Darshan Yeshiva

Parshah Vayetzei

- Parshat Vayetzei is the seventh parshat in the Torah. The text of this parshat is Genesis 28:10-32:3. We begin reading "And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran." The parshat is named vayetzei after the first distinct word of this parshat, which means "and [he] went."

- This parshat can be broken into the following segments: Jacob's dream; Jacob's vow; Jacob meets Rachel and Laban; Jacob and Laban's agreement; Laban's deceit; descendants of Jacob; Laban and Jacob's agreement; God calls to Jacob; Laban's pursuit; and, Jacob meets God's angels.

- Jacob's dream: Jacob left Beer-sheba and headed toward Haran. When the sun was setting Jacob decided to stop for the night. He took stones from the area and used them as his pillow. In his dreams Jacob saw a ladder with angels ascending and descending. Jacob also dreamed that God spoke to him in this dream. God told him that he would be blessed with many descendants and the land where he was treading would be his and his descendants. God also promised to be with Jacob and watch over him wherever he went.

- Jacob's vow: Jacob woke and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not." He became afraid and said: "How full of awe is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Jacob rose and placed his stone pillow upright to act as a pillar. Jacob then poured oil upon the pillar and called the place Beth-el. Jacob made a vow saying: "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then shall the LORD be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that You shall give me I will surely give the tenth unto You."

- Jacob meets Rachel and Laban: Jacob continued his journey to Haran and he came upon a well in the field where the flocks of sheep were watered. Jacob encountered men tending the sheep and asked where they were from. The men responded that they were from Haran. Jacob inquired if they know Laban and they responded in the affirmative. As the men were speaking, Rachel came to the well with her father's flocks. The men stated that they must wait until all the flocks were present before they rolled away the stone and watered any of the flocks. When Jacob saw Rachel he rolled away the stone for her and watered the flocks of Laban. Jacob kissed Rachel and lifted up his voice and cried. He told her that he was her father's brother and Rebekah's son. Upon hearing this, Rachel ran and told her father. Upon hearing Rachel's story Laban ran to the well and met Jacob. Laban brought Jacob to his home where Jacob told of his story. Laban declared that the Jacob was indeed his kindred and Jacob remained with Laban for a month.

- Jacob and Laban's agreement: Laban approached Jacob and stated that since Jacob is family he shouldn't be working for free. Laban asked Jacob what he wanted for a wage. Jacob responded that he would work seven years if Laban gave him Rachel to marry. Laban agreed to give Rachel

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to Jacob to marry saying that it would be a better fit than marrying her off to another man. Jacob worked seven years for Laban and came to Laban asking for Rachel to marry him.

- Laban's deceit

- Laban held a great feast in honor of Jacob's marriage. That night it was Leah – Rachel's sister – who was brought to Jacob. In the morning Jacob realized that he had been tricked by Laban and married to the older sister Leah. When Jacob confronted Laban about the deceit Laban stated that the younger could not be married before the elder in his land. Laban told Jacob that if he remained married to Leah and "fulfilled her week" Rachel would also be given to Jacob to marry. Jacob agreed to work yet another seven years for Laban in payment for his marriage to Rachel.

- Descendants of Jacob: God saw that Leah was hated and God blessed her with a child. Leah conceived and had a son who she named Reuben "'because the LORD has looked upon my affliction; for now my husband will love me." She then had a second son who she named Simeon because "the LORD has heard that I am hated, He has therefore given me this son also." Leah conceived a third time and bore a son she named Levi, saying: "'Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have borne him three sons." She conceived again and bore a son she named Judah for she said, "'This time will I praise the LORD."

- Rachel became angry at her bareness and put the blame upon Jacob. Jacob responded that it was up to God whether or not she would have children. Rachel gave Bilhah her handmaid to Jacob as a wife "that she may bear upon my knees, and I also may be built up through her." Bilhah gave birth to a son who Rachel named Dan for "'God has judged me, and has also heard my voice, and has given me a son." Bilhah conceived again and bore a son who Rachel called Naphtali saying, "'With mighty wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and have prevailed."

- Leah was no longer conceiving and as a result she gave Zilpah her handmaid to Jacob as a wife. Zilpah conceived and gave birth to a son who Leah called Gad for "'Fortune has come!" Zilpha gave birth to a second son who Leah called Asher saying, "'Happy am I! For the daughters will call me happy."

- Reuben was out harvesting and found mandrakes in the fields. He brought the mandrakes back to his mother Leah. Upon seeing them Rachel asked that they be given to her. Leah refused until Rachel proposed that she lay with Jacob that night instead of Rachel as payment for the mandrakes. Leah again conceived and bore a son who she named Issachar for "'God has given me my hire, because I gave my handmaid to my husband." She again conceived and bore a son who she named Zebulun saying, "'God has endowed me with a good dowry; now will my husband dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons." Leah again conceived and gave birth to a daughter who she named Dinah.

- God remembered Rachel and opened her womb. Rachel conceived and bore a son saying, "God has taken away my reproach." She named her son Joseph for "The LORD added to me another son."

- Laban and Jacob's agreement: After the birth of Joseph Jacob went to Laban requesting that he be permitted to take his wives and children back to Canaan for he has served all the time he agree to for Laban. Laban responded that he knew that God had blessed Jacob and Laban requested that Jacob name his wages. Jacob named his wages as "every dark one among the

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sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats." Jacob stated that if a sheep or goat not fitting these descriptions is found in his possession that it is considered to be stolen. Laban agree to this payment.

- However, Laban took all the dark sheep and the spotted and speckled goats from his herd and gave them to his sons. His sons then put a three-day journey between themselves and Jacob. Jacob continued to watch over Laban's flocks "and Jacob took him rods of fresh poplar, and of the almond and of the plane-tree; and peeled white streaks in them, making the white appear which was in the rods." Jacob set these rods in the gutters of the watering-troughs when the stronger of the flocks came to drink so they would conceive among the rods. These stronger ones of the flocks produced streaked, speckled, and spotted offspring. Jacob did not allow the feebler ones among the flock to conceive among the rods and so the feebler ones of the flock were given to Laban. Jacob became extremely wealthy and "had large flocks, and maid-servants and men-servants, and camels and asses."

- God calls to Jacob: Laban's sons accused Jacob of stealing from their father and Laban's attitude toward Jacob had changed. God called to Jacob and told him to return to Canaan promising to be with Jacob the entire time.

- Jacob calls together Leah and Rachel and explained how their father had deceived him and God has protected Jacob – even giving him Laban's flock. Jacob explained how an angel appeared to him in a dream telling him to take those particular animals of Laban's flock and return to the land of his birth. Leah and Rachel agreed that there was no inheritance left for them in their father's household. All the riches that were given to Jacob belong to them and their children so they agree to leave their father's house and return with Jacob to Canaan. Jacob takes Leah and Rachel, the children, and the flocks and leaves Laban for the land of his birth.

- Laban's pursuit: Laban had gone out to shear his sheep and in his absence Rachel stole the teraphim of her father. Jacob had deceived Laban and did not tell him that he and his household were leaving Haran and returning to Canaan. Jacob "rose up, and passed over the River, and set his face toward the mountain of Gilead." On the third day Laban was told that Jacob and all that he had had fled Laban.

- Laban "took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey; and he overtook him in the mountain of Gilead." God spoke to Laban in a dream and said: "Take heed to yourself that you speak not to Jacob either good or bad."

- Laban went to Jacob and asked him why Jacob carried his daughters away as though they were captives. He asked Jacob why he did not tell him he was leaving for Laban said he would have held a feast and sent him away with great joy. Laban told Jacob that he was not given the chance to say goodbye to his daughters and grandchildren and by doing so Jacob acted foolishly. Laban told Jacob that he understood that Jacob longed for his father's house but why did Jacob take his gods? Jacob responded that he was afraid that Laban would take his daughters back by force.

- Jacob told Laban to look through the camp and take that which is his. He also stated that whoever is found to be holding Laban's gods would surely be put to death. Laban went into Leah's tent and the tent of the two maidservants but did not find the teraphim. He then went into Rachel's tent where she had hidden the teraphim by sitting upon them. Rachel explained that the

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"manner of woman" was upon her so she could not stand in her father's presence thus the teraphim were not discovered. Jacob became angry and Laban and responded to Laban by telling him how poorly Laban had treated him. Jacob told Laban that it was God who made judgment upon him and gave Jacob justice.

- Laban relented and told Jacob that they should make a covenant. Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. A heap of stones were gathered and the men ate by the heap of stones. "Laban called [the place] Jegar-sahadutha; but Jacob called it Galeed." The pillar acted as a border stone and Jacob and Laban agree not to cross the border to harm the other. "And Jacob offered a sacrifice in the mountain, and called his brethren to eat bread; and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mountain."
- Laban rose early in the morning and kissed his daughters and grandchildren goodbye and he departed.

- Jacob meets God's angels: Jacob resumed his travels and came upon a place where the angels of God met him. "And Jacob said when he saw them: 'This is God's camp.' And he called the name of that place Mahanaim.'"

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