

# A LITTLE SLICE OF TORAH

פון פרשת דער וואָך FROM THE WEEKLY PORTION



December 03, 2022

פרוץ אָתהּ יי, אָלהינוּ מִלֶּךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
אֲשֶׁר קִדְשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוְּנוּ לְעָסוֹק בְּדַבְרֵי תוֹרָה:

## Parashat haShavu'a Stats

Weekly Portion: vaYeitzei  
Consists of: Genesis 28:10-32:3  
Sequence—

in annual Torah cycle: 7<sup>th</sup> of 54

in Genesis: 7<sup>th</sup> of 12

## An Introduction to the Portion

**Context:** *Genesis, first of the Five Books of the Torah, is an outline of the Creation of the physical universe; a description of the origin of the human family by their respective nations; and an account of Abraham's and Sarah's lineage through their grandson Jacob as the founder of the Israelite people.*

*This week's portion sees a sustained narrative in which Jacob successfully concludes his overland journey to his mother's household in "The Old Country"; builds up a family of twelve children; acquires wealth to support them; and, in a bid to break free of his unscrupulous uncle/father-in-law, makes a mad dash to get them all home to his parents' household.*

### A structural note about the parashah

- 3½ chapters of Genesis;
- 148 verses of Scriptural text;
- 1,752 words of Hebrew manuscript;
- 1 contiguous paragraph in the Torah scroll

continuing paragraph from last week – "Tol'dof"

...ות. ולקחתי לך אשה...  
אברהם ויצחק ויעקב...  
ות. ולקחתי לך אשה...  
אברהם ויצחק ויעקב...  
ות. ולקחתי לך אשה...  
אברהם ויצחק ויעקב...

fresh paragraph beginning next week – "vaYishlach"

- more over



29:31] - Now, The Eternal One saw that Lei'ah was unloved, and so opened her womb (while Racheil remained infertile). [29:32a] - Leah conceived, and bore a son, whom she named **Re'uVein** ["look – a son!"]

29:32b] - for she declared: "Because The Eternal One **has seen** my suffering, so now my husband will love me!"

29:33] - Then she conceived again— and bore a son. At which she declared: "Because The Eternal One **has heard** how unloved I am, He has given me this one, as well!" So she named him **Shim'on**.

29:34] - Then she conceived again, and bore a son. At which she declared: "This time my husband **will become attached** to me, for I have borne him three sons." On account of which, he named him **Levi**.

29:35a] - Then she conceived again, and bore a son. At which she declared, "**This time I must truly give thanks** to The Eternal One!" On account of which, she named him **Yehudah**— **then she desisted** from bearing.

וַיָּבֵא גַם אֶל-רַחֵל וַיִּאָהֵב גַּם-אֶת-רַחֵל מִלֵּאָה  
29:30a] - Then [Jacob] engaged in intercourse with [his new second bride] Racheil, as well— for, indeed, he loved Racheil more than Lei'ah.

וַיַּעֲבֹד עִמּוֹ עוֹד שִׁבְעֵ-שָׁנִים אַחֲרוֹת  
29:30b] - Whereupon[, in payment of the bride-gift due to his uncle (and now father-in-law) Lavan, Jacob] now undertook serving him seven additional years.

וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי-שָׁנוּאָה לֵאָה וַיִּפְתַּח אֶת-רַחֲמָהּ וַרַחֵל עָקְרָה וַתֵּהָרַר לֵאָה וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ רְאוּבֵן

כִּי אָמְרָה כִּי-רָאָה יְהוָה בְּעֵינָי כִּי עָתָה יֵאָהֲבֵנִי אִישִׁי

וַתֵּהָרַר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי-שָׁמַע יְהוָה כִּי-שָׁנוּאָה אֲנֹכִי וַיִּתֶּן-לִי גַם-אֶת-זֶה וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ שִׁמְעוֹן

וַתֵּהָרַר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתֹּאמֶר עָתָה הַפַּעַם יִלְוֶה אִישִׁי אֵלָי כִּי-יִלְדֹתַי לוֹ שְׁלֹשָׁה בָנִים עַל-כֵּן קָרָא-שְׁמוֹ לֵוִי

וַתֵּהָרַר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתֹּאמֶר הַפַּעַם אוֹדָה אֶת-יְהוָה עַל-כֵּן קָרָאָה שְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה וַתַּעֲמִד מִלְדָּת



## TORAH Snippet

29:35b

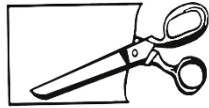
...then **she desisted** from bearing.

וַתַּעֲמִד מִלְדָּת

### - Birth Sequence of Jacob's Sons -

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Re'uvein	Shim'on	Levi	Yehudah	Dan	Naftali	Gad	Asher	Issachar	Z'vulun	Joseph	Benjamin
	Leiah			Bilhah		Zilpah		Leiah		Racheil	

- continued



# TORAH Snippet

29:32	[Lei'ah] named him Re'uVein	וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ רְאוּבֵן
29:33	she named him Shim'on	וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ שִׁמְעוֹן
29:35	she named him Yehudah	קָרְאָהּ שְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה
29:34	On account of which he named him Levi	עַל-כֵּן קָרְאָהּ שְׁמוֹ לֵוִי

John Wycliffe (1383) **sche** clepide his name Leuy  
 William Tyndale (1530), Douay Rheims Bible (1589) **she** called his name Levi  
 Martin Luther (1530), Samson Raphael Hirsch (1873) **nannte sie** ihn Levi “**she** called him Levi”  
 Jewish Publication Society (1999) **She** therefore **named** him Levi

קָרָא “he called”  
 קָרְאָהּ “she called”  
 קָרְאָהּ

Septuagint (c. 150 BCE) δια τουτο **εκαλεσεν** το ονομα Λευι  
 Jerome Vulgate (405) *et idcirco **appellavit** nomen eius Levi*  
 Biblia Reina Valera (1569) *por tanto, **llamó** su nombre Levi*  
 Jean Frédéric Osterwald (1744) *c'est pourquoi **on l'appela** Lévi*  
 “for which reason his name **is called** Levi”  
 Geneva (1550), King James Bible (1611), Jewish Publication Society (1917)  
 therefore **was** his name **called** Levi  
 Everett Fox (1995) **they called** his name Levi  
 Robert Alter (2004) therefore **is** his name **called** Levi

A) Genesis 25:30 -

וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו אֶל-יַעֲקֹב הֲלַעֲיִטְנִי נָא  
 מִן-הָאֲדָם הָאֲדָם הִזֶּה כִּי עֲיַף אֲנֹכִי

Eisav told Jacob: “Why not pour me out some of that **rich red stuff**, for I am famished!”—

עַל-כֵּן קָרְאָהּ שְׁמוֹ אֲדָוִם  
 (on account of which **he is called** “Edom”).

B) Genesis 31:48 -

וַיֹּאמֶר לָבָן הֲגַל הַזֶּה עַד בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ הַיּוֹם

Lavan declared: “This **pillar** shall stand as **witness** between me and you this day”—

עַל-כֵּן קָרְאָהּ שְׁמוֹ גַלְעָד  
 (on account of which [that region ever since] **is called** “Gal-Eid”).

Aryeh Kaplan (1981) **[Jacob]** therefore **named** the child Levi  
 Mesorah (1993) Therefore **He** **called** his name Levi

קָרָא שְׁמוֹ לֵוִי - בְּכוֹלם כְּתִיב וַתִּקְרָא שֶׁהִיא קָרְאָהּ וְזֶה כְּתִיב בּוֹ קָרְאָהּ

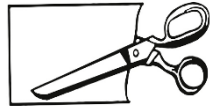
C) RaSHI (Shlomo Yitzchaqi, 10401105) on Genesis 29:34 - “**He named** him Levi” - for all the others it is written “so **she** called him...,” since it was [Lei’ah] who named them; yet of this one he wrote: “**He named** him.”

ויש מדרש אגדה באלה הדברים רבה ששלח הקב"ה גבריאל והביאו לפניו  
**וקרא לו שם זה**

Now there is an exposition of this in Midrash Deuteronomy Rabbah, asserting that The Holy And Blessed One dispatched [the Archangel] GabriEil to bring this infant into the Divine Presence so that [God] could call him by this name.

ונתן לו כ"ד מתנות כהונה ועל שם שלוחו במתנות קראו לוי

[God] bestowed upon him the 24 perquisites of the priesthood [Numbers 18:8ff]— and it was on the basis of having endowed him with these emoluments, that He called him "Leivi."



## TORAH Snippet

	על-כן קרא-שמו לוי
<u>29:34</u>	On account of which he named him Leivi
	על-כן קראה שמו יהודה
<u>29:35</u>	On account of which, she named him Yehudah
	כי אמרה פי-ראה יהוה
<u>29:32</u>	for she declared: "Because The Eternal One has seen"
	תאמר פי-שמע יהוה כי-שנואה אנכי
<u>29:33</u>	she declared: "Because The Eternal One has heard that I am unloved"



וייצר יהוה אלהים את-האדם עפר מן-האדמה ויפח באפיו נשמת  
 חיים ויהי האדם לנפש חיה

D) Genesis 2:7 - Then The Eternal One, who is God, formed **humanity of dust from the ground**, breathing the spirit of life into its nostrils so that the **person** became an ensouled living thing.

ויאמר האדם זאת הפעם עצם מעצמי ובשר מבשרי  
 E) Genesis 2:23 - Then the human declared: "This one, at last, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh!"

לזאת יקרא אשה כי מאיש לקחה-זאת  
 "Let this one be called 'she-person,' because out of **person** was this one taken!"

והאדם ידע את-חנה אשתו ותהר ותלד את-קין ותאמר קניתי איש  
 את-יהוה

F) Genesis 4:1 - The person was intimate with Chavah, his wife, who conceived. She bore [a child, whom she named] **Kayin**— for she declared: "**I have acquired** this person with the help of The Eternal One!"



ותלד בן ותקרא את-שמו שת כי שת-לי אלהים זרע אחר תחת הבל כי הרגו  
 קין

G) Genesis 4:25 - [Eve] bore a son. **She called** him **Seth**, [declaring:] “**because** God **has furnished** me with another inheritor to replace Hevel, whom Kayin killed.”

וַיִּגְדַּל הַיֶּלֶד וַתְּבִיאֵהוּ לְבַת-פְּרֹעָה וַיְהִי-לָהּ לְבוֹן

H) Exodus 2:10 - When the child had grown enough, [the wet-nurse— who was secretly his mother—] brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter to be raised as her son.

וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ **מֹשֶׁה** וַתֹּאמֶר **כִּי מִן-הַמַּיִם מְשִׁיתָהוּ**

**She called** him **Mosheh**, [declaring:] “**because I drew him up** out of the waters.”

וַתֵּהָר חָנָה וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן

I) I Samuel 1:20 - Chanah conceived and bore a son.

וַתִּקְרָא אֶת-שְׁמוֹ **שְׁמוּאֵל** כִּי מִיְהוָה **שְׁאַלְתִּיו**

**She called** him **Sh’muEil**, [declaring:] “**because I asked for** him from The Eternal One.”

J) Exodus 15:23 -

וַיָּבֹאוּ מִרְתָּה

Then they came to Marah;

וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לְשִׁתּוֹת מֵיִם מִמֶּרְהָ כִּי **מְרִים** הֵם

but they were unable to drink of the water because it was **bitter**—

**על-כֵּן קָרָא-שְׁמָהּ מְרָה**

**on account of which** they named it **Marah**.

K) Judges 15:18-19 -

וַיִּצְמָא מְאֹד **וַיִּקְרָא** אֶל-יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶתְּהָ נָתַתְּ בְּיָד-עַבְדְּךָ אֶת-תְּשׁוּעָה הַגְּדֹלָה הַזֹּאת וְעַתָּה אָמוּתָהּ בְּצִמְאָה וְנִפְלְתִי בְּיַד הָעֶרְלִים

Then [Samson] was parched, so **he called out** to The Eternal One: “behold, You have granted your servant this great and mighty victory— but should I now languish of thirst I will still fall into the hands of the uncircumcised!”

וַיִּבְקַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הַמְּכַתֵּשׁ אֲשֶׁר-לָחִי וַיִּצְאוּ מִמֶּנּוּ מַיִם וַיִּשְׁתַּ וַתִּשְׁבַּב רִחוֹ וַיַּחֲי

At which God split open the fissure (in the rock at Lechi) so that water sprang forth from it, from which he drank and revived his strength and lived.

**על-כֵּן קָרָא שְׁמָהּ עֵין הַקּוֹרָא אֲשֶׁר בְּלָחִי עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה**

**On account of which it is known as** “the Spring of **the Caller**”— which is at Lechi— to the present day.

וַיְהִי כַּמְשִׁיב יָדוֹ וַהֲנִה יִצָּא אָחִיו

L) Genesis 38:29 - But then [the first twin, onto whose protruding wrist the midwife had already tied an identifying band to tell them apart later on,] withdrew his hand— and, behold, it was his brother who emerged.

וַתֹּאמֶר מֶה-פְּרָצְתָּ עָלַיְךָ **פְּרָץ** וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ **פְּרָץ**

- more over



At which she declared: “How have **you breached** yourself **a gap?!?”** So **he was known as Peretz.**

**וַיְהִי בְצֵאת נִפְשָׁהּ כִּי מָתָה וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ בֶן-אוֹנִי**

**M) Genesis 35:18 -** As [Racheil] was dying (for she died [of her hard labor birthing him]), **she named him Ben-‘Oni** [“my misfortune”]—

**וְאָבִיו קָרָא-לוֹ בְּנֵימִין**

**but his father named him BinYamin** [“the lucky one”].

**וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתִּקְרָא אֹת-שְׁמוֹ שְׁלֹמֹה**

**N) II Samuel 12:24-25 -** [Bat-Sheva] birthed a son, and **she named him Sh’lomoh** [“he belongs to (the Canaanite dusk-god) Shaleim”].

**וַיְהִי הָאֱלֹהִים וַיִּשְׁלַח בְּיַד נָתָן הַנָּבִיא וַיִּקְרָא אֹת-שְׁמוֹ יְדִידְיָהּ בְּעֵבוֹר יְהוָה**

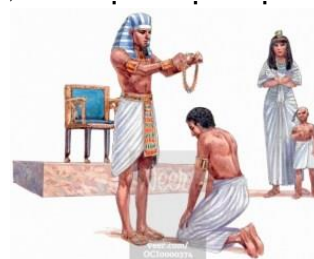
But The Eternal One favored him, and therefore dispatched the prophet Nathan, **who renamed him Y’didYah** [“precious to Adonai”] after The Eternal One.

**וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל-יוֹסֵף אֲנִי פַרְעֹה וּבְלִעְדֶּיךָ לֹא-יָרִים אִישׁ אֶת-יָדוֹ וְאֶת-רַגְלוֹ  
בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם**

**O) Genesis 41:44-45 -** Pharaoh declared to Joseph: “While I am emperor, without your say-so none may lift hand or foot throughout all the land of Egypt!”

**וַיִּקְרָא פַרְעֹה שֵׁם-יוֹסֵף צְפַנַּת פַּנֵּי’אֵחַ**

**Then he proclaimed** Joseph’s name to be **Tzaf’nat Panei’ach** [“the one who listens when the god speaks”].



**יְלָדִים אֲשֶׁר אִין-בָּהֶם כָּל-מוֹם וְטוֹבֵי מְרָאָה וּמִשְׁכִּילִים בְּכָל-חֻקֵּיהֶם וַיִּדְעֵי דַעַת  
וּמִבְיָנֵי מַדְעָ וְאֲשֶׁר כַּח בָּהֶם לַעֲמֹד בְּהִיכַל הַמֶּלֶךְ וּלְלַמְדֵם סִפְרָ וּלְשׁוֹן כְּשָׂדִים**

**P) Daniel 1:4, 1:6-7 -** [The Emperor recruited, to groom as courtiers from amongst the people of his realm,] youths— unblemished and attractive, intelligent and knowledgeable and deliberate, who had the fortitude to stand in the Emperor’s court— and taught them the writing system and language of the Chaldeans.

**וַיְהִי בָהֶם מִבְּנֵי יְהוּדָה דָּנִיֵּאל חֲנַנְיָהּ מִישָׂאֵל וְעֶזְרָיָה**

Now among them were some Judeans— DaniEil; ChananYah; MishaEil, and ‘AzarYah—



**וַיִּשֶׂם לָהֶם שֵׁר הַסָּרִיסִים שְׁמוֹת וַיִּשֶׂם  
לְדָנִיֵּאל בֵּלְטַשְׂאֶצַּר וְלְחֲנַנְיָהּ שָׁדְרָךְ  
וְלְמִישָׂאֵל מֵישָׁךְ וְלְעֶזְרָיָה אֲבֵד-נֹגֹ**

**to whom the chief eunuch assigned** Babylonian] **names.** He named

- DaniEil, BeilTshatzar;
- ChananYah, Shadrach;
- MishaEil, MeiShach;
- and ‘AzarYah, ‘Aved-N’go.

Q) Esther 2:7 -

וַיְהִי אִמּוֹן אֶת-הַדַּסָּה  
[Mordechai] was guardian of **Hadassah**  
הִיא אֶסְתֵּיר  
(who is **Esteir**),  
בֵּת-דָּדוֹ כִּי אֵין לָהּ אָב וְאִם  
his uncle's daughter— for she had no  
father or mother.

הַדַּס Hadas



myrtle (*Myrtus communis*) in bloom

R) Esther 2:10 -

לֹא-הִגִּידָה אֶסְתֵּיר אֶת-עַמָּהּ וְאֶת-  
מוֹלְדוֹתֶיהָ כִּי מְרַדְכֵי צִוָּה עָלֶיהָ אֲשֶׁר  
לֹא-תִגִּיד

Now **Esteir** had not divulged her people  
nor her birth— for **Mordechai** had in-  
structed her that she was not to tell.

Ishtar, moon goddess



Old Babylonian plaque, c. 1800 BCE

S) Dara Horn (1977- ), *People Love Dead Jews* - The family story that so many American Jews have heard, that their surnames were changed at Ellis Island, is a myth. Thousands of court records from the 1920s, '30s, '40s, and '50s reflect Jewish immigrants and their children filing petitions in New York Civil Court in order to change their own family names. Reading these documents, we meet thousands of American Jews, most of them born in the United States, **explaining under oath that they are changing their names** because they cannot find a job, or because their children are being humiliated or discriminated against at school, or because with their real names, no one will hire them for any white-collar position— **because, essentially, American antisemitism has prevented their families' success.**

In her book *A Rosenberg By Any Other Name*, the historian Kirsten Fermaglich points out the “corrosive” effect of this kind of intense and unacknowledged discrimination on the target population: “The unofficial nature of American antisemitism encouraged many Jews to resist discrimination by **using bureaucratic name change petitions to reshape their personal identity, rather than civil rights activism to change an unfair society.**”

What I found most heart-breaking was witnessing how these Jewish name-changers participated in the very humiliation that they were seeking to escape. They did so not merely by changing their names, but by **censoring their own self-expression during the very act of changing those names.** . . . , almost uniformly referring to how their names were “foreign-sounding” or “difficult to spell and pronounce” . . . or “un-American, uneuphonious, and an economic handicap.” . . . In fact, the only petitioners Fermaglich cites whose filings actually mention antisemitism are non-Jews seeking to change their Jewish-sounding names, so as not to be mistaken for Jews.