

| PORTION | DATE | HEB DATE | TORAH | NEVIIM | RENEWED |
|---------|-------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Vayetze | 7 Dec. 2019 | 9 Kislev 5780 | Gen. 28:10-32:2 | Hos. 12:12-14:9 | John 1:41-51 |

This week's Torah portion Toldot does not have positive or negative commandments.

It is written (v. 10), "And Ya'akov went out from Be'ersheba and went toward Charan." Previously, in verse 7, the Torah already mentioned that Ya'akov "had gone to Paddan Aram." Since the Torah is efficient and not a single dot is wasted, we should ask ourselves the repetition of verse 10. In Hebrew, נִצָּא יַעֲקֹב, מִבְּעַר שָׁבַע; וַיֵּלֶךְ, הָרְנָה (vai-ye-tzei ya'-a-kov, mi-be'er sha-va'; vai-ye-lech, cha-ra-nah). Note words, ; vai-ye-lech, cha-ra-nah, the literal translation is "went, cha-ra-nah." Following this context, Ya'akov "went / Charan," implying that he arrived at Charan already, but the events in the next verse makes it clear that he had not arrived at Charan yet. Also, the word "cha-ra-nah" is questionable, because הָרְנָה, it ends with suffix *hei* (ה) rather than saying *le'cha-ra-n* (להרן) by adding lamed (ל) as prefix to indicate that "something" has happened before arriving at Charan.

The sages explain: When "Ya'akov departed from Be'ersheba," meaning he did nothing but depart from his hometown. Once he departed, the anger of Esav subsided. Thus the verse hints at when it says, *cha-ra-nah*, the anger of Esav went away. Another explanation is found in Sefer HaYashar which says that Esav sent his son, Elifaz to follow and kill Ya'akov. When Elifaz caught up with Ya'akov, he prayed at "the place" (v. 11) for help, hinting that he found himself in distress and needed to pray for help in dealing with Elifaz.

It is written (v. 11), "He encountered the place and spent the night there because the sun had set." "The place" in Hebrew is בְּמָקוֹם (*ba-ma-kom*). The sages teach that "the place" is no other than Har HaMoriah (Mount Moriah), the site of *Akeidah* as Avraham saw "the place" afar (Gen. 22:4), and the future site of the *Beit HaMikdash*. Note that there is no *hei* (ה), the typical "the" in בְּמָקוֹם (*ba-ma-kom*). When the letter ה, vowelized with a פתח (ה) precedes a noun, it means "the" (definitive article), and indicates that the object names can be easily identified, either from the context or from general knowledge. Although there is no actual *hei* in בְּמָקוֹם (*ba-ma-kom*), the prefix ב (with a פתח, or "ה vowel," underneath) is equivalent to the double prefix בְּה, in **the**. Hence, בְּמָקוֹם פ (*ba-ma-kom*) means in "**the** place" – the place so important and well known that it need not be mentioned.

It is written (v. 12), "And he dreamt, and behold! A ladder was set earthward and its top reached heavenward; and behold! angels of Elohim were ascending and descending on it." Now, the word הִנֵּה (*hi-neh*) appears twice in this verse. The sages explain that dreams are generally false (Zech. 10:2); even when meaningful, they will contain at least some meaningless details. Thus, the Torah says, "Behold", meaning Ya'akov's dreams were free of confusion or figments of imagination. For this reason, the Torah describes in each and every detail of Ya'akov's dream, to clarify that it was not merely a dream, but an actual prophecy perceived in absolute clarity.

It is written (v. 13), "And behold! Hashem was standing over it." The Midrash¹ explains that the patriarchs are the "chariots" of the Shechinah – that is, their contributions, more than those of anyone else, enable the Shechinah to reside in this world. And since Ya'akov is the fourth leg of this chariot, the verse purposely says that Hashem was "standing over" him, implying that Hashem stood over or upon Ya'akov more than over Avraham or Yitzchak. Because Ya'akov was the main support of the Throne that bears the Shechinah. Adam, Avraham, and Yitzchak were the first three legs until King David whose soul derived from Adam came and supplanted Adam.

"I am Hashem, Elohim of Avraham your father, and Elohim of Yitzchak." It should have been easier to say, "I am Elohim of Avraham, Yitzchak, your fathers." The answer is that, by saying, "Avraham your father," Hashem meant to exclude Esav from Avraham's inheritance, and to that end, He made Ya'akov the direct heir to Avraham. The idea was that Avraham's inheritance should not go to Yitzchak, and subsequently Ya'akov would inherit it from Yitzchak.

¹ Bereshis Rabbah 47:6

If that were to happen, the inheritance would also go to Exav as well. Therefore, when Yitzchak die, Avraham's inheritance would go to Ya'akov directly from Avraham as if Avraham was "his father."

It is written (v. 14), "And all the families of the earth shall be blessed through you and through your offspring." The people of Aram were blessed through Ya'akov. Before Ya'akov came to Aram, they were pressed for water (Gen. 29:2-3) as they all had to gather before opening the well. But once Ya'akov came, they were blessed with an abundance of water as Mitzrayim was blessed through Yosef, as well as 70 nations that were blessed when the Temple was standing.

Now, from the beginning of the parashah (v. 10) to this verse (v. 14), there is another level of understanding, known as *remez*. The Zohar² explains when "Ya'akov departed from Be'ersheba" is an allusion to the soul when it departs from the Upper World to begin a new life on this world. The soul, in this case, Ya'akov (יַעֲקֹב) based on the root letters "עֲקֹב" (heel) which refers to *yetzer hara* (evil inclination), which surrounds [the soul's] heels, in this case Charan. Meaning, prior to the baby's birth, the *yetzer hara* is unable to enter the soul, so, it circles the soul and bides time. "He went to Charan," can be understood as "He went to *anger*." Meaning, Ya'akov departed from the heavenly "well" (*be'er*) of souls and descended into this world, to a world liable to sin and arouse Hashem's anger.

The following verse (11) "He encountered the place" can also be translated as "He prayed to Hashem." An object must have a place to exist; if it is not in any place it does not exist. So, too, the world cannot exist without Hashem. In this sense Hashem is "the place" of everything in the world. The lesson here is that in order to lead a spiritually successful life, a person needs to pray to Hashem, Who is "the place" of the world, asking that we are not abandoned to the hand of *yetzer hara*.

"He spent the night there because the sun had set." We are to always pray for Divine assistance and struggle against the *yetzer hara* until we leave this world when our "sun" sets. The sages say, "Do not be sure of yourself, i.e., do not think yourself immune from attack by the yetzer, until the day of your death."³

"He took from the stones of the place." If a person constantly agitate his yetzer tov to fight against yetzer hara and overpower it, and as a result vanquished it, fine! But if not, he should engage in Torah study, as it is written, "Recite in your hearts,"⁴ which alludes to speaking words of Torah. This is what verse means when it says here, "he took from the stones of the place, meaning, the building blocks of the world, which are the words of the Torah. In addition, the stones of the place is appropriate for the words of the Torah because through studying them, the *yetzer hara* and its forces can be stoned, that is beaten down. The Talmud⁵ explains that if he did not vanquish the *yetzer hara* by studying the Torah, he should recite the Bedtime Shema, as it is stated, "on your beds." When "he lays down (i.e., death) in that place", and did not vanquish the *yetzer hara*, he should remind himself of the day of death. So, we are to rally for *yetzer tov* to fight for control of his behavior, studying Torah, reciting the Shema, and reminding himself of the day of death – a person is guaranteed to vanquish the *yetzer hara*.

It is written, "Ya'akov awoke from his sleep and said, "In truth, Hashem is present in this place and I did not know!" What did Ya'akov say, "In truth?" as if Hashem had some hidden matter that he had difficulty understanding, was revealed to him? "And I did not know," makes as if Ya'akov supposed to know everything, when of course he was not. The Midrash⁶ and Chullin 91b, states on the verse (11) "and he spent the night there because the sun had set." They explain that the sun set before its usual time to ensure that Ya'akov would sleep at "the place." When Ya'akov was approaching "the place", the angels said to Hashem, "The sun is here." The sages continue it is because it was actually not the sun's setting that caused Ya'akov to stop when he did; on the contrary, it was Hashem's desire that Ya'a'kov stop and go to sleep in "the place" that caused the sun to set before its usual time.

² Zohar, Vol. I, 147a

³ Avos 2:5

⁴ Tehillim 4:5

⁵ Sotah 21a

⁶ Beresishis Rabbah 68:10

At first, Ya'akov did not understand why the sun had set prematurely, so when the dream came to him during the night, the secret, i.e., the reason for the sun's early setting then became clear to him. So, this is what Ya'kov meant, "It is for this reason that the sun had set early, so that I would lie down to sleep in this place where Hashem is present."

"And I did not know!" This is not an exclamation of joy. Rather, he is regretting that he was not aware of what was about to happen, he would have prepared himself for the prophetic experience. For if he had prepared himself, he could have experienced a higher level of communication, i.e., talking to Hashem while he was awake rather than a dream, therefore he lamented the fact that he did not recognize the matter beforehand.

It is written (v. 17), "And he became frightened and said, 'How awesome is this place! this is none other than the house of Elokim and this is the gate of the heavens!'" When the verse says that "Ya'akov became frightened," it means that he felt in his heart an intensity of his awe of Hashem without any apparent cause. Therefore, he exclaimed, "How awesome is this place!" Ya'akov was particular by saying, "This is none other than the house of Elokim." Because that Name, rather the Attribute of Justice is the source of all fear of Hashem, as it is written, "Elokim has acted so that [man] should stand in awe of Him."⁷

And when Ya'akov said, "And this is the gate of the heaven," he meant that the place above it in the Upper World is the gate of the heavens. That is why he said, "and this", a second time; because before he was referring to the ground beneath him, and now he was referring to the heaven above.

⁷ Koheles 3:14