Shiur L'Yom Shishi[1]

[Friday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Vayetze***: **Genesis 31:30 - 32:3**
Haftarah: **Hosea 14:1-10**
B'rit Chadasha: **John 1:50-51**

I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock.
[Genesis 31:40]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 85:12-13;
This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition #4, *Ga'al* [*Kinsman-Redemption*]

V'atah haloch halachta ki-nichsof nichsaftah l'veyt avicha *– And you - of a certainty, you walked away because you longed for your father's house …* ***Lamah ganavta et-elohai*** *–. but why did you steal/abscond with my gods?* **Genesis 31:30.**

Torah's Author does not sugarcoat the patriarchal narrative. His goal is not to sell us a form of religion, or make us believe in human perfection, you see. He intends to train us to do the difficult and dangerous work of counterbalancing and neutralizing [a] nation-rage and [b] vain-imagination delusion in each and every one of those pathologies' occult manifestations. He wants us to wisely, gently, and patiently bring *shalom* and *tikkun* into situations that cause others to revert to fight/flight mode. So, He is determined to prepare us to face without revulsion, defang without violence, then navigate without judgmentalism every kind of misbehavior of which a human being under the influence of *ra, shachat*, and *chamas* is or will ever be capable. So do not wag you tongue at the troubling story the Author of Torah has assigned for us to read, study, meditate upon today. Gird up your loins. Take a deep breath. Say the *Bar'chu* blessing if you know it. Read Psalm 119:18-19 aloud. And let's plunge right in.

Offense, Outrage, and Vengeance-Lust; Escalating Rhetoric and Demonizing Bombast; Wars and Rumors of War:
The 'Raging Nations' Mentality Rears its Ugly Head

A nasty episode of inter-personal drama is unfolding on the hills of Gilead. Conflict between Ya'akov and Lavan has been brewing and tension between the two has been rising for years, of course, but seven days ago these things escalated to a new level. While Laban and his sons were all off partying at a sheep-shearing festival, Ya'akov, acting on instructions from the Holy One, decided it was time to break his family free of the shackles of Paddan-Aram's culture of oppression-by-deception and move back to his father's house. He packed up Rachel (who was

[1] All rights with respect to this publication are reserved to the author, William G. Bullock, Sr., also known as *'the Rabbi's son'*. Reproduction of material from any *Rabbi's son* lesson without written permission from the author is prohibited. Copyright © 2024, William G. Bullock, Sr.

pregnant with Binyamin), Leah, Bilhah, Zilpah, all 12 kids, as well as all the herds, flocks, and servants that he had miraculously acquired while serving in Laban's house, and headed south. As Ya'akov saw it, after enduring 20 years of humiliation and manipulation, he no longer owed Laban anything - including an explanation. So he didn't offer one. He didn't even leave a note. He was done. There was, he felt, nothing left to say.

Alas, when Laban and his sons returned from their raucous festival and found Ya'akov, family, and livestock gone without a trace, they were highly offended. Offense led to feelings of resentment and betrayal. Feelings of resentment and betrayal led to outrage. Outrage led to an obsessive craving for vengeance. Their anger – their craving for vengeance – demanded to be satisfied. They made a plan to pursue Ya'akov, catch him, confront him, and *end him.* They mounted their best steeds – and the great chase was on. Seven days of hard riding could not quiet the Mesopotamian mob's vengeance-lust. Even a night-time visitation – and frank rebuke - from the Holy One did not succeed in either cleansing Lavan's brain of dark energy-fueled vain imaginations or de-escalating his offense-and-outrage-obsessed emotional state.

As today's aliyah begins, therefore, Lavan's small army of vigilantes has its quarry caught and cornered. The stench of offense fills the air – and it is a foul aroma indeed. The poison of sanctimonious anger pollutes the atmosphere, painting everything and everyone it touches with *uncleanness*. Such scenes always seem to start with moral indignation. From there it is no great leap to vain imagination. Close on the heels of vain imagination come a flurry of scandalous – though factually unsupportable - accusations. The pattern includes always includes name-calling, emotionally charged ranting, outbursts of profanity, demands for 'justice', insistence upon 'reparation', boisterous saber rattling, narcissistic projection, and paranoid derangement. *Shalom* is forsaken; *love* is abandoned*; and joy* is forgotten. The juggernaut of self-righteous judgment runs roughshod over mercy. Burnt bridges, broken promises, and scorched earth smolder in its wake. Such is the fruit of all human offense. What an obscene-smelling, foul-tasting, mind-numbing toxic admixture!

Alas, Lavan is drinking deeply of, and is feeling all the negative effects of, that lethal cocktail. His temper, immaturity, insecurity, and lack of self-control are all on full display. His capacity for rationality is *nil*. Harsh words are flying out of his mouth the way hornets launch from a nest when someone disturbs it. His pulse is racing. His face is flushed. His neck and facial muscles are tense. His fists are clenched. His eyes are bulging. His nostrils are flaring. His posture is menacing. His upper lip is quivering. His voice is getting louder with every outburst. Cheap

shots are pouring forth in rapid-fire staccato. Accusations of abandonment, betrayal, and theft are coming fast and furious. Like a madman, Lavan rants on. So what is Ya'akov to do? Ya'akov is outnumbered – and this is his father-in-law, his wives' father, and his children's grandfather, so the Covenant compels him to respond calmly and respectfully. He has to be the 'better man'. Thus far he has responded to the tongue-lashing much like a sheep standing silently before his shearers or a lamb patiently awaiting the knife of its butcher, He is letting his father-in-law say his piece. But Lavan has no filter, and he is about to cross a line. He is about to make an accusation so outlandish that his son-in-law will have no choice but to respond to.

Ya'akov had not been looking for trouble - with Lavan or with anyone else. He had tried to avoid a confrontation. After 20 years of faithful indentured servitude, he hoped he could just walk away - and get on with the life mission for which he was born. But Lavan now outlandishly insisted that Ya'akov had stolen something from his house when he left – his *personal idols.* That particular blatantly false allegation was more than Ya'akov's flesh and pseudo-intellect could handle. Something animalistic arose in Ya'akov. Finger, meet trigger. Ya'akov was undone. Twenty-year's worth of frustration and inner turmoil finally boiled over. Cue the obligatory fit of *feigned, self-righteous moral outrage*. Cue the gratuitous *'I insist on posturing myself as the victim, so your job is to accept the label of the villain and wear it forever!'* battle hymn. Cue the red-faced *'how dare you think yourself entitled to live in the same world and breathe the same air I breathe'* histrionics. Cue the '*my pain matters, but yours doesn't*', *never has, and never will'* phony social-justice crusades! Cue every kind of outlandish and scandalous accusation! Cue another destructive episode of self-righteous 'moral' outrage! Cue a stream of profane rants, incendiary chants, and history-rewriting diatribes! Cue half-truths and wholesale falsehoods! Cue redefining bloody mob vengeance as 'social justice'! Cue all kinds of cruelty, looting, fist-raising intimidation, and senseless violence against the helpless innocents, to be falsely labeled as 'protesting against injustice'! Cue the bloodthirsty minions! Cue the galloping hordes! Cue the ultimately godless and arrogant cravers of attention making the most of their moment in the spotlight!

A Violent Clash of Worldviews Is In the Air – and Critical Tests of Character and Temperament Are Coming With It!

Welcome to another prototypical season of 'the time of *Jacob's trouble'*. Oh – you thought we were just reading a Bible story? Sorry, Beloved – this is not 'their' story – it is *our* story! As the sages say, ***Ma'aseh avot siman l'banim*** *– the experiences of the fathers serve as signposts – indeed, directional and location indicators – for all*

their descendants. Torah is a manual on how to face and overcome every challenge we will encounter in our short span of *earth life*. Both the stories in the scrolls and the lifestyle hacks they teach are given to us by the Holy One to help us navigate through life on earth in a way that will [a] bring glory to Him, and [b] and to cause us to be the 'light to the nations' He *created* us to be. All of what uninformed mortals think of as 'human history' actually consists merely of the progeny of ancestors/forerunners *reliving the experiences of those patriarchs on a larger canvas*. It is therefore important for us to be familiar with the stories of our elders, and the details of the patriarchs' lives for two reasons: (a) to learn how we ourselves what priorities and behaviors 'work' and 'do not work', and (b) to anticipate and prepare ourselves for the events that history will throw at us. Every year of life – every complete cycle of Torah and the *moedim* – teaches us more about what life on earth is about – what we are here for, what doesn't work, what does work, and what kind of impact and legacy either doing it wrong or doing it right leaves.

Meanwhile, Back at Gilead

Ya'akov had hoped to avoid a scene with Laban. That is why he chose as his point of departure a time when Lavan and his sons were away at a sheep-shearing festival. As soon as Laban returned to Charan, however, he discovered that his son-in-law, his daughters, their children, and all their servants were nowhere to be found. Worse than that (to his way of thinking) his *household idols* were gone as well. Lavan was outraged. He only saw the world – and the people in it - through the lens of his own will. Laban is not alone in that myopia, of course; he is merely the prototype from which the Torah expects us to learn invaluable lessons about the incompatibility of that kind of approach to life with the Covenant Lifestyle to which we are called. The Covenant Family has served as the convenient scapegoat for every major fake 'social justice' movement for millennia. We are always facing one existential threat or another – and always surviving and transcending, and coming forth better for the trial. In the face of existential threats, you see, our trust in the promises of protection, provision, and pathway of escape that the Holy One has made concerning Avraham's seed kicks in and is going to face yet another daunting challenge.

Ah, but back to our story! In a rage, Laban mustered a lynch mob. Grabbing anything they could use as a weapon, the *offended ones* mounted horses and she-asses and rode off in hot pursuit of the family who had awakened to and dared to act upon the realization that there is more to life than Charanian culture and the house of Laban could ever offer. For seven days Laban and his thugs stalked the much slower moving caravan of Ya'akov. Laban was waiting for just the right moment to vent his rage. He would make his ungrateful son-in-law pay for what – in his twisted imagination – Ya'akov had done to him.

The 'Projection' Phenomenon

Welcome to the world of 'projection', Dear Reader. *Projection* is a *psychological defense mechanism* – a way for people with emotional and relational problems resulting from their own bad choices and misbehaviors to justify perpetuating their negative behaviors instead of recognizing and dealing with them responsibly. It is what in quaint English is referred to as *the pot calling the kettle black.* The projection phenomenon is *the attribution by a person or culture of his, her, or its negative thoughts, feelings or impulses onto another person rather than acknowledging, owning up to,* and *dealing with them*. Here is how the phenomenon works: a person who has personal guilt issues relative to his or her own behavior will avoid dealing with those guilt issues by redirecting their negative thoughts and emotions toward others – usually [a] their parents; [b] authority figures, and [c] the objects/victims of their own misbehaviors. A self-absorbed, ungrateful, and/or lazy person will label others in his or her life as self-absorbed, ungrateful, and/or lazy. A person who is cheating on his or her spouse, or having thoughts about it, will imagine his or her spouse is having an affair. A person who is angry, critical and judgmental and self-righteous will be the first to accuse anyone they dislike most of being a hypocritical, cold-hearted Pharisee. A legalistic person, eating daily of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil instead of the tree of life, will be the first to accuse others of being 'under the law' or having a 'religious spirit'. A person - or ideology – who hates, slanders, and ridicules people for their beliefs and/or political positions will accuse their adversaries of being 'intolerant' and 'close-minded'. A person – or culture – that murders innocents out of racial/religious hatred will accuse the race or culture they persecute of 'genocide'. A person who wants to control others' thoughts and expressions will label those he or she wants to control as 'fascists. A person who hates or distrusts the people of another race or culture will label those people as 'racists' and 'bigots'. A person who thinks himself or herself better than the people of another gender will label the members of that other gender as 'sexist' or 'misogynist'. So it goes. Be careful what you label others, or accuse them of, Beloved. The person for whom the bell should be tolling is probably *you – projecting again.*

The *projection phenomenon* is not a modern invention. It was birthed in the Garden of Eden. It was alive and well in Lavan. But Lavan will by no means be the last to embrace it.

Those Who Rage Against the People of the Covenant Prepare For Their Fateful Assault

In today's aliyah Laban and his minions will launch their fateful assault. It will happen in an area the Bible calls *Galeed* [Gilead]. Laban will invade the camp with a show of force for which Ya'akov's small group of pilgrims has no answer. And

he will have his day. Oh Ya'akov! You will not be able to run, hide, duck or defend yourself. You will have to face Lavan's rage - and the unclean spirits that oppress and counsel him - head-on. But you will not go into this epic confrontation alone, Ya'akov. The Beautiful Voice of the Unseen Shepherd Who watched over Avraham your grandfather and Yitzchak your father in their moments of crisis has spoken to you, and has declared:

Behold, I* am *with you, and will keep you wherever you go.
And I will bring you back to this land;
for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.
[Genesis 28:15]

May the Holy One Who visited you in your dreams at Beit-El be with you indeed, Ya'akov! And may He be with us, your progeny, as well, when it is our turn to stand in your shoes face the raging unclean spirits of our day.

What is the Flash Point *– i.e.* ***Excuse - THIS Time?***

So here we have it – *interpersonal conflict* and opposing worldviews have finally reached a flash point. Right on the pages of Torah we are about to see flaring tempers, angry words, drawn weapons, and lives on the line – in other words, *human drama at its finest.*

Our ancestor Ya'akov just cannot seem to get away from men who want to do him harm. His first departure was a flight from the wrath of Esav. Now fire flames from Lavan's nostrils. At least Esav did not have an army. This time Ya'akov is totally out-manned and out-gunned. He has no hope, in the natural realm, of surviving this encounter. Thank Heaven Ya'akov is no longer is bound by the limitations of the natural realm. Back at *Beit-El* as you will recall, the Holy One gave Ya'akov a Prophetic Word to confirm his covenant with him, saying ***I am with you and will guard, protect and watch over you wherever you go ….*** **Genesis 28:15.**

Every prophetic word or promise must be tested. Until it is tested, and tested severely, it cannot be confirmed as true in 'real time'. The assault on his camp by Lavan and his band of zealots and opportunistic mercenaries will be the first real test of the Holy One's promise to Ya'akov. He is about to see if the Holy One's promise of protection is trustworthy in the face of *a neurotic madman enraged*, who is backed up by an army of bloodthirsty associates.

The men in Lavan's mob have the ability – and the desire – to do Ya'akov physical harm. They could steal from him – and they have every intention of doing so. They could bind, abuse, and torture him – and they are being driven by their inner unclean spirits to do just that, as cruelly as they possibly can. They could kill all he loves before his eyes, then kill him as well – and that is exactly what they imagine

themselves doing and bragging about to establish their reputation as soldiers of holy war. Ya'akov's life and destiny, and the lives and destinies of those he loves most in the world, truly hang in the balance. Have you been in such a situation yet, Dear Reader?

Offenses Must Come ... And Must Be Navigated and Overcome

Please note that Torah does not sugarcoat the experience of life on earth for the Holy One's people. Torah wants us to understand that as Yeshua of Natzret would later teach: ***Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!*** **Matthew 18:7.**

Offenses. Insults. Accusations. Hurt feelings. Wounds of the heart. Angry confrontations. Trauma. These things 'must' – and do – come into every human being's life to one extent or another. It will happen whether you are walking in Covenant with the Creator of the Universe or not. If you are not walking in the Covenant when it happens, all you will have to rely upon in the moments of intense crisis are your own wits and physical strength. If you are walking in the Covenant, however, you will have the Hosts of Heaven at your side and the Shalom of Heaven in your heart.

At the beginning of today's aliyah Ya'akov was no stranger to either *offense* or *interpersonal conflict*. He shared a war-torn womb with Esav of all people. He grew up in the midst of bitter and sometimes violent conflict between his father's herdsmen and the *Ph'lishtim* [Palestinians] over grazing land and wells such as *Esek* [from the root meaning *contention* and *quarreling*] and *Sitnah* [from the familiar root ***satan***, meaning *accusation, enmity, and confrontation*]. **See Genesis 26:20-21.** Even after he was grown Esav's death threat against him was the main reason he had left his home in Eretz Yisrael and spent 20 years in exile in Charan. Moreover, Ya'akov had over the last 13 years had to deal daily with raging jealousy between Rachel and Leah. But these were all just preparatory for what Ya'akov is to face in today's aliyah. The emotion-charged confrontation with his father-in-law Lavan on the hills of Galeed is by far the most stressful thing Ya'akov has yet experienced. This is truly going to be a 'trial by fire'. Do you think Ya'akov is up to the challenge? Would ***you*** be? Don't kid yourself – something similar will almost certainly happen to you. *Do not, under any circumstances, allow yourself to be unprepared*.

First Blood

As yesterday's aliyah ended Lavan was letting Ya'akov 'have it' for leaving without saying good-bye. Lavan did that which a deceiver bent on genocide always does. It is a two-step procedure. Get to know it well.

<u>Stage One</u> – Posturing Ones' self and One's Culture as 'The Victim' Instead of the Persecutor

First, Lavan begins his assault on the Covenant Family by shamelessly re-writing history to his advantage. Employing emotionally charged exaggerations he will *paint himself and his sons as a helpless, innocent victim*s. He will, of course, completely gloss over his own faults and errors. This is the way of those who let unclean spirits incite them to hate the People of the Covenant. The tactics and patterns of genocidal assault on the Holy One's Appointed Witnesses and Ambassadors never change.

Why do deceivers bent on genocide do this? This is what the 'projection phenomenon' looks like in real time. In Laban's prototypical case, the motive was simple to diagnose he intended use emotionally charged rhetoric to cause others who do not know the whole story, and who were either predisposed to his position, easily incited, or just plain gullible, to turn against Ya'akov. Get used to this kind of thing, Dear Reader! Here is Torah's word-for-word description of Laban's rant. Laban said to Ya'akov, ***meh asita*** *– i.e. How could you do this?*

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

Lamah nachbeita livroach
Why did you leave so secretly?

Vatig'nov oti v'lo-higadeta li
You stole away without a word!

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 netashtani l'nashek l'vanayi v'livnotai
You didn't even let me kiss my grandsons and daughters goodbye!
[Genesis 31:26-28]

There is very little truth to be found anywhere in that vicious little rant, of course. But it had enough emotion in it to convince those predisposed to Laban's side, or easily incited, or just plain gullible, to begin to see Laban as an innocent victim and Ya'akov as a horrible villain. That done, the door swings open for stage two in the *crucifixion trial* of Ya'akov – the making of *scandalous and demonizing accusations* against Ya'akov.

Stage Two – Unfounded Allegations of Criminal Behavior

Lavan actually concluded his blistering diatribe by declaring that Ya'akov was guilty of *stealing his household idols* when he left. Torah quotes him as saying: ***Lamah ganavta et-elohai*** *- why did you steal my gods?*' **Genesis 31:30.**

Everyone should now please shed a tear of pity or two for Laban. He expects us to hiss loudly, and shake our fists at Ya'akov for being not only a horrible and

ungrateful son-in-law, but a PETTY THIEF.

The deceivers of this world are very, very good at rewriting history, twisting the truth to suit their purposes, and making scandalous accusations. They almost make it believable – even by the *very elect*! But keep in mind that whatever emotionally charged words might be bantered around by Lavan the deceiver *publicly*, at least three persons on that hill in the middle of nowhere knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that Ya'akov had not, as Lavan has charged with such passion and victimization, taken the household gods of Lavan's house. Who were those three people? Think about it. Rachel, of course, knew - because she had taken them. Ya'akov, of course, knew because he had not. And Lavan knew, because he knew that whatever faults Ya'akov might have he like Avraham and Yitzchak before him did not *believe in* his gods, did not *consider them the least bit valuable*, and *would never at any time under any circumstances have anything whatsoever to do with them*.

Oh, did I mention that in confrontations like this *truth* is always the first casualty? Reality is the 'first blood' spilled. Facts, you see, are not really important at this stage – all that matters in the heat of the moment is *convincing oneself - and whoever is listening - that the other party is sub-human and deserves to be treated like an animal*.

The Root of the Problem

One of the critical elements to preparing for a crisis of interpersonal conflict is to have the clarity of mind to look past the smoke screen of one's adversary's victim-posturing, as well as his/her slanderous accusations, to *the root of the problem*. I am not speaking about the 'last straw', or immediate event or circumstance of provocation. I am talking about the *bitter root*, or *real reason* a crisis-like confrontation is occurring. So let's hone our skills in this regard. What was it about the relationship between Ya'akov and Laban that put the two of them on a violent collision course? It wasn't *really* the missing household gods, was it? That was just *the 'last straw'* or *most recent provocation*. It wasn't *really* that Ya'akov had left in the middle of the night and taken Rachel, Leah, and all the children, servants, and possessions with which the Holy One had supernaturally blessed him without offering Laban the opportunity of a good-bye. That was just *the emotionally charged issue Laban used to justify his attack.*

If it was neither of these things, what <u>was</u> the root of the problem? What was it that made it inevitable that this kind of confrontation would occur somewhere, sometime? Think about it. The seeds from which this confrontation now bursts forth full-grown were planted a *long, long time ago*. The relationship *began in the*

flesh 20 years previously. It was begotten in and incubated by *deception* and *inappropriate behavior* on both sides. You see, Dear Reader, *the glorification of the Holy One was never a goal of this relationship.* Prayer was never a part of this relationship. Neither was worship of the Holy One. Concern for the *dignity*, the *divine destiny*, or even the *legitimate expectations* of the other party to the relationship had never been a part of the relationship, either. *Mishpat* [KJV 'justice'], *tzedekah* [KJV 'righteousness'], and *kavod* [KJV 'honor'] were never part of their walk together. Neither *emet* [KJV 'truth'] nor *chen* [KJV 'grace'] was ever a priority in their transactions. Indeed the relationship between Laban and Ya'akov had been built almost exclusively upon *self-interest - i.e.* on the principle of '*what's in it for me?'* What did Laban want out of the relationship? Laban wanted a good herdsman he could basically 'own' and control; one who would build Lavan's fortune for him just for the privilege of marrying his soulmate. What did Ya'akov want from the relationship? Ya'akov wanted a safe haven from Esav's wrath. He wanted Rachel, and, initially at least, he wanted a place far, far, from home where he could experience all the 'worldly' compromise and settling 'stuff' of Charan that his father Yitzchak, who feared the Holy One and walked according to his ways, would never have tolerated. In Laban's house, you see, there was no *spiritual accountability* whatsoever. As long as Ya'akov produced wealth for Laban, well ... whatever he did in his private life was 100% his own business. Laban 'pushed the envelope', however, when he tricked Ya'akov into working 14 years for the privilege of marrying Rachel instead of the original 7 by substituting Leah for Rachel on Ya'akov's wedding night. Ya'akov refused to confront Lavan in any meaningful way after *the bride-identity deception,* thereby allowing him to 'bully' him. Ya'akov thereby missed the opportunity to require, early on, that Lavan deal with him honestly and above-board.

Despite the fact that Laban *never said what he meant*, *never meant what he said,* and *changed Ya'akov's wages repeatedly*, Ya'akov just kept letting Laban 'slide' time and time again. Ya'akov, it appears, contented himself with an *attitude of superiority*, all the while nursing both a '*victim mentality'* and a *big-time grudge* as well. Ya'akov let Lavan smooth over every offense instead of dealing with it, by 'pushing all the right buttons' that stroked all Ya'akov's selfish desires. Laban knew what made Ya'akov 'tick'. He knew what buttons to push and when. And Ya'akov, for his own selfish reasons, let himself be manipulated over and over and over again.

This might have gone on forever, but for *one thing*: the Holy One intervened. The Creator of the Universe called Ya'akov back to his destiny and purpose in life – back to the 'ancient paths' of his grandfather Avraham and his father Yitzchak. Six years ago Ya'akov began to feel the tug of the Holy One's prophetic

pronouncement at Beit-El: "***v'ha-shivoticha el ha-adamah hazot*** [*and I will bring you again into this land*]. Back then Laban was able to tranquilize Ya'akov's growing hunger for Eretz Yisrael with *a promise of partnership* – a promise *that appealed to Ya'akov's materialistic appetite*, *stroked his sense of self-esteem*, and *fed his need to feel important*. And so the Holy One set out to turn the toxic relationship between Ya'akov and Laban sour. He began a process of shifting the wealth of Laban into the possession of Ya'akov. He knew this would reveal Laban's true heart towards Ya'akov.

The 'Fear Factor'

How does one deal with *a truly evil person or culture*? What is the use of trying to reason with a person or culture who does not want to listen to anything you have to say? This is the situation with which Ya'akov had to come to grips in today's aliyah. Laban has come after Ya'akov with an armed force. He has chased and stalked Ya'akov for 10 days. He has now attacked Ya'akov verbally and accused him of everything from *alienation of affections* to *kidnapping* to *theft*. Ya'akov has to think fast. There is no time to hesitate. Here is how Torah describes his initial response to Laban's angry indictment: ***ki yareti*** – *Because I was afraid …* ***ki amarti pen-tigzol et-b'noteicha me'imi*** – for *I said, 'Lest you should take your daughters from me by force.'*

Permit me to interrupt Ya'akov's reply. His initial remarks in response to Lavan's accusations bring up a very serious issue. The first thing Ya'akov said, you see, was to *admit fear of man* and to *attribute his actions to a response to that fear*. Now I do not for one moment want to trivialize this kind of fear. Men – and women, for that matter – can do some pretty *horrible things* to us and to our loved ones. Confronted with an actual circumstance where a man or woman has the power, the opportunity, and the malicious inclination to do harm to one or one's loved ones, therefore, every human being's 'fear factor' kicks in, his or her 'fight or flight' mechanism engages, adrenalin floods into his or her blood stream - and *something has to give*. *But I thought*, you might say, *Ya'akov left because the Holy One told him it was time to go*. Ah, Beloved, now we are getting somewhere. That ***is*** why Ya'akov left Charan headed back to Eretz Yisrael. He did so as a *sh'ma* response to the Word of the Holy One, who told him: ***Return to the land of your fathers, and to your relatives, and I will be with you.*** **Genesis 31:3.** But while the Word from the Holy One told Ya'akov to go, that is not why Ya'akov left Charan as he did or when he did - surreptitiously, under cover of night. Those elements of the decision were dictated by Ya'akov's 'fear factor'.

It should be pointed out that Ya'akov had more from the Holy One than just instructions to 'return to the land of your fathers'. The Holy One had also told Ya'akov, in the same sentence '***and I will be with you***.' Moreover, in connection

with his first God encounter 20 years earlier at Beit-El the Holy One had told Ya'akov:

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

ki lo e'ezovcha 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 28:15]

Ya'akov therefore had a direct Word from the Holy One guaranteeing his safety and Divine protection. All he had to do was trust in that Word and the 'fear factor' would disappear. Some would say he just should have had more *faith* in God. That is very easy to say until you are, as Ya'akov was, confronted in the flesh by a green-eyed monster who bears you real malice. It is <u>not</u> so easy to say when the tender flesh on one's neck is feeling the sharp point of the cold steel sword of a soldier of a madman like Antiochus Epiphanes, shouting '*give up your Torah scrolls, eat this pork, and bow to this idol - or die'*. It is not so easy to say when one is staring down the barrel of a rifle held by a Gestapo agent demanding you '*get into this cattle car*, ***Schnell!***' It is not so easy to say when one finds oneself face to face in a marketplace, restaurant, or bus with a young Muslim man or woman wearing a heavy jacket who stares at your children with hate his or her eyes, reaches his hand into a fold in his jacket, closes his eyes and shouts '***Allahu Akbar***!" So please forgive our ancestor Ya'akov for not having more *faith in God* when Laban threatened him and his family members with the unthinkable.

Think fast, Ya'akov. Now is definitely not the time to hesitate.

Ya'akov's Rash Reaction

Ya'akov then stunned Laban with we would have to consider a 'rash vow'.

Im asher timtza et-eloheicha lo yichyeh
"With whoever you find your gods, he shall not live.

neged acheinu haker-lecha mah imadi v'kach-lach
Before our relatives, discern what is yours with me, and take it."

V'lo-yada Ya'akov ki Rachel genavatam
For Ya`akov didn't know that Rachel had stolen them.
[Genesis 31:31-32]

This gets Ya'akov off the 'hot seat' all right – but unbeknownst to Ya'akov it places his beloved wife Rachel right in the middle of that seat *in his place*.

In Search of the gods

In the opening verses of today's aliyah Laban attempts to find his missing "gods" amidst the tents of Ya'akov, Leah, and Rachel. It is a pathetic sight. If the pieces of wood and stone for which he was searching were really "gods" at all, they would not have allowed themselves to be stolen or to be hidden in the first place, and they would certainly direct him to them now. That is, of course, the main message of the story. What were Laban's "gods"? They were inanimate pieces of wood and stone. They were formed and shaped by man. Their only value was sentimental and monetary. For any other purpose, they were as useless to Rachel who stole them as they had been to Lavan who paid for them. But in *Laban's world* - the world of *compromise* and *settling for less than God's best*, where nothing is what it seems and where words mean anything the speaker wants them to mean - just because something is *useless* does not mean it is without attraction.

If you want to understand Laban's pathetic search for his idols all you have to do is look at our society. Many things our society obsesses over – things like Oscars, Emmys, Grammies, Dove Awards, Olympic medals, World Series rings, World Cup, Davis Cup, America's Cup, and Super Bowl Championship trophies, slam dunks and platinum CD/DVDs, Green Masters' Jackets, just to name a few - are no less useless than Laban's gods. And yet like Laban most people spend their energy and their lives searching for them ... and, of course, finding nothing. May we all take note of the lesson of Laban's fruitless search.

Vayavo Lavan b'ohel-Ya'akov uve'ohel Leah
Laban went into Ya`akov's tent, into Leah's tent,

uv'ohel shtei ha-amahot v'lo matza
and into the tent of the two maidservants; but he didn't find them.

vayetze me'ohel Leah v'yavo b'ohel Rachel
He went out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent.

Rachel is now in real jeopardy. While her father might or might not forgive her if she threw herself at his feet and begged him for mercy, she really does not have that option, because her husband has now vowed that whoever – if anyone – is found to have Lavan's household idols, he/she will be killed. And Rachel knows she is 'it'. If she doesn't do something - and *fast* - young Yosef could find himself motherless before his time.

So, what is Rachel to do? What would *you* do in her position? We can sit back in our comfortable ivory towers and ponder and cogitate what Rachel should have done. We can calmly and philosophically muse on what we think *the Holy One would have had Rachel do*. But whatever we come up with it probably is not what

Rachel did. Here is the Biblical account:

V'Rachel lakchah et ha-t'rafim
Now Rachel had taken the terafim,

v'tesimem bechar ha-gamal v'teshev aleihem
put them in the camel's saddle, and sat on them.

V'yemashesh Lavan et kol ha-ohel v'lo matza
Laban felt about all the tent, but didn't find them.

Vatomer el-aviha al-yichar b'eynei adoni
She said to her father, "Don't let my lord be angry

ki lo uchal lakum mipaneicha
that I can't rise up before you;

ki derech nashim li
for the manner of women is on me."
[Genesis 31:33-34]

Sometimes, for reasons we can never hope to understand, the Holy One *helps* and *blesses* and *protects* us despite ourselves. He did it for Avraham. He did it for Sarah. He did it for Yitzchak. He did it for Ya'akov, and now He has done it for Rachel. He has probably done it for you, Dear Reader. I know, and freely acknowledge, He has done it for me - *repeatedly*. And when he does it, all we can do is fall our faces before Him, acknowledge we are totally undeserving of His overwhelming lovingkindnesses, ask Him to forgive and cleanse us of the filthy rags we have to offer as righteousness, and humbly yield our lives – for whatever they may be worth - to His service. Sing unto the Holy One a new song!

Ya'akov Gives Vent to 20 Years of Frustration

Ya'akov has no clue what wonderful grace the Holy One has just bestowed upon him, upon his beloved wife Rachel and upon young could-have-been motherless Yosef. Totally oblivious to these things, and feeling vindicated by the fact that Laban has not despite a thorough and public search found the "gods" he accused Ya'akov of taking, Ya'akov takes the opportunity to vent twenty years' worth of pent-up anger at Laban. Yes, Ya'akov is very, very real. Not perfect by any means, mind you, but real. Torah quotes his outburst as follows:

Mah-pishi
What is my trespass?

mah chatati ki dalakta acharai
What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued after me?

Ki-mishashta et-kol-kelai
Now that you have felt around in all my stuff,

mah-matzata mikol kley-veiteicha
what have you found of all your household stuff?

sim koh neged achai v'acheicha
Set it here before my relatives and your relatives,

V'yochichu beyn sh'neinu
that they may judge between us two!

Zeh esrim shanah anochi imach
These twenty years have I been with you.

recheleicha v'izeicha lo shikelu
Your ewes and your nannies have not cast their young,

v'eylei tzoncha lo achalti
and I haven't eaten the rams of your flocks.

Trefah lo-heveti eleicha anochi achatenah
That which was torn of animals, I didn't bring to you. I bore the loss of it.

miyadi tevaksheinah genuvti yom ugenuvti laylah
Of my hand you required it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night

Hayiti v'yom achalani chorev
Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me,

V'kerach b'laylah v'tidad shenati m'eynai
and the frost by night; and my sleep fled from my eyes.

Zeh-li esrim shanah b'veyteicha
These twenty years have I been in your house.

avadeticha arba-esreh shanah b'shtei v'noteicha
I served you fourteen years for your two daughters,

v'shesh shanim b'tzoneicha
and six years for your flock,

v'tachalef et-maskurti aseret monim
and you have changed my wages ten times.

Perhaps Ya'akov has never thought about it before. Certainly he has never looked upon the events of the past 20 years in this light, from this 'outside of time' perspective. As he verbalizes all the miraculous things that have happened in his life while living in Laban's world, Ya'akov suddenly comes to a realization. It is a realization that every son and heir of Avraham's covenant with mankind must come to on his own at some point in his life. Now is Ya'akov's time. The realization is this:

Lulei Elohei avi Elohei Avraham ufachad Yitzchak hayah li
Unless the God of my father, the God of Avraham, and the fear of Yitzchak, had been with me,

ki atah reykam shilachtani

surely now you would have sent me away empty.

et-oni v'et-yegia kapay ra'ah Elohim

God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands,

[Genesis 31:41-42(a)]

Midway through his rant Ya'akov suddenly realizes he has no reason to wage war, or even engage in further argument, with Laban. He realizes he *does not have to hate Laban*. He realizes he *does not have to kill Laban*. He realizes he *does not have to defeat Laban*. He realizes he *does not have to humiliate or embarrass Lavan*. He realizes he *does not have to flee from Laban*. He realizes that he does not have to *justify himself* to Laban. He realizes he *does not have to fret over Laban* in the least.

The reality of the situation is now sinking in. What is that reality? It is simple: the Creator of the Universe is *with him*. As He had promised to do back at Beit-El, the Holy One is *sh'mar*-ing him [guarding, defending, sheltering, keeping watch over him]. Ya'akov - with all his imperfections - is *loved beyond His comprehension*. He is *treasured and protected beyond the power of any man or force of creation to do him permanent harm*. Angels are ascending and descending before Ya'akov's eyes. He is a ladder extending from earth to Heaven. The kingdom of God is forcibly advancing, as the realm of the spiritual world is eclipsing the realm of the physical world. The God of Avraham and of Yitzchak is now his God, too. Like his father and grandfather before him, he has a destiny to fulfill.

Shalom Ya'akov. Rest in that knowledge, and be at peace with the world.

Ya'akov Cuts a Covenant of Peace With Lavan

This sudden realization has rendered Lavan totally powerless to ever again manipulate, much less injure Ya'akov. Lavan knows he is 'whipped'. Ya'akov knows now that his battle is not against flesh and blood. He knows that Lavan will never again be a problem for him. He knows he will not be passing this way again. And so he sees no reason not to make a covenant of peace with Lavan and go on his way. So he said:

Hineh ha-gal hazeh v'hineh ha-matzevah

See this heap, and see the pillar,

asher yariti beyni uveynecha

which I have set between me and you.

Ed ha-gal hazeh v'eidah

May this heap and pillar be a witness,

Ha-matzeivah im-ani lo-e'evor eleicha et ha-gal hazeh

that I will not pass over this heap to you,

v'im-atah lo ta'avor elay et ha-gal hazeh
and that you will not pass over this heap

v'et ha-matzeivah hazot l'ra'ah
and this pillar to me, for harm[2].

Elohei Avraham v'Elohei Nachor
The God of Avraham, and the God of Nachor,

yishpeitu veyneyinu Elohei avihem
the God of their father, judge between us.

Then Ya'akov did something he had never done before – he *swore by the fear of his father, Yitzchak.* His father's God was now <u>*his*</u> *God* as well.

Who Is This, Coming Up From the Wilderness of Exile?

Something has indeed happened to our patriarch-in-training. He is no longer the same man who ran away from Esav and from Lavan. He has begun to realize *who he really is* and *why he is really here on planet earth* at such a time as this. Ya'akov thus agrees to a mutual non-aggression pact. Lavan will bother Ya'akov no more. But his name will form the root of the name of the area where this covenant was cut. We know that area today as "Lebanon"[3] – the *place of Lavan*[4].

Ya'akov Resumes His Journey Toward Home

Our *parsha ha shavua began with a departure* [from Beer-Sheva] *and ends with one* [from Galeed]. These physical departures are the '*bookends*. The more significant departures are spiritual. Ya'akov has departed from *trickery* and from *heel grabbing* and from *self-will.* He has departed from *self-reliance* and from *prayerlessnes*s. He has departed from *self-importance* and from *ingratitude.* Having been delivered by the Holy One from the threat posed by Lavan, Ya'akov is now ready to resume making aliyah to Eretz Yisrael. We will have to wait until next week, when we study ***Vayishlach***, to witness the return.

---

[2] The Hebrew word is ***ra***, *resh, ayin*, Strong's Hebrew word #7451, pronounced *rah*.

[3] Lebanon is the historical home of the Phoenicians, whose maritime culture flourished from around 2700 BCE to around 450 B.C. Alexander captured the Phoenician's capital city of Tyre in 332 B.C. after an eight-month siege. When the city fell Tyre lost its importance on the world stage. After Alexander's death Phoenicia came first under Ptolemaic control, then under Seleucid control. When the Seleucid dynasty fell to the Armenians, the rising empire of Rome stepped in and restored Seleucid control. Rome later incorporated Phoenicia into the Roman colony of Syria. An obscure city once known as *Berytus* (modern-day Beirut) began rising to prominence after the Roman emperor Augustus granted it Roman colonial status and Herod the Great financed lavish building projects there. During the era of Roman rule the Phoenician language died out and was replaced by Aramaic as the tongue of the people. In the 630s, the Muslims invaded and took over, and held sway for over a millennium. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, the five Ottoman provinces that had comprised present-day Lebanon were mandated to France by the League of Nations. The country which we know as Lebanon today gained independence in 1943, and gained sovereignty 3 years later, when French troops withdrew.

[4] The root of the name Lebanon in Hebrew is *lamed, beit, nun – i.e.* Lavan.

In the meantime Ya'akov is 'out of the frying pan, and into the fire' so to speak. Yes, he has been able to survive Laban's wrath. But can he handle the wrath of Esav? Before Ya'akov meets Esav he will need a little Divine assistance. And here's good news, Dear Reader, given to us as the *parsha* draws to a close - the Holy One 'has him covered'. ***V'Ya'akov halach l'darko*** *– and Ya`akov went*[5] *on his way ...* ***vayifgei'u-vo mal'achei Elohim*** *– and the angels*[6] *of God met*[7] *him.*

Go in peace, Ya'akov *avinu!* And *Shalom aleichem, malachim Elyon*! [welcome, messengers of the Most High].

Questions For Today's Study

1. Let us begin our study of the final aliyah of *Vayetze* with a few questions.

[A] In verse 30 Lavan indicates he can understand why Ya'akov left. What is his understand of Ya'akov's reason for leaving?

[B] Was Lavan correct in his assessment of Ya'akov's reason for leaving Haran? If not, what do you think the real reason was, and why do you think Lavan could not see it.

[C] Although Lavan thought he understood why Ya'akov left, there is one thing about his leaving which puzzles him. What is it that puzzles Lavan?

[D] Ya'akov's response to Lavan's allegation of theft is three-fold. Before he responds to the specific allegation of theft, what does he say? Why do you think Ya'akov start the discussion with that kind of statement?

[E] The second part of Ya'akov's response is a flat denial of the charges, and a rash vow. What does Ya'akov "vow" to Lavan?

[F] In what places does Torah tell us that Lavan searched for his "gods"?

[G] Can you see any correlation between Lavan's vain search for his "gods" and Pharaoh's actions in the midst of the plagues?

---

[5] The Hebrew verb is *halak*, *hey, lamed, kaf sofit*, Strong's word #H1980, pronounced *haw-**lawkh'***. This verb is usually translated as "to *go, walk, come, depart, proceed, move,* or to *go away".* It is first used in Genesis 2:14, to describe the smooth out-flowing motion of the third River of Gan Eden, called *Hiddekel*. It is also the verb used to describe the movement of the Holy One in Genesis 3:8, as He came looking for Adam to restore him after he ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

[6] The Hebrew phrase our English Bibles translates as 'angels of God' is *malachi Elohim*. Malachi [angels] is a plural form of *malak, mem, lamed, alef, kaf sofit,* Strong's Hebrew word #4397, pronounced *mawl-awk'.* The verb root of this word is *la'ach*, *lamed, alef, kaf sofit*, a verb unused in TaNaKh, but which Strongs' indicates means to *deputize*, or to *dispatch as a deputy.* A messenger is thus one who is sent by the Holy One to act as His *Divine Deputy* in regard to a specific task. Since the Holy One had covenanted at *Bayit-El* to "*keep you* [Ya'akov], wherever you go, and to "*bring you* [Ya'akov] *again into this land*" [Genesis 28:15], the malachi which met Ya'akov on the way were most likely those assigned by the Holy One to protect and escort him.

[7] The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as 'met' is *paga*, *peh, gimel, ayin*, Strong's Hebrew word #6293, pronounced *paw-gah'*. It is usually translated "*to meet, to light upon, or to join".* It is first used in Torah in Genesis 23:8, by Avraham, when, after Sarah died, he asked the sons of Chet [KJV 'Heth'] to intercede [***paga***] on his behalf with Efron, the owner of Machpelah, that he might acquire a burial place.

[H] Raquel, of course, was the guilty party. How did she cover up her guilt?

[I] Why do you think Raquel stole her father's "gods"?

[J] Read the story of Achan in Joshua 7. Why do you think the Holy One let Raquel "get away with" this theft, deception, and pollution of the camp of the Holy One's chosen, when Achan and his whole family were stoned to death? Do you think it makes any difference that the events in Joshua 7 took place in Israel, while the events of today's aliyah all occurred "in the hill country of Gilead"? Explain your answer.

2. In verses 36 through 42 Ya'akov, feeling vindicated by the fact that Lavan has not found the "gods" which he accused Ya'akov of taking despite a thorough and public search, vents his anger at Lavan.

[A] Do you think Ya'akov was right or wrong to vent his anger in this way?

[B] What challenge does Ya'akov give Lavan in verses 37?

[C] How long does Ya'akov say he has worked for Lavan?

[D] List the working conditions Ya'akov says Lavan placed upon him.

[E] To whom does Ya'akov attribute the assets he possesses [see verse 42]?

[F] In Strong's and Gesenius, look up the word translated as "Fear" in verse 42. Write the Hebrew word and its definitions. Then explain what you think Ya'akov meant by the term "*the Fear of Yitzchak*".

[G] What two things does Ya'akov say the Holy One has 'seen'?

3. Lavan responds to Ya'akov's angry diatribe by agreeing he will not (in light of the Holy One's warning, in the dream in yesterday's aliyah) deprive Ya'akov of his wives or children - but he insists they are his. Since they are his, he reasons, he is entitled to get something for them (in addition to Ya'akov's 20 years of labor, and the blessing of the Holy One that came upon his household by reason of Ya'akov's presence there). So, he wants a "covenant". And Ya'akov obliges.

[A] What was to be the "sign" of this covenant (like a ring is a sign of a marriage covenant, and Shabbat-treasuring is the sign of the Mosaic and Renewed covenants)?

[B] The "sign" of this covenant was given one name in Aramaic (for Lavan's descendants to recognize and acknowledge) and two names in Hebrew (for Ya'akov's descendants to recognize and acknowledge). What were each of the names, and what does each of those names mean?

[C] How was this sign to function as a "witness"? Explain your answer.

[D] What *two things* did Ya'akov promise Lavan as part of this covenant? [See verses 50 and 52]?

[E] What one thing did Lavan promise Ya'akov?

[F] In the name of what god did Lavan swear his oath of covenant?

[G] In whose name did Ya'akov swear his oath of covenant?

[H] What was the "seal" of this covenant? [Verse 54].

[I] In your opinion, does this covenant have any effect today? If so, what is the effect today of the covenant made in the hill country of Gilead by Ya'akov and Lavan?

[J] What country separates modern-day Israel from its fiercest enemy, Syria (previously known as "Aram", the land where Haran was located)? When and how did that country come into existence, and how did it get its name?

4. After Lavan left the camp of Ya'akov, Ya'akov pulled up camp, and started toward the direction of the Yardin River, and Eretz Yisrael.

[A] Who met Ya'akov as he started his descent from the hills of Gilead toward the Yardin?

[B] How does this event confirm the promise the Holy One made to Ya'akov in Genesis 28:15?

[C] Look up the Hebrew word "*Machanaim*" in Gesenius' Lexicon, as well as in one or more Bible Dictionaries. Consider the hieroglyphic 'word picture' formed by the combination of the Hebrew letters *mem, chet, nun, yod, and mem sofit* [the name itself] and by the Hebrew verb root *chanah – i.e. chet, nun, hey*. Then write a short explanation of why you think Ya'akov named the place he saw the angels "*Machanaim*"?

5. In today's concluding haftarah reading for parsha *Vayetze* we read the prophetic exhortation from the prophet *Hoshea* [Hosea]:

Yisra'el, return to the Holy One your God; For you have fallen because of your sin.
Take words with you, and return to the Holy One.
Tell him, "Forgive all our sins, and accept that which is good: So we offer like bulls our lips."
Ashshur can't save us. We won't ride on horses;
Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, 'Our gods!'
For in you the fatherless finds mercy."
"I will heal their waywardness. I will love them freely;
For my anger is turned away from him.
I will be like the dew to Yisra'el. He will blossom like the lily,
And send down his roots like Levanon. His branches will spread,
And his beauty will be like the olive tree, and his fragrance like Levanon.

Men will dwell in his shade. They will revive like the grain, and blossom like the vine.
Their fragrance will be like the wine of Levanon.

Efrayim, what have I to do any more with idols? I answer, and will take care of him.
I am like a green fir tree; from me your fruit is found."

Who is wise, that he may understand these things?
Who is prudent, that he may know them? For the ways of the Holy One are right,
And the righteous walk in them; but the rebellious stumble in them.
[Hosea 14:1-9]

[A] What does Hoshea call Israel to do?

[B] In Strong's and Gesenius, look up the word translated as "return". Write

the Hebrew word and its definitions.

[C] How, if at all, does the message of Yochanan the Immerser and Yeshua (which is translated as "Repent") differ from the word translated as *"return"* in today's haftarah?

[D] What does Hoshea tell the people of Israel to "*take with them*"? Explain what he means.

[E] Note how verse 3 of the haftarah relates to the opening of today's Torah reading (where Lavan searched in vain for his useless "gods"). What four things does this verse tell the people of Israel to acknowledge to themselves and to the Holy One?

[F] Verses 4-8 represent the response the Holy One promises to make if/when His people will truly "return" to Him, and make the acknowledgements of verse 3. List the things the Holy One promises to do.

[G] In Strong's and Gesenius look up the words translated as "*wise"* and *"discerning"* in verse 9. Write the Hebrew words and their meanings.

[H] How does Hoshea describe the "ways of the Holy One"?

[I] How does Hoshea say you can tell the difference between the *"righteous*" and the "*rebellious"?*

6. In today's B'rit Chadasha reading from John 1 we read Yeshua's reply to Natan'el, who has just identified Him as the 'son of God', and the 'king of Israel'.

Yeshua answered him, ***"Because I told you,***
'I saw you underneath the fig tree,' do you believe?
You will see greater things than these!"
He said to him, ***"Most assuredly, I tell you, hereafter you will see heaven opened,***
and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."
[John 1:50-51]

[A] What differences do you see between the vision Ya'akov had of a stairway/ladder (at the beginning of this week's parsha), and what Yeshua tells Natan'el he will see?

[B] Did any of the events of Yeshua's earthly life fulfill this prophecy? If so, when and how? If not, when do you believe it will be fulfilled?

[C] Yeshua does not, in this verse at least, claim for Himself the titles Natan'el ascribed to Him (rabbi, Son of God, King of Israel). Instead, what does He call Himself and where did that name/title come from [it is indeed a name/title found in the TaNaKh]?

May you ***sh'ma*** *the call of the Holy One to depart when it comes.*
And may the Holy One watch over you and bring you into your inheritance.

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 85:12-13

Yes, the Holy One will give that which is good.
Our land will yield its increase.
Righteousness goes before him, and prepares the way for his step.