Class # 7 - **Parshat Vayeitzei: Be like Water, My Friend**

Advanced Fellowship Parsha Class - Sponsored in memory of Alice Toby Barbanel Z”l

Rabbi Pinny Rosenthal - prepared collaboratively with Rabbi Yoni Sacks

**Bruce Lee – Be like Water, my friend**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=APx2yFA0-B4>

1. How do you interpret Bruce Lee's "Be water"?
2. Why isn’t a person naturally like “water”?
3. Why is this a successful life strategy?

***Jacob's Journey, Marriage and Children***

28:10 Jacob left [Beer-sheba](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=1&CHAPTER=28#C536) and headed toward [Charan](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=1&CHAPTER=28#C537). 28:11 He came to a familiar place and spent the night there because the sun had already set. Taking some stones, he placed them at his head and lay down to sleep there. 28:12 He had a vision in a dream. A [ladder was standing on the ground, and its top reached up toward heaven](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=1&CHAPTER=28#C538). God's angels were going up and down on it. 28:13 Suddenly he saw God standing [over him](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=1&CHAPTER=28#C539).

[God] said, 'I am God, Lord of Abraham your father, and Lord of Isaac. I will give to you and your descendants the land upon which you are lying.

28:14 Your descendants will be like the [dust of the earth](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=1&CHAPTER=28#C540). You shall spread out to the west, to the east, to the north, and to the south. [All the families on earth will be blessed through you and your descendants](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=1&CHAPTER=28#C541). 28:15 I am with you. I will protect you wherever you go and bring you back to this soil. I will not turn aside from you until I have fully kept this promise to you.' 28:16 Jacob awoke from his sleep. 'God is truly in this place,' he said, 'but I did not know it.' 28:17 He was frightened. 'How awe-inspiring this place is!' he exclaimed. 'It must be God's temple. It is the gate to heaven!' 28:18 Jacob got up early in the morning and took the stone that he had placed under his head. He stood it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. 28:19 He named the place [God's Temple (*Beth El*)](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=1&CHAPTER=28#C542). The town's original name, however, had been [Luz](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=1&CHAPTER=28#C543). 28:20 Jacob made a vow. 'If God will be with me,' he said, 'if He will protect me on the journey that I am taking, if He gives me bread to eat and clothing to wear, 28:21 and if I return in peace to my father's house, then [I will dedicate myself totally to God](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=1&CHAPTER=28#C544). 28:22 Let this stone that I have set up as a pillar become a [temple to God](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=1&CHAPTER=28#C545). Of all that You give me, I will set aside a [tenth](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=1&CHAPTER=28#C546) to You.'

1. What was Yaakov’s state of mind as he is running to Charan?
2. What is amazing about that?

**Rambam, Laws of the Foundations of the Torah, Ch. 7:1**

It is [one] of the foundations of [our] faith that God conveys prophecy to man.

Prophecy is bestowed only upon a very wise sage of a strong character, who is never overcome by his natural inclinations in any regard. Instead, with his mind, he overcomes his natural inclinations at all times. He must [also] possess a very broad and accurate mental capacity.

A person who is full of all these qualities and is physically sound [is fit for prophecy]. When he enters the *Pardes* and is drawn into these great and sublime concepts, if he possesses a accurate mental capacity to comprehend and grasp [them], he will become holy. He will advance and separate himself from the masses who proceed in the darkness of the time. He must continue and diligently train himself not to have any thoughts whatsoever about fruitless things or the vanities and intrigues of the times.

Instead, his mind should constantly be directed upward, bound beneath [God's] throne [of Glory, striving] to comprehend the holy and pure forms and gazing at the wisdom of the Holy One, blessed be He, in its entirety, [in its manifold manifestations] from the most elevated [spiritual] form until the navel of the earth, appreciating His greatness from them. [After these preparations,] the divine spirit will immediately rest upon him.

When the spirit rests upon him, his soul becomes intermingled with the angels called *ishim,* and he will be transformed into a different person and will understand with a knowledge different from what it was previously. He will rise above the level of other wise men, as [the prophet, Samuel] told Saul [[I Samuel 10:6](http://www.chabad.org/15839#v6)]: "[The spirit of God will descend upon you] and you shall prophesy with them. And you will be transformed into a different person."…

Halacha 3

When a prophet is informed of a message in a vision, it is granted to him in metaphoric imagery. Immediately, the interpretation of the imagery is imprinted upon his heart, and he knows its meaning.

For example, the ladder with the angels ascending and descending envisioned by the patriarch, Jacob, was an allegory for the empires and their subjugation [of his descendants]. Similarly, the creatures Ezekiel saw, the boiling pot and the rod from an almond tree envisioned by Jeremiah, the scroll Ezekiel saw, and the measure seen by Zechariah [were all metaphoric images]. This is also true with regard to the other prophets. Some would relate the allegory and its explanation as these did. Others would relate only the explanation. At times, they would relate only the imagery without explaining it, as can be seen in some of the prophecies of Ezekiel and Zechariah. All of the prophecies come in the form of metaphoric imagery and allegories

1. After understanding the Rambam’s requirements for a person to receive a Prophecy – what makes Yaakov’s experience so unique?
2. How does the allegory for the empires and their subjugation [of his descendants] fit into the prophecy?

Radak’s comments

Since Yaakov was fleeing from his home, and no doubt his mental and spiritual equilibrium had been traumatized somewhat by recent events, God showed him these insights to not only repair the damage, but to provide him with knowledge he had not yet possessed previously. He promised to give him the land that he was presently running away from, and reassured him that it was well within the Supreme Power, the Lord, to accomplish all this when the time would be ripe. He reassured him that he, Yaakov, indeed was Yitzchok’s real descendant and that all the promises made to Avraham would bear fruition through him and his descendants.