



7 years of Points to Ponder on Parashas Vayetze

**וַיֵּצֵ֥א יַֽעֲקֹ֖ב מִבְּאֵ֣ר שָׁ֑בַע Yaakov left Beer Sheva (28:10) - Rashi** notes that the double language is based on the impression that a Tzaddik has and leaves on a community when he is there and leaves. **Kli Yakar** adds that the Tzaddik can only make an impression if the people left behind are able to detect the impact he leaves. **Beis HaLevi** adds that in most cases people travel FROM somewhere or travel TOWARD a destination. Yaakov was able to keep himself focused on both missions and was thus able to achieve them both.

**וַיֵּצֵ֥א יַֽעֲקֹ֖ב מִבְּאֵ֣ר שָׁ֑בַע And Yaakov left Be’er Sheva  (28:10**) – **Rashi**notes that when a Tzaddik leaves a place it leaves an impression**. Rav Yaakov Yitzchak Kalmanovitz ztl.** once recalled a comment made by the **Malbim** who, in context of fleeing from the Maskilim of the city he worked in, was asked how the departure of a Tzaddik didn’t make an impression on those people? He explained that in order for the departure of a Tzaddik to leave an impression, there must be those left behind who can be impressed. Hence, when Avraham left Ur Kasdim, there is no mention of any impression for no one was left behind to care. However, when Yaakov left, he left Rivka and Yitzchak and the impression was noticed.

 **וַיֵּצֵ֥א יַֽעֲקֹ֖ב מִבְּאֵ֣ר שָׁ֑בַע And Yaakov left Be’er Sheva and he came to Charan (28:10**) – Actually, Rashi notes that the trip was not direct. Rather Yaakov studied Torah in Yeshivas Shem V’Eiver for 14 years. **Rav Yaakov Kamenetzsky ztl.** explains that when one goes into exile , he needs to learn and prepare by studying Torah HaGalus and thus, Yaakov’s time spent there was well spent and part of the mission. What was so special about Shem V’Eiver’s Yeshiva that the one of Avraham and Yitzchak didn’t suffice (See Yoma 38b)? **Rav Yaakov Yosef of Polonoye ztl.**  suggested that Yeshivas Shem V’Eiver was a place where one learned that when the outside world was not in sync with one’s personal values and spiritual strivings, one created a distance to contemplate and plan the next move in order to be on the proper internal stance to confront the outside. Had Yaakov followed Avraham and Yitzchak, he would not have been prepared to know how to proceed when he was on his own (See Biblical People, Places and Things “Yeshivas Shem V’Eiver 2013).

**וַיֵּצֵ֥א יַֽעֲקֹ֖ב מִבְּאֵ֣ר שָׁ֑בַע And Yaakov left Beer Sheva and went to Charan (28:10)**– The commentaries debate why the Torah had to focus on both where Yaakov left from and where he was going. That is because people leave somewhere sometimes to get away from something and sometimes to get somewhere. In Yaakov’s case he was doing both. He was leaving his parent’s home to get away from Eisav but also in order ot go to Charan to find a wife. **The Steipler ztl.** adds that the same was true in the olden days when even one who left the Yeshiva to go to work was able to remain committed to Torah values.  Still, he needed to begin his life in Yeshiva to learn how to remain Torah true. Today, one needs to go to get a Yeshiva education even if he will not be a successful Lamdan merely to serve as a deterrent from the streets.

**וַיִּקַּח֙ מֵֽאַבְנֵ֣י הַמָּק֔וֹם And he took from the stones of the place (28:11) – Rav Mordechai Greenberg Shlita**explained that Yaakov used the stones as a test as to whether he was destined to raise the Shevatim. He added that often people assume that Shalom equals unity of thought. Nothing could be further from the truth. The multiplicity of thought clarifies the color of life and its complexities. The Ketores needs Chelbana and the Tefillah need Poshei Yisrael. Gefen too, gets its sweetness from the leaves and the protection that they provide. Both the leaves and the Pri daven for one another. The same needs to be true for us as well. We too, need to appreciate all the facets of the Jewish people. The stones fused together because they recognized the value of the other stones and made room for them under the head of the Tzaddik.

**וַיִּקַּח֙ מֵֽאַבְנֵ֣י הַמָּק֔וֹם  He took from the stones of the place (28:11) – Rashi**cites the famous Midrash about the stones fighting as to which one Yaakov should place his head.**Rav Zeidel Epstein ztl**. explained that Hashem does not like the Machlokes that depends on Alai. Hence, he put them together—wherein there was no personal ownership of the Tzaddik.

 **וְהִנֵּ֤ה סֻלָּם֙ מֻצָּ֣ב אַ֔רְצָה** **And he dreamed and behold there was a ladder (Sulam) on the ground and its head reached the heavens (28:12)-** **The Baal Haturim** notes that the Gematria of Sulam is also the Gematria of “Zeh Kisei HaKavod”, “Kol”, “Sinai”, “Mammon” and “Oni” What is the connection between these disparate words? **Rav Aharon Soloveitchik ztl.** explained that Yaakov tried to make a bridge between heaven and earth – between Torah and secular living. The Torah highlights that the ladder must be firmly on the ground but it must be directed Heavenward. Comparing Sulam and Oni, the Baal Haturim notes that we need not only think of our personal security but with society as a whole and we need to raise the “Kol” to that as well. Elsewhere, the Baal Shem Tov compares the gematria of Sulam to that of Sinai. The **Nefesh Hachaim** also notes that man’s Soul is hinted to, symbolically utilizing the image of the Sulam. **Maran HaRav Asher Weiss shlita** notes that Tefillah without Torah or Torah without Tefillah is an incomplete soul. We need both torah and Yiras Shomayim if we are to succeed in ascending the mountain to Hashem.

**וְהִנֵּ֤ה סֻלָּם֙ מֻצָּ֣ב אַ֔רְצָה** **And behold there was a ladder with its feet on the ground and its head in the heavens (28:12) – Rav Chaim Sabato Shlita** explains that the dream was a message based on Yaakov’s thoughts. It was a reference to man’s role in the world. We live to climb the ladder one step at a time. If we take it each step at a time, there is no limit to how high we can go – assuming we want to go. At the same time, Hashem’s influence meets us going downward until they get us into the ground at the darkest of moments – and then they too, rise up. Yaakov, the forefather who prepares us for Galus, teaches us that even in the darkest of times, we need to keep climbing and the challenges will rise with us.

**וַיִּיקַ֣ץ יַֽעֲקֹב֘ מִשְּׁנָתוֹ֒**  **And Yaakov awoke in the morning (28:16**) – The **Midrash**(Berashis Raba 69) quotes Rav Yochanan who explains that he got up from his learning (his mishna). Why does the Midrash choose this “far out” approach**? Rav Dovid Tevel ztl**. explains that if Yaakov had indeed been sleeping, it would have been enough to say he awoke. By adding the word M’Shnaso, one learns that there was something else going on. By knowing that one who studies Torah at night has a greater experience of the Shechina with him, we understand the reason for the comment of the midrash.

**וַיִּקַּ֤ח אֶת־הָאֶ֨בֶן֙  And he took the stone that was under his head (28:18) –Rashi** famously cites the Midrash that the stones fought over whom would be allowed to have the Tzaddik rest his head and Hashem fused them into one single stone.  The **Maharal**notes that the binding of the stones came about because each one decided that he alone had the “right way” to be the bedrock of the future generations. **Rav Dr. Benny Lau Shlita** notes that stones play a bigger role in the Parsha. Yaakov needs to push off the stone from the well and refers to the Shepards as Achai and later a stone identifies the markings of Galeid. But who were the brothers he spoke to then? Rabbi Lau explains that the real secret of the original drash and the subsequent possukim is in the fact that Yaakov teaches us that the true Tzidkus comes through solidarity. Instead of focusing on the individual stones, he recommends that we focus on why and how they came together.

**וְאוּלָ֛ם ל֥וּז שֵֽׁם־הָעִ֖יר לָרִֽאשֹׁנָֽה: The city was known as Luz (28:19)** - The Talmud (Sotah 46b) notes that the Malach HaMaves was not allowed into the city of Luz. Hence, no one died there. **Rav Elyashiv ztl.** asked how a city with such overt success can simply disappear?  He explained that a place without destiny may not have death but it also does not have life. Life is something you create -- with value and energy based on what you put into it. But if you do not put into it, it leaves you behind.

**וְהָאֶ֣בֶן הַזֹּ֗את This stone (28:22**) - Stones abound this Parsha. The stone reassures Yaakov when he is afraid. It needs to be removed when he is at the well and it serves as a divider from Lavan at the end. What is the role (Roll?) of the stones? **Rav Dr. Norman Lamm Shlita** suggested that the greatest boulder in life is that which the shepherds stated to Yakov when they said “Lo Nuchal” that they could not move the stone off the well. The argument of “Lo Nuchal” is the ultimate impediment from success. Yaakov does not see boulders as things that hold him back, he uses them to be stepping stones to greatness.

ו**ְהָאֶ֥בֶן גְּדֹלָ֖ה עַל־פִּ֥י הַבְּאֵֽר**: **And there was a big stone on the mouth of the well (29:2) – Rav Zevin ztl.** sees a critical mission to Jews in the lesson of well. The well represents holiness and purity and anything positive in the world finds at its source, the well and water. There are many forces that try to find the purity, to uncover it and sometimes to pollute it. But a world without the purity and holiness in it is a dry and uncomfortable place. Yaakov teaches his children that no matter the cover, he and his children will always be able to push off the toughest stones that keep us from the holiness and reveal the source of purity for us.

**אַחַ֖י מֵאַ֣יִן אַתֶּ֑ם  And Yaakov said to them “My brothers where are you from” (29:4)** – When did the shepards become brothers to Yaakov? **Rav Yosef Kahanneman ztl.** explains that later in the same conversation, he gives them Mussar about going  back to work. Where does he get off assuming that they would bother to listen to a stranger from Canaan? Rav Kahaneman answers that when one begins a conversation by showing the other side that he is interested in them and in what they have to say and stand for – a sense of brotherhood – they are willing to open dialogue with him and even listen to what he has to say.

 **וַיֹּ֗אמֶר הֵ֥ן עוֹד֙ הַיּ֣וֹם גָּד֔וֹל לֹא־עֵ֖ת הֵֽאָסֵ֣ף הַמִּקְנֶ֑ה הַשְׁק֥וּ הַצֹּ֖אן וּלְכ֥וּ רְעֽוּ He said the day is still long it is not the time for gathering the flocks (29:7) - Rashi** explains that Yaakov saw the shepherds slacking off of the job and he called them out on it. How did the visitor at the well think it was his place to chastise them? Moreover, why did they listen to him? **Rav Yosef Kahanneman ztl.** explains that he began with the word “Achai” – he called them brothers – and he meant it. Thus, they understood that his words were honest and accepted them.

**וַיִּשָּׂ֥א אֶת־קֹל֖וֹ וַיֵּֽבְךְּ: And he raised his voice and he cried (29:11) - Rashi** notes that he cried because he was sad that he had come empty-handed. Why would the spiritual Yaakov think it critical to cry over coming to meet Rachel this way? **Rav Simcha Zissel Broide ztl.** suggested that Yaakov was afraid that if he came unprepared it was an indication that Hashem was not with him in achieving the Shidduch here. Being afraid of not proceeding in the path Hashem had for him, was a reason for Yaakov to be quite distressed.

**עֵינֵ֥י לֵאָ֖ה רַכּ֑וֹת** **Leah’s eyes were tender (29:17) - Rashi** explains that this was because she was crying because of the rumors that people spread about whom she was going to wind up with. **Rav Meir of Primishlan** noted that she cried excessively on purpose not to attract Eisav. The **Ben Yehoyada** goes one step further adding that when she saw that the younger brother had no effect on the older, wicked one, she saw much to cry about in her potential lot.

**וַיְהִ֣י בַבֹּ֔קֶר וְהִנֵּה־הִ֖וא לֵאָ֑ה In the morning, behold it was Leah (29:25) - Rashi** notes that at night Yaakov did not realize it was Leah since Rachel had seen the potential embarrassment facing her sister and gave her the signs. Why was Rachel not concerned about the lie and loss to Yaakov. After all, he HAD worked 7 years for her hand? **Rav Chaim Greineman ztl.** explained that Rachel understood that Yaakov might have decided in the future to divorce Leah but at least the public humiliation would be avoided. This alone, was reason enough for her to take the chance.

**וְלָ֖מָּה רִמִּיתָֽנִי**: **Why did you trick me (29:25)** – The trickery utilized by Lavan touched off a major sibling rivalry between Rachel and Leah who went from being sisters to being Tzoros which touched off sibling rivalries in their children in the future as well. Later in the Parsha, Yaakov is duped by Lavan’s trickery in switching his salary one hundredfold. Is this Midda K’Negged Midda for tricking Yitzchak? How is that possible if the only reason he did trick his father was because of his mother’s command? **Rav Avraham Rivlin Shlita** explains that even though Yaakov was tested with the opposite of his natural strength (Ish Emes tested with Sheker) and he passed the test, he still needed to deal with the “side effects” of the use of subterfuge. Therefore although he was correct for using Sheker with Yitzchak, the Sheker left an impression on him that needed to be cleansed via being on the receiving end.

**וַיֶּֽאֱהַ֥ב גַּם־אֶת־רָחֵ֖ל מִלֵּאָ֑ה And he also loved Rachel even more than Leah (29:30)** – What is learned from the word “Gam”? **Rav Moshe Weinberger Shlita** once noted that Rachel and Leah represented 2 types of love – and while Yaakov valued the fiery passion he had with Rachel, his long term “Bread and butter”  relationship came from the daily responsibilities and commitment that his relationship with Leah represented. A person is measured by that daily commitment, dedication and dependability throughout life whether in joyous or difficult times.

**וַיֶּֽאֱהַ֥ב גַּם־אֶת־רָחֵ֖ל מִלֵּאָ֑ה How did Yaakov marry 2 sisters? (29:30) – Ramban** explains that in Eretz Yisrael one volunteers to keep the Torah. It did not apply in Chutz LaAretz. **Rav Schachter Shlita** quoted **Rav Yaakov Kamenetzsky ztl**.  who noted that originally he promised to marry Rachel and was tricked. The end of the day, he needed to break his promise to Rachel. Sometimes Shev V”Al Taaseh is not better.  Since here he was keeping a chumra not to marry 2 sisters but breaking his word was an Issur, Shev V’Al Taaseh would not apply. Rav Schachter explained that sometimes we need to choose the lesser of evils.  Sometimes we lose the real din in the Chumros. We need to consider both.

**הַפַּ֨עַם֙ אוֹדֶ֣ה This time I will thank Hashem (29:35)** – The Talmud tells us that from the day the world was created, there was no one who was Modeh to Hashem until Leah came along at the time of Yehuda’s birth. Thus, Yehuda whose name becomes synonymous with Judaism all the time, is based on this principle of Hodaah. Yehuda too, is known later on in life for Hodaah – but of a different kind. The Talmud tells us that in regard to the episode with Tamar, Yehuda Hodah V’Lo Bosh. He too, was the epitome of Hodaah. Yet, there, unlike by Leah where the word Hodaah meant “thanks” it referred to an admission. Is there any connection between thanks and an admission**? Rav Hunter ztl.**  says absolutely. He notes that contained within each and every Hodaah – thanks, there is also a recognition that” I couldn’t do it without you. “ The recognition of man’s limits is also an admission of man’s failings.  **Rav Kook** carries the idea into the Modeh Ani we recite upon rising each morning. By offering thanks at the first moment of the dawn of another day, we are also recognizing and admitting that Hashem created and runs the entire world.

**הַפַּ֨עַם֙ אוֹדֶ֣ה אֶת  This time I’ll thank Hashem (29:35)** – The Talmud praises Leah as the first who thanked Hashem. Why is she so praised for this?  **Rav Schachter Shlita** noted that when we don’t have everything we need – we need to ask Hashem for everything. (This is part of the curse of the Nachash who has Afar to eat his entire life and does not appreciate the chance to thank Hashem for it.) The unique part of Leah’s action was that she DID receive more than her share and still offered appropriate thanks to Hashem.

**הָֽבָה־לִּ֣י בָנִ֔ים וְאִם־אַ֖יִן מֵתָ֥ה אָנֹֽכִי**: **Give me children and if not I am dead (30:1) – Rav Schachter Shlita** would often point out to us that the great distress of Rachel Imeinu was her diametric opposition to the song “Hei’Avar Ayin V’HeiAsid Adayin Daaga Minayin.  For Rachel  cried out to her husband that if she won't have any children she will consider herself as if she were dead and as if she had accomplished nothing in her lifetime. Even though such an individual identifies with the past, that is not sufficient; one must have children to be able to link up with the future as well. For only a Rasha has a very brief life indeed, considering that he lives only in the very brief moment of the present.

**וַיִּֽחַר־אַ֥ף יַֽעֲקֹ֖ב בְּרָחֵ֑ל** **Yaakov’s anger flared up at Rachel and he said “Am I in place of Hashem who withheld children from you?**  (30:1-2) – How could Yaakov have been so insensitive? **Rav Chaim Kamil ztl** was pointing out to her that it was HER tefillos that Hashem desired. It wasn’t that he was refusing to daven but rather that his Tefillah alone would not be the catalyst she sought as much as hers would.

**דָּנַ֣נִּי אֱלֹקים וְגַם֙ שָׁמַ֣ע בְּקֹלִ֔י  Hashem has judged me and also given me a child (30:6) –** In what way was judgement a factor here? **Rav Dovid Tevel ztl.** explains that Rachel took solace because, says the midrash, she knew that the Moshiach Ben Dovid would come from Yehudah. She took solace in knowing that that she helped birth those destined to help Yehudah.  Whenever the leadership of Yehuda is called upon to bring the people to spiritual heights, Dan stands at his side as an assistant to make the possibility into something that happens. The mishkan get built by Betzalel and Oholiav, the mikdash by Shlomo and Chiram. Each time it is the 2 Shevatim working together.

**הַֽמְעַט֙ קַחְתֵּ֣ךְ אֶת־אִישִׁ֔י וְלָקַ֕חַת גַּ֥ם אֶת־דּֽוּדָאֵ֖י בְּנִ֑י Was it not enough that you are trying to take my husband but that also you want to take my son’s Dudaim?** (30:14-15) – How could Leah DARE challenge Rachel. Didn’t she KNOW that Rachel had given her the Simanim? **HaRav Shalom Schwadron ztl.** explains that the Simanim were the mitzvos of Niddah, Challah and Hadlakas HaNer (Based on the Baalei haTosafos).  Rachel never introduced these as the Simanim – merely as Jewish laws that the bride needed to know. Therefore, Leah never knew the extent of the sacrifice that Rachel had made for her. This is the ultimate in Chessed.

**אֵלַ֣י תָּב֔וֹא כִּ֚י שָׂכֹ֣ר שְׂכַרְתִּ֔יךָ בְּדֽוּדָאֵ֖י בְּנִ֑י**  **Come to me because I have rented you with the Dudaim of my son (30:27) – Sforno**notes that this strange story demonstrates that the idea of having and raising children was not for their own benefit but rather for Hashem’s**. Rav Wolbe ztl.** commented that this is proof that a marriage can and ideally should be built upon a base of love which when bedrocked in Yirat Shomayim brings the souls together – not just the physical. This is perhaps the Zohar’s explanation of why Yaakov waited 7 years for Rachel originally --- to show he really had a connection to her – not just a physical desire for her.

ו**ַתֵּלַ֣דְןָ הַצֹּ֔אן עֲקֻדִּ֥ים נְקֻדִּ֖ים וּטְלֻאִֽים**: **Marked, striped and spotted (30:39) – The Slonimer Rebbe ztl.** noted that this section of the Torah contains many deep secrets. He understood at one level that the different styles refer to ways of serving Hashem. At first one uses the basics of Emunah—to know the general rules. This is the reference to “marked (akudim)”. After that one gets to dotted which refers to feeling the Emunah in the heart – a concentrated Emunah that is liked a dot (hence the Nekudim). Yet – that Emunah needs to be actualized which it is as it is carried through the spine to all of the limbs that make the Emunah go to action. Hence the stripes --- a reminder of the spine.

**וַיָּ֨שֶׁת ל֤וֹ עֲדָרִים֙ לְבַדּ֔וֹ וְלֹ֥א שָׁתָ֖ם עַל־צֹ֥אן לָבָֽן**: **The sheep that were lagging belonged to Lavan (30:40)**– Why did Lavan specifically get THESE sheep? **The Birkas Avraham of Slonim ztl.** explained that when things lag behind --- they lack purpose. That was the case with Lavan as well. Lagging behind meant it lacked Deiah and direction. We have no purpose in that **(See Derasha Vayetze 5776) .**

**וַיִּפְרֹ֥ץ הָאִ֖ישׁ מְאֹ֣ד מְאֹ֑ד The man became very wealthy (30:43)** – Are we to take the wealth of the Avos to heart as an ideal to aspire to? Or is wealth not a pursuit of significance for true Jewish leaders and if the latter, why the stress on the financial success for the Avos? **Rav Moshe Stav Shlita** suggested that the wealth attained by the Avos was a sub-text to the fact that whatever they attained physically was merely a means of serving Hashem. In addition, this involvement must be rooted in the recognition that one is fulfilling the will of Hashem by helping to sustain the world. One of the points of difference between positive and negative involvement in this pursuit is the difference between wealth of Eretz Yisrael and wealth of chutz la’aretz. The sustenance provided in Eretz Yisrael is a result of direct hashgacha, and eating its fruits is therefore not only physical sustenance, but a reflection of the dwelling of the Shechina. In chutz la’aretz, nature is the guiding force, and it is difficult to see the hand of Hashem in nature. Thus, in chutz la’aretz, the necessary pursuit of wealth demeans the one who is involved in it. The money that the Avot had was dedicated to their avodat Hashem. But it was not appropriate that the money that Avraham received as a result of Sarah would be used to help him survive. He therefore use it to provide for the bnei hapilagshim, who would teach their students in the manner befitting their level. Yitzchak and Yaakov similarly used their wealth to support the survival of spiritual people in the reality of this world. Any possession that came from lowly sources were given to Esav; they were not used for holy purposes.

**וַיַּ֥רְא יַֽעֲקֹ֖ב אֶת־פְּנֵ֣י לָבָ֑ן And Yaakov saw the face of Lavan (31:2) – Yalkut Shimoni**notes that a person’s heart changes itself between good and bad – Hashem told Yakov to see that change and pick himself up and return to his parents**. Rav Altusky ztl**. adds that Yaakov’s realization of this change allowed Lavan’s influence over him to be severely limited. By recognizing that the person he thought he was controlled by, changing, Yaakov allowed himself to distance himself and distinguish himself and his family from Lavan.

**וַיִּשְׁלַ֣ח יַֽעֲקֹ֔ב וַיִּקְרָ֖א לְרָחֵ֣ל וּלְלֵאָ֑ה הַשָּׂדֶ֖ה** **Yaakov summoned Rachel and Leah to the field (31:4) – The Rebbe Reb Elimelech Biderman Shlita** quotes the Shelah HaKadosh who explains that there are 2 ways to convince people to follow a path – coercion and persuasion. When one coerces, s/he is not maximizing the power of the argument. This is especially true in the world of Chinuch  (and of Shalom Bayis). Where possible, persuasion is better than coercion. Where there is coercion, there is always friction, and the atmosphere is unpleasant. Even if there is compliance, the hard feeling is there. Therefore, it is beneficial to learn the art of persuasion.

 **וְאַתֵּ֖נָה יְדַעְתֶּ֑ן כִּ֚י בְּכָל־כֹּחִ֔י עָבַ֖דְתִּי אֶת־אֲבִיכֶֽן: You know that I worked with my full force for your father (31:6)** – The **Rambam** notes that halachically a worker must give his all to his job. He is not allowed to say that he is doing the average expectation for someone in his position. The gemara (Bava Metzia) uses this rule to determine that in a case of a Shomer Chinam versus Shomer Sachar is the protection the same as a Baal HaBayis or must he do more. A Shomer Chinam needs to do only what the Baal HaBayis does but a Shomer Sachar must go further. **Rav Schachter Shlita** pointed out that a Shomer Sachar is the Poel on this job—hence although the Gemara applies our possuk to a Poel and the Rambam to the Shomer Sachar. There is no contradiction. Rav Schachter added that we have the responsibility to work and to work hard.

 **הַע֥וֹד לָ֛נוּ חֵ֥לֶק וְנַֽחֲלָ֖ה בְּבֵ֥ית אָבִֽינוּ**: **Then Rachel & Leah answered him is there any inheritance for us in our father’s home? (31:14)** – Why did they give such a strong introduction to their response? Why respond as if listening to Hashem was a by-product of having nothing else? **Rav Elya Lopian ztl.** explains that Rachel and Leah were teaching us that we are not to view listening to Hashem as a burden. They were showing that leaving was not going to be a sacrifice to them and that this is how serving Hashem was meant to be done – knowing that the happiness in serving Hashem lies in shunning the falsehood of the vain pleasures of this world.

**לָ֤מָּה נַחְבֵּ֨אתָ֙ לִבְרֹ֔חַ Why did you hide to run away (31:27)** – Yaakov was a tremendously strong man – he was able to defeat a Malach. His children too, were quite strong. Why then does he run away from Lavan? What was he afraid of?  **Rav Elyashiv ztl.** explains that Yaakov was not afraid of Lavan per se. However, he did not want to have to confront Lavan for he knew that if he did, Hashem would strike Lavan down and it would look like Yaakov was a Kafui Tova – an ingrate – for destroying the man who gave him everything. Fearful of a Chilul Hashem, Yaakov preferred to leave quietly.

 **וְרָחֵ֞ל לָֽקְחָ֣ה אֶת־הַתְּרָפִ֗ים And Rachel took the Terafim and placed them under the saddle and sat upon them (31:34)**– The **Zohar HaKadosh** explains that she took the Terafim so that Lavan could not use these idols and their spiritual impurity power to find Yaakov and family. By sitting on the Terafim, she rendered them useless. How? The Zohar explains that when we sit on something we are showing that we degrade it. Once terafim are degraded, they are powerless. **HaRav Avigdor Nebenzal Shlita** explains that the same thing is true about the other “forces” that we think control our lives. They have an effect on us only when we allow them to ensare us. Once we decide to overpower these forces, they too, are powerless.

**וַיִּ֥חַר לְיַֽעֲקֹ֖ב And Yaakov became angry and fought against Lavan.  He answered [Lavan] and said ‘what is my transgression (Bereishis 31:36).** What becomes of Yaakov’s anger when he finally loses it on Lavan? How does he express himself? Does he note the regular cheating that Lavan did to him? Does he describe the theft? The mockery?  No he doesn’t. **HaRav Yechiel Yitzchak Perr Shlita** explains that Yaakov could not allow himself to get angry at Lavan – the grandfather of his children and the father of his beloved wives.  This speaks volumes of the evils of anger and of the lengths that a Tzaddik like Yaakov will go to avoid it. But how are we to handle our moments of anger?   It is told that Rav Simcha Zisel of Kelm, the most senior of the talmidim of Rav Yisroel Salanter had a commitment not to become angry until he put on a certain garment. It seems that by the time he got his coat on, his anger had dissipated.  Giving oneself some space before becoming angry, instead of trying to just restrain it, seems to be the reason that Rav Simcha Zisel succeeded with this practice. If anger is truly controlled, it will die just like any other human quality that can find for itself no means of expression.

**וַיִּ֥חַר לְיַֽעֲקֹ֖ב And Yaakov got angry with Lavan (31:36)** - It is hard to believe that the man who was swindled by Lavan for 20 years and did not respond is suddenly getting angry. What changed? **Rav Mordechai Eliyahu ztl.** explained that when it comes to physical matter -- Gashmiyus, there is room to be Mivater. However, in spiritual matters one does not need to, and cannot, “just give in.”

**ויֹּ֨אמֶר יַֽעֲקֹ֤ב לְאֶחָיו֙ לִקְט֣וּ אֲבָנִ֔ים And Yaakov told his brothers “Gather stones**”. (31:46) – Who were the brothers that he spoke to? **Rav Elya Meir Bloch ztl** notes that these are the spiritual brothers – those who join us in our spiritual endeavors. Yaakov was enjoining those who were with him and his mission to feel like full fledged partners in the process.

**וַיַּשְׁכֵּ֨ם לָבָ֜ן בַּבֹּ֗קֶר וַיְנַשֵּׁ֧ק לְבָנָ֛יו וְלִבְנוֹתָ֖יו וַיְבָ֣רֶךְ אֶתְהֶ֑ם  Lavan got up early in the morning and he kissed his children and blessed them (32:1)**– Why does the Torah want us to know that he gave a Beracha to his children? **Sforno** comments that we see that a parents blessing to his progeny always has potency. **Rav Henoch Leibowitz ztl.** adds that we see what the power of a Beracha offered with a full heart – even if offered by a Rasha with his heart set on destroying them. He might not have related to the family of Yaakov as Tzelem Elokim but in his Beracha, he DID see them as an extension of him and blessed them accordingly.

**וַיִּקְרָ֛א שֵֽׁם־הַמָּק֥וֹם הַה֖וּא מַֽחֲנָֽיִם**: **And he called the place Machanayim (32:3) – Ramban** explains that he called the place Machanayim to note that the place was similar to the camp of the Malachim. **Rav Shlomo Wolbe ztl.** asked what the significance of comparison to Malachim (which we do daily in Kedusha BTW,) was all about. He answered that in the same way that Malachim, spiritual powers from spiritually advance places bless Hashem through their work, we too, do spiritually fulfilling things here in the Olam Haasiya.

**Haftara:**

**Hosea  - Rav Moshe Lichtenstein Shlita**points out that the connection between the Parsha and the Haftorah is in the fact that both describe the absence of faithfulness in exchange for the pursuit of money and monetary gain. Like Hosea’s rebuke of the people in this regard, Yaakov’s challenges in Charan were not going to be based primarily on overt antisemitism. Rather, it was to be in being in the face of those who trade loyalty, personal fidelity and financial compromise in exchange for monetary concerns. The end of the process is Shuvah Yisrael (14:2), but this repentance can only come in the wake of the rending of the closed hearts. The repentance which occurs at the end of the haftara is born out of a feeling and situation of failure, and not out of religious awareness in and of itself. Efrayim comes to repentance only because the way of sin does not succeed; the source of repentance is not spiritual thirst, but only the feeling of failure.

**וַיִּבְרַ֥ח יַֽעֲקֹ֖ב שְׂדֵ֣ה אֲרָ֑ם Yaakov fled to Aram (Hoshea 12:13)**– Why does the Novi want the people to know about Yaakov’s flight? **Rashi and Redak** both comment that the message was part of Hashem’s promise that he was not going to leave them no matter where they went.  **Malbim** disagrees and notes that Hoshea is criticizing the people for their primary Avairos of deceit and idolatry.  In noting that Yaakov engaged deceit, he was also met with deceit. The same would be true for his children if they do not change their ways. **Rav Gideon Weitzman Shlita** explains that Yaakov became influenced by appearance (hence he remained for the additional 6 years – hence the change from working to guarding in the Haftorah) which came about because of complacency. We are called to action as Jews and not to descend in to the path of Avoda Zara – of passivity.

**וַיַּֽעֲבֹ֚ד יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ בְּאִשָּׁ֔ה וּבְאִשָּׁ֖ה שָׁמָֽר And Yisrael ran away to Aram and Yisrael worked there for a wife and for a wife he watched (Hosea 12:7)** – The obvious connection to the Torah reading is the running away of Yaakov as is chronicled in the Parsha too. However, the duality of action – Avodah and Shmirah – imply 2 different approaches. **Rav Yehuda Shaviv Shlita** explains that this duality --- implying both active and passive steps – is similar to the situation that Hashem takes with us too. He waits for us to get close to him and, when necessary, guides us to the proper path – hence the conclusion Shuva Yisrael.

**וַיַּֽעֲבֹ֚ד יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ בְּאִשָּׁ֔ה וּבְאִשָּׁ֖ה שָׁמָֽר: Yaakov worked for a woman there and for a woman he was saved (Hosea 12:13)** - Why does the Torah use the double reference to “a woman”? **Rav Schachter Shlita** suggested that there is a reference to Rachel and to Leah here. Why did Shidduchim come so hard to Yaakov -- so much so that he had to work for 14 years to get one? Rav Schachter would often remind us that things worth keeping often come with hard work -- not simply. Yaakov’s Shidduch was particularly important insofar as it would be the source of all of the Shevatim. He worked hard to have and hold onto the relationships and the hard work paid off.

**שובה ישראל  Return Yisrael to Hashem your God (Hosea 14:2 )** – The **Noda B’Yehuda** notes that technically we are obligated to do a complete and total Teshuva without any argument that we cannot. The reason is that we were tripped up by our sins. Still, Hashem offers us the opportunity to offer an imperfect Teshuva – to take the Devarim – Vidui, Charata and Kabbalah L’Atid -- and use it to return to Hashem.