Shiur L'Yom Sheni[1]

[Monday's Study]

READINGS:	***Torah Vayeitze***:	**Genesis 28:10-22**
	Haftarah:	**Hosea 12:13 - 13:3**
	B'rit Chadasha:	**John 1:35-39**

I am with you, and will watch over you wherever you go.
[Genesis 28:15]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 85:1-3;
This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition # 4, *Ga'al* *[Kinsman –Redemption]*

Vayeitze Ya'akov mi-Be'er Shava *– And Ya'akov departed from Be'er Sheva …* ***vayelech Charanah*** *- and he walked to Charan.* **Genesis 28:10.**

Welcome to the season of exile – and the *cultural lies, fleshly distractions,* and *pseudo-intelletual incitements* such a season brings. The Holy One wants us to be forewarned concerning, alert to, and prepared for the dark season of deception that we are about to encounter– a season in which absolutely nothing will be as it appears to be; where appetites, opinions, and negative emotions are skillfully manipulated into addictive behaviors, cultural biases, and mob-rage; where innuendos are far more than words and phrases; and where nothing the midway-barkers of the society around us utter can be taken at face value. Are you ready for this test, seed of Avraham? Ready or not, here it comes. This is your next wilderness test!

The Out-Workings of the Covenant – Generation III and Beyond

In the face of Esav's vow to kill him, Ya'akov has self-deported. He is taking his passionate but immature '*Covenant-Partner-in-Training'* act on the road. For the next three weeks – the three weeks leading up to the special re-dedicatory season of *Chanukah* - the spotlight of Torah will be upon *Ya'akov's God-encounters and Divinely orchestrated life-experiences*. We have already become familiar with the Face the Holy One wears as the "*God of Avraham*" and as the "*God of Yitzchak*". It is now time for us to come face-to-Face with the Holy One as the '*God of Ya'akov*" as well. In the upcoming three-week period our Torah study will actually cover *several decades of Ya'akov's life*. As these decades unfold we will accompany Ya'akov through six life-changing *encounters* with the Holy One. We will walk with him through multiple 'critical departures'[2], each prophetic in some

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[2] A 'critical departure' is to take leave of that which is familiar and comfortable and step out into a place where the ordinary schedules and routines of life have to be abandoned in order to deal with a new set of physical, emotional, and spiritual challenges. A critical departure involves significant risk and requires

way of our life in Exile. As Ya'akov was carefully guided by the Holy One through prototypical *life experience after life experience,* so will his descendants be as long as we are in Exile. As was the case with Ya'akov, each life-experience the Holy One guides us through is designed to function like *a Divine cattle-prod propelling us through spiritual doorways and presenting us with choices and decisions to make which will impact the history of mankind.*

Over the course of the next three weeks we will see the Holy One use the combination of 'God-encounters' and 'God-ordained life experiences' to mold Ya'akov into a man who would *trust the Holy One totally*, who would *sh'ma the Holy One's words wholeheartedly*, and who would both *walk in* and *teach His household* the ways of the Holy One. That is exactly what we should by now expect from the Holy One. That is what comes with THE COVENANT. It is called *emunah* in Hebrew; or, in English you might think of it as a *"lifestyle of consistent, increasing, and persevering covenant faithfulness that grows over the course of years out of walking with, serving, and learning to admire and trust the Stronger Partner in a Covenant'.*

The things the Holy One is going to do in Ya'akov's life over the decades that are chronicled in Torah's next three *parshot* – as well as the things the Holy One is doing and will in the future do in our lives – are all merely part of the outworkings of the Covenant the Holy One cut with Avraham. The Holy One does these things for Ya'akov because *Ya'akov is [a] Avraham's seed*, and *[b] chosen by the Holy One to be the functional human partner to THE COVENANT in his generation*. And that is the same reason the Holy One does what He does in <u>our</u> lives, Dear Reader. He does what He does in our lives because *we, like Ya'akov, are* [a] *Avraham's seed* [whether naturally or through engrafting in Messiah], and are [b] *chosen by the Holy One to be the functional partner to THE COVENANT in our generation.* The Creator of the Heavens and the Earth has so much in mind for us to accomplish on His Beloved planet Earth during our sojourn here – and we have so little time!

Only if you understand these things can you really hope to understand why the chronicles of the outworkings of THE COVENANT in the lives of Avraham, of Yitzchak, and of Ya'akov are given so much attention in Torah – and why the Divine Author of Torah made absolutely sure we *study*, *come to grips with*, and *rest in the intimate relationship* they provide before He gives us a single *mitzvah* to

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major adjustments to the way one looks at, thinks about, and engages with the world. This is the first of several 'critical departures' for Ya'akov. Departing Be'er-Sheva for Charan was just the beginning of his odyssey.

'fulfill'. The God of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov does not, you see, want a people who does what He says out of either *fear of punishment* or *hope of reward*. What He wants from us is a *covenant partner to walk and share His Heart with,* not a cowering slave to grovel at His feet in hopes of avoiding His wrath and receiving breadcrumbs from His table. Like our ancestor Ya'akov, however, we have much to learn.

Ya'akov' First Radical Departure

In the opening aliyah of *Vayeitze* we find young Ya'akov departing from Be'er Sheva – *i.e.* his *comfortable little cocoon*. That means he is saying goodbye to every aspect of who he has been raised to believe he is. It means that he is leaving behind his father, his mother, his brother, his home, and virtually everything else he knows of life. As his grandfather before him, he is about to become a wandering Aramean – a foreigner, and a man without a country.

Do not weep for Ya'akov, though – for this is all part of the Holy One's Grand Plan for the Redemption of mankind as a species, bloodline by bloodline, and for the Restoration of Creation, location by location, to its original intended state of beauty, fruitfulness, and *shalom*. Ya'akov doesn't know it yet, but he is about comes face-to-face with the Creator of the Universe – the Magnificent, Awe-Inspiring Persona Who had appeared to, spoken with, and befriended both his grandfather Avraham and his father Yitzchak.

After reading about the lives of Enoch, Noach, Avraham, and Yitzchak, and their interactions with the Holy One we have learned the importance of "God encounters" such as Ya'akov is about to have. These moments of face-to-face interaction reminiscent of Garden of Eden intimacy are the stuff that changes a man's [or woman's] life. And that is very good – ***tov*** - for our ancestor Ya'akov, who quite frankly has very little to commend him to us or to the world at this point.

What is *tov* for our ancestor Ya'akov is *tov* for us his descendants as well. Stay calm. Keep your eyes focused on the objective, not the immediate issue. Avoid the drama with which people and situations try to entangle you. Keep a conversation with the Creator of the Universe going at all times. Resist the temptation to interrupt that on-going conversation with the Creator to complain, rant, accuse, or blame human beings. Always be always kind - even as you hold fast to wisdom. Most of all, resolve, whatever happens to you, to continue to be a blessing and shine a beautiful Kingdom Light; and refuse to absorb or embrace anybody's darkness. You have been prepared for this all your life. Everything you have experienced thus far has been a training course. You now know the risks that come with every deviation from the Creator's Way; soon you will learn the rewards of

knowing Him, communing with Him, walking with Him, serving Him instead of yourself, and co-laboring with Him in building a counterculture of shalom and blessing instead of trying to manipulate the world according to your own ideas of good and evil, right and wrong, fair and unfair, and just and unjust.

Meet the Young Foreigner On-The-Run

A deceiver, running for his life from his brother Esav, a man without friends or even a home, Ya'akov today begins his interaction with the Most High G-d, the G-d of his father Yitzchak and his grandfather Avraham, from a virtual "*ground zero*". His life is a mess. He is a mess. He is a fugitive, running for high ground, aspiring only to escape the wrath of Esav and soothe his own feelings of guilt by finding a wife from his mother's family in Charan.

Unbeknownst to our fugitive however *SomeOne* is hunting him through the hills of Central Kena'an – indeed, SomeOne much more clever, resourceful, and dangerous than the twin brother whose wrath he fled Be'er-Sheva to escape. Who is it that is in hot pursuit of Ya'akov now? His pursuer is none other than the God of his grandfather Avraham and his father Yitzchak – the Creator of Heaven and Earth. The Holy One has Ya'akov squarely in His sights and is about to *overtake* and then *capture* this scrappy self-willed young man. And He is going to do it without so much as a fight.

Underneath his hard exterior, you see, this young troublemaker is a child of *the Covenant*. He has hungered for – and has received - both the *birthright* and the *blessing* of his father Yitzchak. And so, beginning with the aliyah of Torah we study today, and in accordance with a patient, pre-arranged Divine plan, over the course of the next few years Ya'akov is about to find out *what the blessing and the birthright mean* in real time. And he is about to discover that neither the blessing nor the birthright of a Yitzchak can be either bought or sold, earned or stolen.

The Grand Apprehension

On his way to this destination Torah tells us Ya'akov stopped for the night *ki-va ha-shemesh – i.e., "because the sun had set".*

V'yifga b'makom v'yalen sham ki-va ha-shemesh
He came to a place and spent the night there because the sun had set.

vayikach me'avnei ha-makom
He took of the stones of the place,

vayasem mera'ashotav v'yishkav b'makom hahu
and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep.
[Genesis 28:11]

Please understand that prior to this moment Ya'akov had lived his life totally in the realm of *tachat ha-shemesh* - *i.e.* what the writer of Ecclesiastes would later refer to as "*under the sun*". What does this mean, you ask? It means that Ya'akov had heretofore lived according to *the ways of a man without a personal knowledge of and relationship with God*. Warped and wounded by in-vitro combat with the physically stronger Esav he had lived up to this moment in total reliance upon the sight of his unenlightened natural eyes, the hearing of his unopened physical ears, and the reasoning of his unrenewed and Serpent-venom infected mind.

Ya'akov had heretofore known only the things that are visible and seemingly real '*under the sun'* – i.e. in the *visible*, *tangible, physical*, *very material* realm of ordinary life. Consequently, while Ya'akov undoubtedly had must have acquired some level of *head knowledge* of the God of Avraham and of Yitzchak[3] just by being present in the household of Yitzchak and Rivkah it is about to become clear that he had never actually *met* his father and grandfather's God in any personal way. He had never been *apprehended* by the Creator Himself. He had no meaningful, life-shaping relationship with the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven. He like most of the world truly knew only the light of the *yellow sun of earth's solar system* – not the True Source and Essence of Light.

But now Ya'akov has *journeyed to the outer limits of the tachat ha-shemesh realm*. He is very near the invisible boundary line of that dimension. For as Torah tells us, for him ***"the sun has set".*** Unbeknownst to Ya'akov's natural mind a whole new realm is about to open up to him. He is approaching a realm the gateway of which is not the brilliant light of the sun, but is instead the backlight of the moon – what in Hebrew is called *ohr yare'ach*. What is about to happen to Ya'akov should be understood as his introduction to the *other realm* the Holy One has created - the *realm of transcendent spiritual reality*, where that which is unseen to the natural eye of man is more real than that which can be seen by it. **II Corinthians 4:18[4]; Hebrews 11:1, 13[5].** It is this "*other", and "unseen", dimension* of life that not only *offsets* but ultimately *overshadows* the realm of *tachat ha-shemesh*.

Please do not misunderstand, however. Ya'akov is not going to be *transported out*

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[3] A Hebrew legend says that Ya'akov before the events recorded in today's aliyah Ya'akov spent fourteen years studying the Holy One's ways in *the yeshiva of Shem and Ever*, and that, during this time, according to the legend, he was not involved with material matters at all but was solely devoted to spirituality. Even if this is true, it does not change the fact that Ya'akov had never met the Holy One, and was therefore, as he departed for Charan, merely living on *borrowed revelation.*

[4] **II Corinthians 4:18**: ' ... ***we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things that are not seen. For the things that are seen*** **are** ***temporary, but the things that are not seen*** **are** ***eternal***.'

[5] **Hebrews 11;1,13**: " ***... faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen ... . By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things that are seen were not made of things that are visible.***

of the realm of 'under the sun' into the realm of spirit. He is not going to leave one realm in order to enter the other. He will instead experience the realm of spirit while still firmly planted in the physical realm. He – like we – is going to have to learn to exist, relate to, and function in *both realms/dimensions at the same time.*

The spiritual realm is not some mystic form of '*nirvana*' where super-spiritual people have ecstatic 'out of body' experiences and 'escape' reality. In fact, the spiritual realm is not a different place from our world at all. Hence throughout the experience Ya'akov's head will rest on a *real rock* on a *real hill* - even as angels ascend and descend in plain view. Man was, you see, created to function in the realms of *tachat shemesh* and *tachat yare'ach* simultaneously. It is in fact essential to man's purpose in creation that we NOT be transported out of the physical realm to the spiritual realm. Our purpose, you see, is to *bring the Personhood of God and the supernal truths of the spiritual realm <u>into</u> the physical realm*. In other words the plan of the Holy One for our lives is not merely to position us so that we can see and marvel at the famous ladder of Ya'akov's dream – *it is for us to <u>become</u> that ladder*. What that ladder was for Ya'akov our spiritual walk with the Holy One is to become to all those whom the Holy One draws within our sphere of reference. The Holy One's will for our lives is that day by day, year-by-year, angels would ascend and descend upon the *words of our mouths* and the *works of our hands*[6]. The destiny the Holy One has prepared for us is that *Shabbat-by-Shabbat, and festival-by-festival, the manifest Presence of the Holy One should become a tangible reality in the physical world of our homes, families, and communities*.

Called to Live In Awareness of and Responsiveness to Both the Greater and Lesser Lights

Please note that this is one of the great spiritual significances of the Hebrew calendar in contradistinction to the Western and Muslim calendars. The calendar of the Western world is strictly a *solar* [*tachat shemesh*] calendar, focusing solely upon the events of the phenomena of *the sun*. The calendar of the Muslim world is strictly a lunar calendar [*tachat yare'ach*], focusing solely upon the events of the phenomena of *the moon*. The Hebrew calendar is different from both of these. The Hebrew calendar focuses upon the interactions and intersections of the phenomena of both the sun and of the moon.

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[6] Consider in this regard the words of Yeshua of Natzret to Natan'el [Nathaniel] in John 1:51: He said to him, "***Most assuredly, I tell you, hereafter you will see heaven opened, and the angels of the Holy One ascending and descending on the Son of Man***." When did/will Natan'el see this? When Mashiach's talmidim become the 'ladder' in question.

The Holy One's way is for us to live *tachat shemesh* [under the sun] and *tachat yare'ach* [under the moon] simultaneously. The Holy One empowers us to *function equally well in either* form of light – and any and all degrees of darkness. He further empowers us to apply and live by the principles of the spiritual realm in both *tachat shemesh* and *tachat yare'ach* realms. If you will receive it, that is how the 'kingdom of God' is made to 'forcibly advance'.

There is A Place ... Where Worlds Collide

The location where Ya'akov set up camp when 'the sun had set' – and where he would first experience the collision of the physical and spiritual realms - is in verse 11 merely referenced by most Hebraic translations as "*the Place*" [NIV says "*a certain place*"]. It is the argument of sages that "the Place" was *Mount Moriyah* [Moriah] in the city of Melchi-tzedek - and that this explains what happened there. While this has to be considered in light of the discussion in verse 19, it is of course not beyond the realm of possibility.

The point is that the Holy One has established a *primary portal* on earth. It is in Israel. It is a place He – not man – chose and sanctified. It is a place He designed and constructed – not a building erected by man. That is what the Holy One means in Deuteronomy 12 and 14 when He speaks of a place *where He will choose to place His Name.* It was at that place, and *only* at that place, that animals are to be offered as surrogates for their owners, that first fruits, firstborns, and the *ma'aser* [tithe] are to be brought, and that all men are to make pilgrimage to celebrate *Pesach* [Passover], *Shavuot* [Pentecost], and *Chag Sukkot* [the Feast of Tabernacles]. I am, of course, speaking of *Y'rushalayim* [Jerusalem] – and in particular that hill known by some as Moriyah and others as 'Temple Mount'. The portal was/is not/will never be the *Kotel* [Wall] that stands in that location however. Nor was is it or will it ever be *any Temple*, be it first, second, third, or millennial. The portal is of purely spiritual essence, not physical or material substance. The portal in question is an intrusion of the spiritual realm into the physical realm, built from the spiritual side, by spiritual hands, and projecting into the physical side - not the other way around. Please do not, therefore, confuse any physical structure, building, institution, system, or temple with the spiritual portal the Holy One has established between the two realms. And do not suspect that just because we are not to take our tithes or offerings or make pilgrimage to any other site besides Mount Moriyah that the Holy One does not have other portals on earth. He does. He can, whenever He wants, use any square inch on earth [or in the Created universe for that matter] as a portal for revealing the spiritual realm to mortal men.

But we should understand that it is not our purpose in life to, and we need not – and indeed cannot - *build* a portal for Him with the bricks and mortar of this earth.

All He calls upon us to do is to offer ourselves to *be* a portal. He must *increase*, we must *decrease*. That does not mean our physical desires and appetites completely disappear and that we somehow get translated into *nirvana*. We simply decrease and allow Him to increase, by *letting spiritual realities and truths gradually begin to take precedence over our physical desires.* We do it by *surrendering the members of our body to loving the Holy One with all our heart, soul and strength.* We do it by *surrendering our faculties of speech to declaring the truths of His Torah when we lie down and when we rise up, as we sit in our homes and as we walk by the way*. And we do it *by inscribing everywhere we go, through the influence of our conduct and attitude, the Constitution of His Kingdom* [which is of course the Torah]. Ah, but the ability to understand – much less do – that effectively depends upon us having a real and meaningful relationship with the God of the Torah. And such a relationship only comes through God encounters – like our forefather Ya'akov is about to have in today's aliyah.

Ya'akov's First-Ever God Encounter

Please note that as the dramatic God-encounter experience of Genesis 28 occurs there is nothing in the text of Torah to suggest that Ya'akov is looking for God. It appears from the text that he is just *tired*, *lonely,* and *unable to go any further in his flight* from Esav's wrath. In this treacherous and unfamiliar terrain he simply could not see well enough to travel at night. So, young Ya'akov laid his head down for the night. Sounds like the normal thing to do, right? Ah, but what occurs next in the narrative of today's aliyah is not normal at all. It is *beyond wonderful*, *beyond imagination*, and *beyond stunning*. It is the second Biblical reference to a human being receiving revelation from the Holy One through a dream [the first was in parsha *Vayera*, when Avimelech received a dream from the Holy One concerning Sarai. **Genesis 20:3**].

Ya'akov's Amazing Technicolor Dream

Ya'akov's first-ever God-encounter is, we soon find out, going to start with a dream. For Torah tells us:

V'yachalom v'hineh sullam mutzav ar'tzah
And he [Ya'akov] dreamed - and behold, a stairway[7] was set up on the eretz,

V'rosho magia ha-shamay'mah
and the top of it reached to heaven.

[7] The word our English Bibles translate as 'stairway' or 'ladder' in this verse is the Hebrew word ***sulam***, *samech, lamed, mem sofit*, Strong's Hebrew word # 5551, pronounced *sool-lawm'.* This word is derived from the verb root *salal, samech, lamed, lamed,* Strong's Hebrew word #5549, pronounced *saw-lawl',* meaning to *lift up* or to *cast up.*

v'hineh mal'acheio Elohim olim v'yoreidim bo

And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

[Genesis 28:12]

Most of us only remember this first act of the drama. We fixate on the marvelous and mystical dream-vision of the 'stairway to Heaven' where angels ascend and descend. We have come to call what Ya'akov saw in his dream '*Jacob's ladder'*. We have even memorialized it as a children's song. But there was much, much, more to the events of this very special night than just a nocturnal vision of an escalator for angels. In fact the sight of the ladder/staircase/escalator - and for that matter the manifestation of the angels themselves - served only as the *prelude* to the really important aspect of the God encounter.

Ya'akov Has a 'Thunderspeak' Experience at Last

What Ya'akov will remember most about this night is <u>not</u> the ladder, nor is it the angels. What Ya'akov will remember most about this night is the Beautiful Voice that utters the words which He inherently senses are destined to change his life forever.

V'hineh Adonai nitzav alav vayomar

And behold, the Holy One stood above [*the ladder*] *and declared,*

Ani Adonai

"I am the Holy One [*yod, hey, vav, hey*[8]],

Elohei Avraham avicha v'Elohei Yitzchak

the God of Avraham your patriarchal ancestor and the God of Yitzchak.

[Genesis 28:13(a)]

Please understand that these are the very first words from the mouth of the Almighty that Ya'akov has ever heard. The message is clear - *There is a God, Ya'akov. But there is only one God.* The Holy One wanted Ya'akov to know, before he arrived in the land of Charan where foreign gods were worshipped and foreign ways were the norm, that *God is not different things to different people*. He wanted him to know that the God Whom Avraham, Ya'akov's grandfather, knew and served is the same God Whom Ya'akov's father Yitzchak knew and served. And He wanted Ya'akov to know that the God Whom Ya'akov's father Yitzchak knew and served is the same God that he – beginning this very night – was going to know and serve.

Please note if you will a critical item of protocol from previous initial God-encounters that is "missing" in the narrative of the message spoken to Ya'akov. In

[8] This is the unpronounceable covenant name of the Creator, first used in Genesis 2, in the context of verse of the Holy One's interactions with mankind in the Garden. In Genesis 1 the Creator was referred to solely as Elohim. To those into whom He breathes the breath of life He is more than Elohim – He is *yod, hey, vav, hey*.

Ya'akov's case there is no *'al-tirah' [fear not]*[9]*. That means that* there is no Divine Empowerment or invitation being imparted by the Holy One for Ya'akov to *stand in the Holy One's Presence*, or to even *speak to Him*, much less to *'cut covenant' with Him.* That will all come later. This is *the Holy One's moment* - not Ya'akov's. Ya'akov is not supposed to do anything except *sh'ma* [listen, take notice, receive the Divine communication, and be transformed by what he hears].

Ha-aretz asher atah shochev aleiha lecha etnenah ulezar'eicha
The land whereon you lie, to you will I give it, and to your seed.

V'hayah zar'acha ka'afar ha-aretz
Your seed will be as the dust of the eretz,

ufaratzta yamah v'kedmah
and you will spread abroad to the west, and to the east,

v'tzafonah v'negbah
and to the north, and to the south.

v'nivreichu vecha kol-mishpeichot ha-adamah uv'zar'eicha
In you and in your seed will all the families of the eretz be blessed.

V'hineh anochi imach
Behold, I am with you,

Ush'marticha b'chol asher-telech
and I will guard/protect you in all your wanderings,

v'hashivoticha el ha-adamah hazot
and I will bring you again into this land.

ki lo e'eizovcha ad asher im-asiti et asher-dibarti lach
For I will not leave you, until I have done that which I have spoken of to you."
[Genesis 28:14-15]

These are not *idle words* Beloved. They are not even *mere promises*. They are *prophetic declarations* of the Most High God - and they are therefore every bit as full of creative power to bring to pass what they say as were the words '***Let there be Light'***, '***Let the earth produce plants bearing seed***', and '***Let us create man in our own image'*** spoken at Creation.

Please understand that these prophetic words of the Holy One do not have anything to do with Ya'akov's *merit*. They are not about Ya'akov being a 'better person' than Esav, or the rest of mankind. They are about Ya'akov being the Holy One's *choice* to succeed Avraham and Yitzchak as the weaker partner in the covenant by which the Holy One intends to redeem mankind. What the Holy One has just done, you see, was to *renew with Ya'akov the covenant He made with Avraham in*

[9] Compare Genesis 15:1.

Genesis 15 and 17. Ya'akov has just been Divinely empowered for the process of succeeding his father and grandfather as the Holy One's weaker covenant partner [the *vassal*].

The Elements of the Renewed Covenant

As we have discussed previously there are four basic elements to the covenant of the Holy One with and for the benefit of mankind through adopting Avraham as a *vassal*:

[1] God would give Avraham fantastically fruitful seed [progeny];
[2] God would give Avraham's descendants the land of the Kena'ani [i.e. *Eretz Yisrael* (the land of Israel)] in perpetual stewardship;
[3] Avraham was to teach his children and his household after him to follow the Way of the Holy One, and to *asah tzedekah u'mishpat*;
[4] Avraham was to circumcise every male child born in his household on the 8th day of the child's life.

Now let's look at what the Holy One says to Ya'akov in our aliyah. Item one [the promise of fantastically numerous descendants] is reiterated. So is item two [the promise of the Land]. There is no specific mention of item [3] *i.e.* the empowerment of the vassal to teach his children and his household after him to follow the ways of the Holy One, and to 'do righteousness and justice' or of item [4] *i.e.* the directive that the vassal circumcise each male child on the eighth day of life. Instead, the Holy One merely says to Ya'akov ' ... *in you and in your seed will all the families of the eretz be blessed."*

Ya'akov is *just getting started in relationship* with the Holy One. Talk of *birthright* and *blessing* are still just beautiful words buzzing around in his head. He is not anywhere near ready, as his young head rests upon the rock at the place he knows only as Luz, to commit to cut covenant with the Holy One as did his grandfather Avraham did in Genesis 15 and 17. He is not anywhere close to ready, as he lays down alone on that hill that night, to lay before the Holy One everything he considers important in life as did Avraham in Genesis 22. Talk of teaching children and a household God's ways, and circumcising sons and grandsons, is premature and would go right over his head. He has no frame of reference for such things. All he can handle at this point is knowing he is 'grafted in' to his father and grandfather's heritage.

The rest will come in due time. For with this initial "God encounter" Ya'akov's life begins to change. It will not happen overnight. It will take a series of God encounters – as well as a number of dramatic and sometimes devastating life experiences pre-arranged by the Holy One - for Ya'akov to overcome his *tachat shemesh* life-focus and his immature self-centeredness and to begin to walk out the

Divine destiny for which he was created – to bear the Name "Israel", prince of God, and to sire the twelve tribes which would ultimately possess the most strategic piece of land on earth and become the Holy One's "Light" to the Nations and peoples of the earth.

Ah, but now I am really getting ahead of myself. Let's look at Ya'akov's reaction to his first "God encounter", and let it begin to change us as well.

Ya`akov awakened out of his sleep, and he said,
"Surely the Holy One is in this place, and I didn't know it."
He was afraid, and said,
***"Mah noreh** [How dreadful] is **ha-makom hazeh** [this place!]*
*This is none other than **Bayit-Elohim** [God's house],*
*and this is **Sha'ar Ha-shomayim** [the gate of heaven]."*

Ya`akov rose up early in the morning,
*and took **ha-eben** [the stone] that he had put under his head,*
*and set it up for a **matzebah** [pillar], and poured **shemen** [oil] on the top of it.*
He called the name of that place Beit-El, but the name of the city was Luz at the first.

*Ya`akov vowed 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 clothing to put on,
so that I come again to my father's house in shalom, then the Holy One will be my God,
and then this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, will be God's house.
And of all that you will give me I will surely give the tenth to you."

May the Creator apprehend you just as forcibly and just as effectively this week.

Questions For Today's Study

1. As Ya'akov set out from Be'er-Sheva:

[A] What does Torah say was the young man's intended destination?

[B] What were his father's instructions about what he was to do at that destination? **[See Genesis 28:2].**

[C] What blessing did Yitzchak his father bestow upon Ya'akov as he was preparing to leave **[See Genesis 28:3-4].**

2. On his way to this destination Ya'akov stops for the night ***"because the sun had set".*** When he lays his head down for the night things begin to happen.

[A] In Strong's and Gesenius look up the words our Bibles translate as "dream" and "ladder". Write the Hebrew words, and define them.

[B] What did Ya'akov see in his dream?

[C] When the Holy One spoke to Ya'akov in his dream by what name did the Holy One identify Himself?

[D] List (in the order given) the promises the Holy One made to Ya'akov.

[E] What do you think the promise that Ya'akov's descendants would be ***like the dust of the earth*** means?

[F] When Ya'akov awoke what thoughts came to his mind? (List them in the order Torah gives them).

[G] In Strong's and Gesenius look up the words our Bibles translate as "*awesome*" and "*gate*" in verse 17. Write the Hebrew words, and define each.

[H] What physical actions did Ya'akov take the next day that show that he "*shema*'d" the words the Holy One had spoken?

3. In the concluding verse of today's aliyah of Torah Ya'akov makes a "deal" with the Holy One.

[A] What conditions did Ya'akov place on his acknowledging the Holy One as his God and not just Avraham's God?

[B] If the Holy One fulfilled the conditions Ya'akov laid down what did Ya'akov promise to do?

4. In today's Haftarah reading we see the prophet Hosea speaking concerning the Northern Kingdom - the tribes other than Benyamin and Y'hudah [Judah]. These Northern tribes were led by Efrayim and Menashe - the sons of Yosef [Joseph]. Here is how Hoshea begins the revelation that has become Haftarah *Vayetze*:

By a prophet the Holy One brought Yisrael up out of Mitzrayim,
And by a prophet he was preserved.
Efrayim has provoked to anger most bitterly.
Therefore his blood will be left on him, and the Holy One will repay his contempt.

When Efrayim spoke, there was trembling.
He exalted himself in Yisrael, but when he became guilty in Ba`al, he died.
Now they sin more and more, and have made themselves molten images of their silver,
Even idols according to their own understanding,
All of them the work of the craftsmen.

They say of them, "They offer human sacrifice and kiss the calves."
Therefore they will be like the morning cloud,
And like the dew that passes away early,
Like the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the threshing floor,
And like the smoke out of the chimney.

[A] What does Hosea say that Efrayim has done that will result in judgment?

[B] What does Hosea say will happen to Efrayim?

5. In today's reading from the Apostolic Scriptures we find Yochanan the Immerser standing in or beside the Jordan River calling people to return to the Torah and undergo *mikveh* in the living waters. As he goes about this task Yeshua of Natzret walks by.

Again, the next day Yochanan was standing with two of his talmidim,

and he looked at Yeshua as he walked, and said, ***Behold, the Lamb of God!***
The two talmidim heard him speak, and they followed Yeshua.
Yeshua turned, and saw them following, and said to them, ***What do you want****?*

They said to him, ***"Rabbi"*** *(which is to say, being interpreted, Teacher),*
"where do you stay?"
He said to them, ***Come, and see****.*

They came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day.
It was about the tenth hour.

[A] What testimony did Yochanan give concerning Yeshua?

[B] How would the phrase "Lamb of God" be stated in Hebrew?

[C] What was the response of Yochanan's talmidim when Yochanan gave this testimony about Yeshua?

[D] If you had been one of the two talmidim in question, what do you think you would have said in response to Yeshua's question "*What do you want?"* In other words, what exactly do you *want* and *expect to happen* in your life and in your world by reason of your deciding to follow Yeshua?

May you get to know "the Place"
of the Holy One's gateway to Heaven very, very, well - and may you go there often.

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 85:1-3

O Holy One ... You have ***been favorable to Your land****.*
You have ***restored the fortunes*** *of Ya`akov.*
You have ***forgiven the iniquity*** *of Your people.*
You have ***covered all their sin****.* ***Selah.***
You have ***taken away all Your wrath****.*
You have ***turned from the fierceness of Your anger****.*