Shiur L'Yom Chamishi[1]

[Thursday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Vayetze***: **Genesis 30:25 - 31:29**
Haftarah: **Hosea 13:14-16**
B'rit Chadasha: **John 1:48-49**

You didn't even let me kiss my daughters and grandchildren goodbye!
[Genesis 31:27]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 85:10-11;
This Week's Featured Amidah prayer is Petition #4, *Ga'al* [*Kinsman-Redemption*]

Vayehi ka'asher yaldah Rachel et-Yosef *– And it came to pass after Rachel gave birth to Yosef …* ***vayomer Ya'akov el-Lavan shalcheni*** *– that Ya'akov said to Lavan 'Send me out!' …* ***tenah et-nasha'i v'et-yeladi*** *- surrender my wives and my offspring ….* **Genesis 30:25-26a.**

Ya'akov had high hopes for all his children, of course – but Yosef? Yosef was special-among-the-special. The birth of this child - Rachel's long-awaited firstborn child – awakened Ya'akov's neshamah [God-breathed Eternal Spirit (See Genesis 2:7)] as nothing had since the Staircase Experience twenty years earlier. As Ya'akov gazed lovingly into the eyes of the pure bundle of perfection Rachel called 'Yosef', he realized that he needed to up his game. In Lavan's house he was and would always remain a mere shadow of the man he was created to be. His own actions as a young man, the reaction of his brother Esav to those actions, and the manipulations of Lavan had combined to sentence him to a prolonged *Charanian Exile*. He knew that, under the immutable spiritual law of sowing and reaping, he deserved nothing less. But his children didn't. If his children – especially Yosef - were going to become the world-changing patriarchs they were called to be, he had to get them out of Lavan's house of horrors. He had to get them out of Charan, out of Mesopotamia, out from under the mind-numbing cloud of narcissistic gaslighting, paranoia, projection[2], doubletalk, double-standard, disinformation, lie-indoctrination, manipulation, offense, outrage, and delusion that prevailed in that area. He wanted out of the *ra, shachat,* and *chamas*-infused darkness fog that held

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[2] 'Projection' is a common psychological defense mechanism (an often subconscious 'default' practice pursuant to which a person deflects attention from his own guilt, malice, fear, lust, envy, jealousy, insecurity, thoughts, feelings, motives, or behavior by attributing those very same pathology onto another person or group – *i.e.* a convenient villain, fall-guy, or scapegoat. Example, someone who is self-conscious about his/her job performance accuses his/her boss or a co-worker of misconduct. The accusation of such a person are just a smoke-screen/fog-bank behind which the projector seeks to hide.

even the best of the region's inhabitants tightly in its grip. He wanted more – and better - for his offspring than the swirling abyss of dark energy called Paddan-Aram could ever provide. He did not want to raise any of his children – especially *Yosef* - in this devil's den of vanity, folly, idolatry, uncleanness, vile passions, perverse lusts, darkened understanding, futile thinking, ethnocentricity, and narcissism. He wanted to get himself, his wives, and his children as far away from the one-world-order-through-science, philosophy, ideology, and political theory. He suddenly longed to return to a simpler, more spiritual lifestyle – the lifestyle he had grown up watching his grandfather Avraham and his father Yitzchak live back in Eretz Yisrael. If they were still alive, he longed to introduce all his children to, and have them grow up around, their grandfather and grandmother. He wanted them to fall in love with the shepherding-trails around Shechem, Beit-El, Hebron, Be'er-Sheva, Beit-Lechem, and Yirushalayim the way his father loved them. He longed to introduce each of his children – especially *Yosef* - to Moriyah, to Modi 'in, and Machpelah. He longed to take his family for long, leisurely walks in the Negev, where songs of praise to the Holy One echoed from hilltop to hilltop and from wadi to wadi. His heart ached to lead his family back to the epicenter of Glorious Light. Surely his penance for deceiving his father and manipulating the birthright and blessing was close to being paid. Surely he and his family had endured enough dark energy insults in exile. Surely by now the Glorious Land the Holy One had promised to his grandfather's seed – and thus to him and his seed - was groaning in eager expectation for the sons of the Covenant to make their return.

Patience, Ya'akov. All in good time. You will return to your father's house, but this is not the appointed time. The reality is that you are not ready for the challenges that will attend your return to the land of Promise. You are not ready for the confrontations with first Lavan, then Esav, that must precede your re-unification with your father. Moreover, it is not just <u>you</u> that has to be ready for the challenges ahead; your wives and children must be ready as well. Moreover, the pathway of your exodus must be prepared. So, you and your family will spend six more Yom Kippur's in Charan. For six more growing seasons your wives and children will have to tread water in this brackish backwater of dark energy! But fear not. The Divine Shepherd of Beit-El – the 'God of Avraham' and the 'Fear of Yitzchak' – is watching over you as He promised. He is fully committed, fully invested, and fully engaged - twenty-four hours every day. He is working all things together for good for you and yours. You will make it through this – and *so will your family*. And when you eventually do go out, the Holy One will make sure that you do not go out empty-handed.

The Consuming Power of Dark Energy

Ya'akov knew that his fellow humans in Paddan-Aram - including the members of his own family – had a major 'dark energy' problem. And so do our fellow men, today, wherever we may encounter them. As a result of man's insatiable appetite for and consumption of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of *tov v'ra* [often construed by the mind of Western man to mean 'good' and 'evil'], you see, vast pools of dark energy are now growing everywhere – and threatening to take over – our world. Much like the tar pits in the Valley of Sodom, these pools of dark energy are constantly threatening to *swallow unwary men, women, and children whole*. Dark energy reservoirs like anger, fear, offense, worry, hate, greed, lust, accusation, blame, depression, pseudo-intelligence, and self-absorption threaten to *engulf human beings in darkness*, and then slowly *drain the shalom*, *rob the joy, suck the hope,* and *bleed the life* out of them. This process of slow, agonizing dehumanization and death that these pools of dark energy have in mind for you does not, however, have to be your fate. Nor does it have to be the fate of your children, or children's children. Nor, for that matter, does it have to be the fate of any human being - born or unborn. The Holy One has designed a more excellent way. He has established His Instructions for Living[3] with an energy far stronger than any of the dark energy pools. His Words are 'Light Energy'[4]. He has infused His Words – and all who receive and walk in them - with power to recognize, face, transcend, and overcome the challenges of dark energy. He therefore offers every man, every household, every bloodline, and every city and village a far *better fate* than sinking slowly in the quicksand of darkness. He has not forsaken His Creation. He has set in motion a Glorious Plan to bring about the Redemption of mankind from dark energy and the Restoration of Creation to its originally intended Edenic state. What is the mechanism through which the Holy One intends to introduce and effectuate that Plan? It is *the Avrahamic Covenant*. The Covenant the Holy One cut with our ancestor Avraham is the best news anyone – or any planet - will ever hear. In that Covenant resides hope for all families and bloodlines on the face of the earth.

Understanding the Avrahamic Covenant

Through participation in the Avrahamic Covenant, humankind has been offered *a Transcender's Way* through the pools of dark energy that pollute the world. Merely by walking with the Creator down the pathways of that Covenant, humankind can

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[3] The 'Instructions for Living' the Author is talking about are every word recorded in Scripture that is spoken with the Divine Voice. It all started with ***Yehi Ohr*** – *i.e.* 'let there be light!' **Genesis 1:3.** Specifically in relation to the Avrahamic Covenant it began with ***Lech Lecha*** – *i.e.* go out for/to become yourself!' **Genesis 12:1-3.**

[4] Hence the Psalmist describes the Holy One's Words as a *lamp unto my feet* and a *light unto my path*.

avail itself of an *Overcomer's Destiny.* So, what are the *essential elements of the Avrahamic Covenant?* The first is *sh'ma-ing the Voice and following the instructions of the Creator*. ***Lech Lecha*** *– go out for/to find yourself* ... He said to Avraham. And so it is for us. Walking in the Covenant way means breaking free from the familiar fountains through which dark energy has been affecting us. This involves the people, places, institutions, cultures, customs, traditions, and ideas that been most severely infiltrated by, and which now ooze, dark energy. If we are to transcend dark energy, and live as *children of the light*[5], we cannot stay attached to or limited by our 'false identity' markers – labels like race, national origin, ethnicity, skin color, tribal affiliation, clan, geographical region, political persuasion, ideological bent, economic class, movement, crusade, or self-concept. That does not mean we disrespect or dishonor our parents, our race, national origin, etc. – but it does mean we recognize and reject the unhealthy, counter-productive thought and behavior patterns; the out-of-control sensuality and the misplaced sentimentality; the wounds, scars, and offenses; and the hypersensitivities, proclivities to folly, and misdirections, that have attached themselves to these false identity markers over the ages.

The second critical element of the Avrahamic Covenant is *aman-ing the person and essential seed of the Holy One Himself.* Genesis 15:6. *This aman*-ing is not just 'believing' as our English translations suggest. *Aman*-ing is *becoming pregnant with another life force, carrying that life force to term in embryonic state, then birthing it, then nurturing it to maturity, and ultimately reproducing it in meaningful ways.* This involves changing everything about one's life and utilization of time, resources, passion, giftings and influence to accommodate and give full effect to that life force.

The third critical element of the Avrahamic Covenant is *walking before – i.e. in a constant state of awareness of the Presence of - the Holy One* and *therefore perpetually being cleansed, made over, and made whole*. **Genesis 17:1.**

The fourth critical element of the Avrahamic Covenant is *instructing one's children and one's household after him how to keep the way of the Holy One by asah-ing tzedakah and mishpat – i.e.* building those things out of whatever raw materials life provides them, and exerting continuous effort and skill to cause those things to take visible shape and have recognizable form and impact. **Genesis 18:19.**

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[5] Ephesians 5:8 ff***: For you were once darkness, but now you are light in th Lord. Walk as children of light ... finding out what is acceptable to the Lord; and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.***

The fifth critical element of the Avrahamic Covenant is responding affirmatively to the call of the Holy One, when it comes, to take the person[s], thing[s], idea[s], or relationship[s] to the land of Moriyah, lay them on the altar, and surrender them to the Holy One to do with as He wills. **Genesis 22:2.**

Navigating the Tar Pits, and Fending off Encroachment of the Dark Energy

How are you coming with the essential elements of the Covenant so far, Dear One? *Vayetze* is all about learning to recognize, resist, navigate around, transcend, and overcome the toxic effects of the vast toxic pools of dark energy that now exist in us, in our families, in our cultures, in our institutions, and in our particular ethnic, national, racial, economic, geographical, political, and ideological identifications. Our ancestor Ya'akov [Jacob] is currently the man on the point of the spear. He is destined to be the prototypical *Hebrew of the Diaspora*. We are watching him in the fight of his life - a fight not just for *survival* but for *integrity* and for *faithfulness to the Avrahamic Covenant*. This fight is for him – and always will be for us – fought largely *in enemy territory*, *behind enemy lines*.

For a son or daughter of the Covenants, life anywhere outside of *Eretz Yisrael* – the land promised to Avraham and his seed forever - is life in Exile. Such a life may at times be pleasant and prosperous; at other times such a life is fraught with persecution and pain. It usually starts with some level of favor from the locals. But the favor is utilitarian in nature, and it always evaporates into thin air at the first sign of trouble. The favor of men like Lavan, and cultures like the West, quickly turns first to suspicion, then to persecution. When the first signs of that appear, we are supposed to realize that our toxic season of separation from our homeland needs to come to an end. We need to get OUT – as fast as possible. Bags need to be packed. Exits need to be made. Where should we go? Our next stop may be another land of exile, and another challenging obstacle course of dark energy cesspools. But one day - and hopefully soon - our destination will be *Eretz Yisrael.* That is home. Everything else will eventually turn into a death trap.

We need the soil of *Eretz Yisrael.* It is life and health and peace to us. We need to walk the hills around Jerusalem. We need to breathe the desert air of the Negev around Hebron and Be'er-Sheva. We need to make *mikveh* in the Yarden and at Gihon spring. We need to experience silent awe at the sight of Hermon, the Golan, Karmel, Kinneret, the Judean Desert, the Dead Sea, and the Valley of Megiddo. We need to see the date palms rising up majestically from the desert floor around En Gedi, the fig, olive, and pomegranate trees bearing fruit in the Galil, and majestic oaks and cedars swaying peacefully in the breezes of places like Beit-El,

Petach Tikva, Haifa, and Safed. It isn't 'Holy Land Tours', bargains at the *shuk*, or even prayers at the *Kotel* we need. What we need goes deeper than any physical structure or modern city or marketplace. It goes deeper than history or religion or politics or philosophy. It goes deeper than bloodlines and Bible characters. What we need is to reconnect our souls to the blessed Land itself. We need to reconnect with the blessing of Creativity and Fruitfulness the Holy One placed upon that soil. And we need to reconnect with the Divine Purpose and Plan the Holy One wants to release from there to the world – in our day, in our time. May the Holy One end the present separation – and heal our hearts. And may He do it soon!

In Exile – But Not Alone!

For us, Exile is happening in places like America, Africa, Europe, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Japan, and Iceland. For our ancestor Ya'akov the location of exile was the village of Charan in Mesopotamia. Charan was a place of *compromise* and *settling for less than God's best*. So it is with our places of Exile. Charan is also a place that we in these studies have come to call Lavan*'s world*. But Lavan's influence and ways of deception are felt in every land of Exile known to man.

As today's aliyah begins Ya'akov has already been in Lavan's world for approximately 14 years. What exactly has our ancestor been doing all these years in Lavan's world, you ask? Well, the purpose for which Ya'akov initially came to this place was to take himself a wife from among the daughters of Lavan. That he has done. In fact, Ya'akov has been tricked into taking not just one but TWO DAUGHTERS OF THE HOUSE OF LAVAN AS WIVES.

Ya'akov left his father's camp at Be'er-sheva with nothing but a blessing. He acquired no material possessions at all along the way. So upon arriving at Charan he had no choice but to sell himself as an indentured servant in order to acquire the 'bride price' for the maiden he had been sent to find and take as a wife. He has labored a total of 14 years for nothing but the hand of Lavan's youngest daughter, Rachel. Lavan insisted on Ya'akov also marrying his oldest daughter, Leah, so he now has two wives. And yet Ya'akov still owns absolutely nothing in the way of material possessions except the tunic on his back. Lavan and his sons will soon dispute his right to possess even that.

Ya'akov owns not one ounce of silver to start a new life in Eretz Yisrael. He owns not a single nugget of gold with which to barter for food for his family. Lavan has made sure that Ya'akov owns not so much as one sheepdog – much less any herds, no flocks, no land, no wells or watering rights. He does not even allow Ya'akov

the dignity of owning the tent in which he lives. Everything around him – including his own labor - belongs to Lavan. And Lavan will never let him forget it.

The Balance Sheet of Life – Which Side Should Be our Focus?

As we begin our study today the asset side of Ya'akov's earthly balance sheet reflects that all he has in the world are two wives [Leah and Rachel] two maidservant/concubines [Bilhah and Zilpah], 11 sons, and one daughter. There is some really good news about Ya'akov's balance sheet, however. That good news is found on the opposite side from the listing of assets. The side I am talking about is the liability side of the balance sheet. Finally, for Ya'akov, that side reflects a big fat ZERO. After 14 years of indentured servanthood Ya'akov is finally 100% debt-free. He now owes no human being – including - so much as a shekel.

Ya'akov's days of indentured servanthood in 's house are now accomplished. He is free at last - free to go wherever he wants, whenever he wants. He is free to stay ... or he is free to leave. He has nothing more to bind him to 's house. Well, there is *one little thing*. If he leaves Charan now, you see, he will leave without a single shekel of silver, without a single nugget of gold, without a single ram or ewe or donkey or camel. Indeed, if he leaves now he will leave without so much as a pigeon or turtledove. If he leaves now he will leave without a single morsel of food for the journey, much less a cent of capital with which to establish himself when he makes his return to Eretz Kena'an. That is not the way Ya'akov's grandfather Avram left Charan. And that will not be how Ya'akov will be leaving Charan either.

Returning to the Theme of Radical 'Departures'

Make no mistake - before today's aliyah is over our ancestor *Ya'akov* [Jacob] will indeed leave the house of Lavan. He will indeed depart from Charan and begin in earnest his journey of return to the fragrant and fruitful hills of Eretz Yisrael. And mark my words – when that happens the 'departure' scene will be an experience that will foreshadow both *the exodus from Egypt* and the final return of the remnant of the Holy One's people from the present *Diaspora*.

As Pharaoh will do with regard to Ya'akov's offspring a few centuries hence Lavan will resist Ya'akov's exodus and will refuse to let the people of the Covenant go. And as will be the case in the time of the escape of Ya'akov's descendants from Egypt the result of Pharaoh's resistance will be that by the supernatural working of the Holy One the Holy One's people will carry with them, from their exile, *the wealth of the one they have been made to serve*.

Ya'akov will not leave Charan empty-handed any more than his descendants will leave Egypt empty-handed. But prepare for a lot of bricks and storehouses to be forged by hard labor in the interim!

Ya'akov First Attempt to Make Aliyah

As soon as the fourteen-year period that *Ya'akov* had worked for Rachel had expired, right around the time Rachel gave birth to Yosef, Ya'akov sought Lavan's permission to take his new family and ***go back to*** *[his]* ***homeland***. The 'deal' he had made with Laban had been that he would serve him 7 years for *Leah-in-Rachel's-clothing*. The deal got amended to seven more years of work for Rachel herself. Both of those seven-year commitments were fulfilled. Why should he stay around in – and continue to subject his family to - this toxic environment? What could possibly tempt him to keep working for someone as dishonest and manipulative as Laban ... when he had earned his freedom?

Laban knew Ya'akov's Achilles heel – it was, after all, a weakness he had inherited from his mother, Rivkah, from his grandfather Betu'el, and from his great-great grandfather Nachor. Laban knew Ya'akov loved the thrill of 'wheeling and dealing'. So, he offered Ya'akov a deal he was sure the young man could not refuse.

The Labans of this world know all the tricks and pull out all the stops. Look carefully at his manipulation tactics. First he played Ya'akov's emotions like a fiddle:

Vayomer elav im-na matzati chen
'Haven't I earned your friendship?' replied.

Pretty slick, huh? Guilt trip much? The answer, of course, was an unqualified 'NO, YOU HAVE MOST DEFINITELY NOT EARNED MY FRIENDSHIP'. You have used and deceived me at every turn! Alas, Ya'akov was not seeing the situation clearly yet. Receiving no rebuff from his 'fish-on-the-line', Laban proceeded to set the 'hook':

b'eineicha nichashti
'I have made use of divination

v'yevarcheni Adonai b'g'laleicha
and have learned that it is because of you that the Holy One has blessed me.'

Oh, *this guy is GOOD! Careful now, Ya'akov ... this is your Serpent alert!* The last time we saw someone this good at manipulating people was in the Garden, and had to do with a piece of fruit!

But Lavan is not finished. While Ya'akov was still reeling from the 'God has put us together' bullet-point brings the *piece de resistance* – Lavan played to Ya'akov's pride and ambition:

Vayomar nakvah sechareicha alai v'etenah
'Just name your price!' said [Lavan]. 'I will give it!'
[Genesis 30:27-28]

Hook Line and Sinker!

As Lavan expected, Ya'akov fell for this deception. He took the bait hook, line and sinker. In exchange for even more years of labor, Ya'akov proposes that he receive all [a] spotted, [b] streaked, and [c] off-color animals in or born to the flocks Lavan has placed under his charge. Lavan orally agreed to Ya'akov's terms because it is a relative oddity, in Syria, for a sheep to be born anything other than white or a goat to be born anything other than black. What a fool he thought Ya'akov was! And even the more so because he had a plan to assure Ya'akov got virtually nothing.

The Great Pretender's Fateful Last Trick

What was 's devious plan? Torah tells us plainly:

V'yasar b'yom hahu et ha-teyashim ha-akudim
That day [Lavan] removed the ringed and streaked he-goats,

v'hatlu'im v'et kol ha-izim ha-nekudot
and all the spotted and streaked she-goats –

v'ha-tlu'ot kol-asher- bo v'chol-chum baksavim
everyone with a trace of white, and every sheep with dark markings.

V'yiten b'yad-b'nav
These he gave to his sons.

V'yasem derech shloshet yamim beyno uveyn Ya'akov
He then separated himself from Ya'akov by the distance of a three-day journey.

v'Ya'akov ro'eh et-tzon Lavan ha-notarot
Ya'akov was left tending Lavan 's remaining sheep.
[Genesis 30:35-36]

Now wait a minute. Had Lavan not just agreed to let Ya'akov have all spotted, streaked, an offcolor animals that Ya'akov found in his flocks and herds "today"? Now he is personally running through the flocks and herds pulling out every animal Ya'akov might claim and giving them to his sons – all before Ya'akov can get out to the fields to inspect the animals and claim his property. He not only gave the animals he had promised to Ya'akov to his sons, he covered up his deception by removing the promised animals three days' journey away. This meant that:

[a] Ya'akov would start with absolutely nothing, and

[b] the spotted/streaked/off-color animals in the existing herds and flocks could not crossbreed with the solid-color animals he left for Ya'akov to tend, making it almost impossible, in the natural, for Ya'akov to develop any significant flock or herd.

Lavan thought, in accordance with every principle of natural genetics he knew, that he would thereby prevent Ya'akov from getting any benefit whatever from his bargain. Basic principles of science as he knew it – and a lifetime of experience – told him that if solid color animals mated with solid-color animals, they would have solid-color offspring – forever! That would mean Ya'akov would never get a single animal.

Lavan is such a schemer! But he does not seem to understand the law of sowing and reaping. What goes around .... well, you do know how that ends, don't you?

Who's Fooling Who?

All Lavan's best efforts at manipulating the situation notwithstanding, we are about to see that the promise the Holy One made to Ya'akov at *Beit-El* fourteen years previously[6] was far more powerful than even natural principles of genetic science. The Holy One over-ruled natural genetics. He instructed Ya'akov in *supernatural* genetics. It was through supernatural genetics that the Holy One planned to transfer virtually all the wealth he had allowed Lavan to acquire during Ya'akov's tenure from him to Ya'akov.

The Holy One had Lavan on a leash all along. Lavan was merely a pawn in the Holy One's hand. And pawns must always eventually bow before knights.

The Holy One let both Lavan and Ya'akov think Ya'akov had done something to reverse the natural genetic propensities of 's sheep and goats – but what really happened was that the Holy One supernaturally intervened on behalf of Ya'akov in accordance with his Covenant promises **(**see **Genesis 28:13-15),** with the blessing Yitzchak had spoken **(**see **Genesis 27:28),** and in faithfulness to his covenant with Avraham. What really happened was that the Holy One made good on His promise to *be with* and to *bless* Ya'akov. What really occurred was that the Holy One honored the prayer Yitzchak spoke over Ya'akov-in-Esav's-clothing twenty years ago, when he said:

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[6] This promise is found at Genesis 28:13-15. The conclusion of the promise was: ***Behold, I* am *with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.***

... may the Holy One give you of the dew of heaven,
of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine.
May peoples serve you and nations bow down to you.
May you be master over your brethren, and may your mother's sons bow down to you.
Cursed [be] everyone who curses you, and blessed [be] those who bless you!"
[Genesis 27:28-29]

In other words *don't be in a hurry to run out and try Ya'akov's striped-poles-at-the-watering-holes trick on your livestock at home* – it probably won't work. It was not the shrewdness of Ya'akov's *plan* that allowed him to prosper, you see – it was *the outworking of the Covenant his grandfather had made with the Creator of Heaven and Earth*!

Of course, the source of the wealth that Ya'akov is experiencing does not matter to Lavan or his sons. They don't care HOW or WHY Ya'akov is acquiring wealth. They see merely that Ya'akov – who is definitely not one of them - is prospering while they are not. And that DOES NOT MAKE THEM HAPPY! Just as the Ph'lishtim had begun to hate Yitzchak as soon as the Holy One caused him to prosper in their land, so Lavan and his sons began to hate Ya'akov as soon as the Holy One caused him to prosper in their land. Torah describes this in the opening lines of Genesis chapter 31:

Vayish'ma et-divrei b'nei- l'emor
And Ya'akov began to hear things that Lavan's sons were saying,

lakach Ya'akov et kol-asher l'avinu
'Ya'akov has taken everything belonging to our father.

ume'asher l'avinu asah et kol-ha-kavod hazeh
and from that which was our father's he has made all this glory.

Making a Living? Or Making Glory?

Did you catch the last phrase Lavan's sons just threw out? They accused Ya'akov of taking that which was their father's and *making kavod*. Some English Bibles translate the Hebrew word *kavod* in this instance as *'wealth'*. But more frequently, and more accurately, it is translated 'glory'.

Why would the sons of Lavan the pagan deceiver refer to what Ya'akov made as '*glory*'? The sons of Lavan may just be on to something. While we thought Ya'akov was just trying to make a living since he started his new arrangement with Lavan, perhaps he has been doing something far more important. Perhaps instead of making a living, Ya'akov has really been 'making glory'.

What is ‘glory’ you ask? Glory is ‘*weight’*. What is ‘*weight*’, you ask? Weight is different from mass. Mass is the quantity of substance in a thing. “Weight” on the other hand, is not a substance at all, but the evidence of a force. Specifically it is the evidence of the force that the *applicable sources of* gravitational pull exert on an object.

What Ya’akov has done is simply to *tap into the glory*. He has just taken advantage of the gravitational pull that the Words of the Holy One inside of him are exerting upon the material possessions of Lavan and his sons. Picture a snowball rolling down hill, collecting snow from the hillside as it goes. The Words of the Holy One constitute the snowball. Lavan’s wealth is the hillside. The force of Divine gravity is pulling everything Ya’akov gets close to away from Lavan and attaching it to Ya’akov. That is the glory principle – it is *the force that draws resources from both natural Creation and Heaven to its activator ... like a magnet draws steel*. May each of us learn to be good stewards of, and may the whole earth be filled with the knowledge of, this glory!

Ya’akov’s Second God-Encounter*: Twenty Long Years after Beit-El!*

Remember that Ya’akov’s first God-encounter - at *Beit-El* on the way to Lavan’s house - had been an indirect one. It had happened in the midst of a dream. **Genesis 28:12-15**.

Why had the first revelation of the Holy One been in the form of *a dream?* Probably because a dream is regarded as *the lowest realm of revelation* - the realm of revelation for those who are not at all intimate with the Holy One (e.g. Avimelech, Lavan, the baker and the cupbearer of Egypt, Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, the magi of Matthew), or who are having trouble listening to Him on a particular subject due to misinformation or mistaken teaching of spiritual leaders (e.g. Kefa [Peter], regarding the appropriate level of interaction with goyim/gentiles). That was Ya’akov’s condition in a nutshell.

Ya’akov’s father Yitzchak and his grandfather Avraham had been *men of prayer* who *worshipped the Holy One*. Ya’akov, however, was not ‘getting’ it yet. Prayer is not something you can learn – prayer is a reverential response to the revelation of the Majesty and Kindness of the Holy One. Without a revelation of the Holy One’s Eminent Majesty and Kindness, there can be no meaningful prayer life.

So the Holy One caught Ya’akov in an unconscious dream-state where he could not run or talk his way out of the encounter - and He showed the young man just a fleeting glimpse of the fringes of His Majesty.

Now in Genesis 31:3, after 20 long years of silence, the Holy One decides to Divinely interact with Ya'akov again. This time, however, the Holy One raises the level of revelation from dream-revelation to speaking directly into Ya'akov's stream of consciousness. A dream-line image of someone enthroned atop a stairway manned by angels is one thing; but hearing the actual Voice that Created the Universe speaking in real time is something else altogether! Here is how Torah records this God-encounter:

Vayomer Adonai el-Ya'akov
The Holy One said to Ya'akov,

shuv el eretz avoteicha ul'moladeteicha
'Go back to your birthplace in the land of your fathers

v'ehyeh imach
I will be with you.'
[Genesis 31:3]

The Shofar of Heaven has sounded. It is finally Ya'akov's year of Jubilee. The appointed time on Heaven's calendar for Ya'akov to go home has finally arrived. Ya'akov has finally been freed and empowered to return again - to the Land from which he has been Exiled now for so long. May it be so for us as well! All that is left to work out and work through is the process of the next radical departure.

Finally … We're On Our Way Home!

Hearing the word of the Holy One that he is finally released to leave, Ya'akov catches Lavan away from home for a few days at sheep shearing time and uses the opportunity to speak to Leah and Rachel about leaving. Ya'akov is apparently not quite ready to tell Leah and Rachel that God is speaking to him *directly* - so he relates to them a story about a "dream" which he did not really have [at least according to the record of Torah]. **See Genesis 31:10-13.** To give his story an air of legitimacy he related it not to the previous day when the actual interaction with the Holy One occurred but to "breeding season" when the whole striped-poles-at-the-water-holes routine came into being. **Genesis 31:10.**

Lavan's manipulations are about to come home to roost. Rachel and Leah did not agree on much, but when Ya'akov mentioned leaving their father's house forever they did not hesitate to agree on one very important thing:

Rachel and Leah answered and said to him,
"Is there still any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house?
Are we not considered strangers by him?
For he has sold us, and also completely consumed our money.

For all these riches which God** [Elohim] **has taken from our father
are* really *ours and our children's;
***now then, whatever God** [Elohim] **has said to you, do it**.*
[Genesis 31:14-16]

With Leah and Rachel in total agreement, Ya'akov is ready to take his leave (remember, the name of this week's parsha is "*and he departed*"). It is time to pack the camels ... and make a prototypical Exodus.

Rachel's Little Souvenir of Lavan's World

Ya'akov will not go out of Exile empty-handed. He will take with him the abundant possessions his presence brought to Lavan's house, which have by the Holy One's grace and blessing, now become *his*. Unbeknownst to Ya'akov however, as his little 'God-squad' is preparing to leave Lavan's world forever his younger, more impetuous and self-willed wife, Rachel, is doing something of which he would not approve. As she is packing her things to leave, Rachel made one little 'impulse acquisition'. She decided to take a little something of her father's with her, as well - something that absolutely guarantees that Lavan will come after them in hot pursuit, much like Pharaoh will do with regard to Ya'akov's descendants a few centuries later. Torah describes Rachel's actions as follows:

Rachel et ha-terafim asher l'aviha
Rachel stole the occult instruments of healing that belonged to her father.
[Genesis 31:19 (b)]

Rachel, Beloved Matriarch of Israel - what on earth were you thinking?[7] Why are you taking your father's *dark energy* amplifiers with you? The idea was to get Yosef – not to mention the baby your father doesn't know you are carrying - *away from* the dark energy of Charan – not to carry it with you!

What Terafim Have We Taken From our Father's House?

The Hebrew word that Torah uses to describe what Rachel stole from her father's house is *terafim*. Most English translations of this ancient text have rendered this unusual Hebrew word as 'household gods' or 'idols'. But let us look deeper – at the verb at the root of it all. That verb root is *resh, feh, alef – i.e. rafa*. You know this word, don't you? It means *he/it heals, cures, relieves symptoms, and/or makes well*. So, what are *terafim*? Add a *tav* prefix to *rafa* (to make the word *terafa*) and you get a noun referring to whatever a particular person or culture considers

[7] The sages have found ways to justify Rachel's actions despite the compromise they represent and the trouble they caused. According to the commentary of Bible.ort.org. for instance, "some say [Rachel's theft of the household idols] was to prevent her father from worshipping them (*Bereshit Rabbah* 74; Rashi). Others maintain that it was to prevent him from using them in divination to find Ya'akov. (*Tanchuma* 12; Rashbam; Ibn Ezra; cf. **Genesis 30:27; Hosea 3:4, Zechariah 10:2**). Still others maintain that Rachel took them to gain her father's pardon (Josephus 1:19:9).

analgesic, therapeutic, or health-enhancing. Each culture, you see, has its *shamans*, *witchdoctors*, *potions*, *procedures*, and *pills*. Based primarily upon the narrative and mystique that prevails in his/her culture, public forums, information/education systems, and households, each person develops ideas of what 'heals', brings 'relief', comfort, keeps disease away, and/or makes everything feel better. I will just leave that right there for you to think about … *Rachel.*

The Covenant People Become the Objects of Hot Pursuit For the First Time

When Lavan and his sons returned from sheep shearing, he found his little encampment very, very quiet. Ya'akov, Rachel, Leah, his grandchildren, and even his household idols were gone – vanished as into thin air. Lavan was absolutely *furious*. He mustered an army [does this sound like Pharaoh and his chariots to you?] and pursued Ya'akov all the way to the hill country of Gilead. His statements at the encounter that ensued provide a perfect example of revisionist history at work.

Vayomer Lavan l'Ya'akov meh asita
Lavan said to Ya'akov, 'How could you do this?

Vatig'nov et-levavi v'tenaheg et-b'notai kishvuyot charev
You stole behind my back and led my daughters away like prisoners of war!

Lamah nach'beita livroach
Why did you have to leave so secretly?

Vatig'nov oti v'lo-higadeita li
You stole behind my back and told me nothing!

v'ashalechacha b'simcha uv'shirim betoch uv'chinor
Why, I would have sent you off with celebration and song, with drum and lyre!

V'lo netash'tani l'nashek l'vanai v'livnotai
But you didn't even let me kiss my daughters and grandchildren goodbye

atah hiskalta aso
What you have done is very foolish.
[Genesis 31:26-28]

Clothing himself in self-righteous indignation, Lavan took up an offended air and a victim's rage and accused Ya'akov of not leaving under proper terms. "*If you had just told me you wanted to leave, I would have sent you out properly, with prayer and laying on of hands"*, he might have said. It all sounds so *spiritual*, doesn't it? But it was not spiritual at all. Remember that the Holy One had told Ya'akov in no uncertain terms to go. He *had* to go ... whether Lavan – or anybody for that matter - liked it or not. Moreover, the Holy One had revealed to Ya'akov - and even to

Leah and Rachel - that Lavan simply could not be trusted. Had Ya'akov gone to Lavan and told him he was considering leaving, what do you think Lavan would have done? Remember what he did the last time Ya'akov tried such a thing!

The Lavans of this world, you see, are *takers*. They are experts at making themselves appear as "victims" by twisting the facts - and at laying "guilt trips" on people. If Lavan had known any, I am sure he would have quoted Scripture at Ya'akov - out of context, of course. Lavan was a highly skilled manipulator. What is more, his heart was hardened, and he could not be reasoned with. So when the Holy One said "go" Ya'akov went. He departed.

Ya'akov had finally learned that he did not need Lavan's *permission*. He now understood that he did not need Lavan's "*covering*". He even realized that he did not need Lavan's *blessing*. Why did Ya'akov not need these things? Because Dear Reader – and this is VERY important - because *he had a covenant with the Holy One, and the Holy One, his covenant partner, had said he could – indeed must – go*. That is all any of us needs. So don't let -like manipulators - or the guilt trips that they spin your way - fool you or hold you back from your destiny.

Questions For Today's Study

1. In the last few verses of yesterday's aliyah we were told that the Holy One released Rachel from her barrenness, allowing her to bear *Ya'akov* [Jacob] a son.

[A] What does Torah say brought about the opening of Rachel's womb?

[B] In Strong's Concordance and Gesenius' Lexicon look up the word translated as "remembered" in Genesis 30:22 [NIV]. Write the Hebrew word and its definitions. In this context, what definition do you think is most appropriate?

[C] Do you see any evidence of a change in Rachel's heart between the birth of *Naftali* **[Genesis 30:7-8]** and the birth of her own son? Explain your answer.

2. With regard to Ya'akov's initial approach to Lavan concerning going back to Kena'an:

[A] List all the things Ya'akov asked of Lavan.

[B] Lavan's response to this approach consisted of 3 parts. List the parts.

[C] The third part of Lavan's response [name your wages] played on Ya'akov's materialistic tendencies, so he "bit" on that aspect. What were the terms he spelled out for staying and taking care of Lavan's flocks?

[D] Immediately after Lavan agreed to Ya'akov's terms, what unethical thing did he do to make sure Ya'akov did not get any benefit from the bargain?

[E] After Lavan took steps to totally deprive Ya'akov of the agreed wages,

did Ya'akov back out on the "deal"?

[F] What did Ya'akov do to remedy the situation, and cause Lavan's deception to "backfire"?

[G] How do you think what Ya'akov did at the watering troughs of the flocks led to him acquiring not only large flocks, but also "maidservants and menservants, and camels and donkeys" as Genesis 30:43 indicates occurred.

[H] When Ya'akov began to accumulate wealth, what did Lavan's sons (brothers of Rachel and Leah) begin to say about him?

3. In regard to Ya'akov's second God-encounter, as described in today's aliyah:

[A] What instructions does the Holy One give Ya'akov?

[B] What promise does the Holy One make to Ya'akov?

[C] How do you think this message to Ya'akov relates to the "deal" Ya'akov made with the Holy One back in Genesis 28:20-22?

4. When Ya'akov spoke to Leah and Rachel about leaving the story note that there is no reference to prayer or to an agreement with God's will in the response of Rachel or Leah.

[A] What reasons <u>do</u> Rachel and Leah give for agreeing to leave with Ya'akov?

[B] As Ya'akov was gathering up his wives, children, and belongings and departed Charan, what was his declared <u>destination</u>?

[C] What did Rachel take with her that belonged to Lavan?

[D] After he actually escaped Charan, how did Ya'akov's destination change?

[E] How many days did Ya'akov and his caravan travel before Lavan and his army caught up to him?

[F] In Genesis 31:24, the Holy One appears to Lavan in a dream. What did He tell Lavan?

[G] Did Lavan *sh'ma* this instruction of the Holy One's? Explain your answer.

[H] What did Lavan say he would have done to "send Ya'akov off/out" if Ya'akov [Ya'akov] had told him he was leaving?

[I] About what did Lavan try to lay a "guilt trip" on Ya'akov?

[J] How did Lavan attempt to make himself seem more "righteous" than Ya'akov?

5. In today's haftarah reading the Holy One indicates that even though Efrayim (the tribes of the Northern Kingdom) will not step up and fulfill the destiny for which the Holy One had called them forth from Rachel, he would not let that destiny fail -

even if it took RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD. In verses 15 and 16 he then explains why resurrection from the dead will be exactly what is necessary!

[A] In Strong's and Gesenius look up the words that our English Bibles translate as "*power*", "*graves*" and "*death*" in verse 14. Write each of the Hebrew words and their definitions.

[B] In Strong's and Gesenius look up the words that our English Bibles translate as "*plagues*" and "*destruction*" in verse 14. Write both of the Hebrew words and their definitions.

[C] In Strong's and Gesenius look up the words that our English Bibles translate as "*ransom*" and "*redeem*" in verse 14. Write both of the Hebrew words and their definitions.

[D] After telling how He will resurrect the bones of the "10 lost tribes" under Efrayim in the end days, list all the things that the Holy One says he is going to those 10 tribes that will make resurrection necessary.

[E] Why is the Holy One going to allow the horrible things of verse 16 to happen?

[F] What does the Holy One say is the "*guilt*" of the 10 tribes whose capitol was Samaria?

[G] In Strong's and Gesenius look up the word our English Bibles translate as "*guilt*" (NIV) in verse 15. Write the Hebrew word and its appropriate definition.

6. In today's reading from the account of Yochanan regarding the life and deeds of Yeshua of Natzret, we study the initial encounter between Yeshua and Natan'el.

Let's set the stage for this narrative. Yeshua has been called by Pilipos [Philip] to "come and see" Yeshua of Natzeret, who he describes as "*the one Moshe wrote about in the Torah, and about whom the prophets also wrote*". **John 1:45.** Natan'el has replied half-jokingly "*Can anything good come [from Natzeret?].* **John 1:46.**

Upon meeting Natan'el Yeshua has exclaimed: "***Here is a true son of Israel (Ya'akov*** [Ya'akov]) **- *in whom there is nothing false!"***

[A] Natan'el is taken aback by Yeshua's characterization of him. What question does he ask?

[B] In Strong's Concordance look up the Greek word our English Bibles translate as "know" in verse 48. Write the Greek word and its definitions. What Hebrew word do you think Natan'el probably used (assuming the actual conversation took place in Hebrew, not Greek), and in what way, if any, does that word contain a different shade of meaning. You will probably want to go to Richards' Expository Dictionary of Bible words and Gesenius (accessed through Strong's) to answer this question.

[C] How does Yeshua's response to Natan'el's question convince Natan'el that Yeshua is in fact the Messiah? Before you answer please read I Kings 4:22-25, and Micah 4:1- 9.

[D] What *title* and what *two descriptions* does Natan'el actually give to Yeshua?

May the Holy One speak to you continually,
with ever-increasing clarity of revelation -
and may your testimony be true and trustworthy.

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 85:10-11

Mercy and truth have met together;
righteousness and peace have kissed.
Truth will spring out of the earth,
and righteousness will look down from heaven.