of our G-d Almighty.

Unfortunately, this profound and fundamental lesson of faith and trust in G-d is so relevant today. Most of us are still reeling from the immense tragedy of Oct 7th, and our daily lives have been forever changed. Surprisingly, many have yet to recognize that G-d is the sole provider of life, meaning, happiness, and purpose. But G-d in His great mercy has and will continue to fulfill His promise to our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov, His covenant of connection, unity and redemption. **"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."**

"At the heart of Judaism is faith in freedom: Our faith in G-d's freedom, and G-d's faith in ours." -Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*