



# Ashreinu | אשרינו

ENHANCING YOUR STUDY OF THE WEEKLY TORAH PORTION

## DECISIONS AND DIRECTION

RABBI AVI HOCHMAN

---

RABBI AVI HOCHMAN

---



---

AKIVA ROSENTHAL ('20)

---



---

ARIELLA GROSS ('21)

---



---

MORDECHAI SHEKHTER ('20)

---



---

ELANA SILKIN ('19)

---

Often in life we are faced with decisions to make. Which Yeshiva/Seminary to pick? Which college to attend? How should I spend my free time? Which chesed opportunities do I take upon myself? How do

we decide which one to choose?

We find a similar dilemma in this week's parsha.

“וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּעֵר שֶׁבַע וַיֵּלֶךְ חָרָנָה”

“And Yaakov leaves from Beer Sheva and goes toward Charan” (Bereishit 28:10).

The commentaries grapple with the extra words in this pasuk. Why do we need to be told that Yaakov leaves in addition to where he goes? Is it not obvious that if he is going towards Charan, that he would be leaving the place where he was currently living, Be'er Sheva?

Rashi offers a famous answer to this question. He tells us that the **וַיֵּצֵא** of Yaakov is coming to teach us a lesson. When a tzadik leaves a place, it makes an impression on that place. Why? When the tzadik, in this case Yaakov, was in a given place, his beauty, splendor, and majesty enveloped that location. However, when the tzadik leaves, all of that departs. The leaving of the tzadik can be felt in the entire place.

The Beit HaLevi, in his commentary on the Torah, explains that each word, **וַיֵּצֵא** and **וַיֵּלֶךְ**, is teaching us something unique about our decisions. When a person decides to go somewhere, he can be going for one of two reasons: either because he no longer wants to be in his current location or because he needs/wants to get to the new location. Yaakov leaves for both reasons. He leaves Be'er Sheva because Rivka urges him to flee in order to escape Esav's wrath. Yitzchak, however, wishes Yaakov to go to Charan in order to find a suitable wife from Lavan's house. So Yaakov, being an obedient son, obeys both of his parents' wishes and relocates with both reasons in mind.

Every morning before Ashrei we recite the following pasuk from Mishlei (19:21):

“רבות מחשבות בלב איש ועצת ה' היא תקום”

“There are many thoughts in the heart of Man, but the advice of Hashem, it shall stand.” I once heard an explanation from Rabbi Yamin Goldsmith, Menahel of Shaalvim for Women, that highlights our message. What Shlomo HaMelech is telling us is: We have many decisions to make in our lives and the final decisions we make represent what Hashem wanted for us. We have to go about weighing the pros and cons, but in the end, when we make the decision, that is the one that Hashem wanted for us.

Nobody can answer that question except yourself, but you should ask yourself what has motivated you towards the decisions that you ultimately make.

A person should focus on the reason behind his or her decision. Why are you choosing that option? Is it the easy way out? Is there more to gain with the other option? Are we just afraid to take the challenge of the first choice? Hopefully, if we think through our decisions and with Hashem's help, we will ultimately achieve success and all of our decisions will be met with great excitement, accomplishment, and satisfaction.

## THE PERFECT BALANCE

AKIVA ROSENTHAL ('20)

In Parshat Vayeitzei, Yaakov has two significant dreams which represent the history of the Jewish people. At the beginning of the parsha, Yaakov is traveling to Lavan's house to escape from his brother Esav when he has his first dream.

The Torah states:

“וַיִּחְלֹם וַהֲגֵה סֹלֶם מִצָּב אֲרָצָה וְרֹאשׁוֹ מֵגִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וְהִנֵּה”  
“מִלְאָכֵי אֱלֹהִים עֹלִים וְיֹרְדִים בּוֹ”

“And he had a dream; a ladder was set on the ground and its top reached to the sky, and angels of God were going up and down on it” (28:13).

He dreams about a ladder that begins from where he is sleeping and ascends to heaven, with angels moving up and down the ladder. This image reveals Yaakov's goals and values as a young man, which include being spiritually close to Hashem. He hopes to reach

a certain spiritual level at which he has a strong relationship with Hashem -- the top of the ladder.

The second dream occurs while he is working for Lavan. The pasuk mentions:

“וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי מִלְאָךְ הָאֱלֹקִים בְּחִלּוֹם יַעֲקֹב וַאֲמַר הֲגִנִי”

“And in the dream an angel of God said to me, ‘Yaakov!’ ‘Here,’ I answered” (31:11).

Yaakov describes his dream to his wives, Rachel and Leah, by explaining the encounter he had with an angel in his sleep. This dream is focused on mundane matters, like shepherding sheep. At the end of the dream, an angel comes to Yaakov and tells him that Hashem recognizes Lavan's immoral behavior, referring to how Lavan is cheating Yaakov out of keeping some of his sheep and how Lavan had prevented Yaakov from marrying Rachel. This message reflects Yaakov's desire to be a religious Jew, despite living in an unholy place. In an environment of cheating and lying, Yaakov refuses to be like his father-in-law, Lavan, and stands up against these immoral actions.

These two dreams are a lesson for all of us because we struggle with the same issue that Yaakov does: the balance between our religious lives and our physical lives. The angel in Yaakov's second dream teaches us that we can be as devoted to Hashem as we want to be. Hashem also commands Yaakov (31:13)

“קום צא מן-הארץ הזאת ושוב אל ארץ מולדתך”

to return to Israel in order to be in a more spiritual and pure place, a place where Jews should live. The angel's message lets us know that Hashem is always with us and that He will help us become the best Jews that we can be. May we all, with Hashem's help, work to create the perfect balance between our spirituality and the physical world.

## THE LADDER OF PROGRESS

ARIELLA GROSS ('21)

Parshat Vayeitzei begins by describing Yaakov's journey:

“וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּעַר שֵׁבַע וַיֵּלֶךְ חֲרָנָה”

“And Yaakov left from Be'er Sheva and he went to Charan” (28:10).

As sunset approaches, Yaakov pauses to find a place to sleep. That night, he dreams of a ladder extending from the ground to heaven, with angels of Hashem

continuously ascending and descending it. Rashi explains that the angels going up represent the angels who escorted him to the borders of Israel, and the angels going down represent the angels who will escort him outside of Israel.

Hashem appears to Yaakov, telling him this land will belong to his future offspring. Hashem warns him that his offspring will be spread out and face great challenges, but ultimately will return to this land. A common discussion among commentators is the significance of Yaakov's dream and the practical applications we can derive from it.

The Chofetz Chaim, Rabbi Yisroel Meir Kagan Ha-Kohen, cites an idea shared by many commentators. He suggests that the ladder symbolizes spirituality, with each rung representing a religious challenge or question we face. On a ladder, people move up or down, rarely staying in the same place. So too with spirituality, we progress or regress with each of our challenges. Those challenges we overcome help us grow and learn, and those we fail to accomplish can hinder us temporarily, but do not prohibit our ability to climb higher again.

Just as the angels can move upward and downward on the ladder, so too we can move up and down at varying points, with the goal of ultimately ascending. As we rise on our spiritual rungs, we can look down and take pride in our progress. Every mitzvah we do, regardless of how insignificant it may seem, impacts us greatly and helps us achieve our ultimate goal: greater and better spirituality. We should choose to think of our hardships and struggles as merely minor setbacks and understand that there is always room for growth in our level of spirituality.

## THE GREATEST OF IMPRESSIONS

MORDECHAI SHEKHTER ('20)

This week's parsha begins in a very peculiar fashion.

“ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע וילך חרנה”

“And Yaakov went out from Be'er Sheva and he went to Charan” (28:10).

Rashi asks a very interesting question on this pasuk. Why is there a double lashon regarding Yaakov's de-

parture? The pasuk only needed to write וילך חרנה, so why was there a need for the Torah to mention that Yaakov also left Be'er Sheva? Rashi answers that the addition of this language is coming to teach us that the departure of a tzadik from a place leaves a great impression on the people living there.

The Chatam Sofer asks a very important question on Rashi. If the reason that the Torah uses a double language is to emphasize the fact that a tzadik left his town, why is there no double language when Avraham left Ur Kasdim?

He answers that a tzadik can only make an impression on a town when there are people in that town who are impressionable. In Be'er Sheva, Yitzchak and Rivka gained so much from having Yaakov in their midst, as did everybody else in the vicinity. However, in regards to Avraham Avinu, nobody in Ur Kasdim could care less about the fact that Avraham was a tzadik. Therefore, when he left, the impression that Avraham had made on his city went unnoticed.

In today's day and age, there are many things that can make an impression on us, but most of them are temporary. In order for these impressions to last, they must be important, and it is our job to prioritize those things most important to us, allowing them to stick.

## INCREASING OUR LEVELS

ELANA SILKIN ('19)

Parshat Vayeitzei begins with Yaakov fleeing from his father's house and from his brother Esav who wants to kill him. After fleeing, Yaakov stops for the night and has a dream:

וַיַּחְלֹם וְהִנֵּה סֹלֶם מֻצָּב אֶרְצָה וְרֹאשׁוֹ מְגִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וְהִנֵּה מַלְאָכֵי אֱלֹהִים עֹלִים וְיֹרְדִים בּוֹ

“...he dreamt, and behold! A ladder was set earthward and its top reached heavenward, and behold! Angels of God were ascending and descending on it” (28:12).

Dreams mentioned in Tanach are vehicles of prophecy. According to the Talmud Brachot (57b), all dreams are one-sixtieth prophecy. Rabbi Yochanan Zweig explains that dreams create an experience where the dreamer experiences the future, as opposed to a prophecy in which the prophet solely views

# Staff

the future. The events that Yaakov experienced in his own life and in his dream represented scenarios that will occur in the future. Just as Yaakov was being exiled from his father's house, so too, the Jews have been exiled from Eretz Yisrael and our Father's house. Similarly, Yaakov was in a difficult situation in the house of Lavan and the Jews have experienced numerous difficult situations throughout our long exile.

If the only purpose of the dream was to act as a prophecy, what is the relevance of Yaakov's dream in our lives today? Yaakov dreamed that angels were going up and down a ladder. Rabbi Yisroel and Rabbi Osher Anshel Jungreis point out that the ladder is an allusion to Har Sinai. The word סולם-sulam (ladder) and the word סיני-Sinai have the same gematria value of 130. We learn from this that in order to keep us from being swept into the environment of exile, we must continually raise our level of Torah. Just as Hashem was at the top of the ladder in the dream, He must be at the forefront in our lives in order for us to lead a Torah-filled meaningful life.



## EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

BATSHEVA SHEKHTER (' 20)

## DESIGN DIRECTOR

SHIREL GARZON (' 19)

MAYRAV SAKETKHOV (' 20)

## EDITORS

LIBBY WEINGARTEN (' 19)

MEITAL FIXLER (' 19)

SAM CLARKE (' 19)

AHARON BRANDWEIN (' 19)

JACKIE ZIMMERMAN (' 19)

YONI KURTZ (' 20)

CHANI KAMINETSKY (' 20)

## MONTHLY CONTRIBUTORS

ADINA HIRSCH (' 19)

SARA DEICHMAN (' 19)

AKIVA ROSENTHAL (' 20)

MORDY SHEKHTER (' 20)

YAFFA SHEKHTER (' 20)

DONIELLA ZAK (' 21)

ASHIRA MEYEROWITZ (' 21)

## FACULTY ADVISOR

RABBI AVI HOCHMAN

## DEVELOPERS

MAX FROHLICH (' 21)

DOVID ZAK (' 19)

## DISTRIBUTOR

YOCHEVED SOBOL (' 20)

A KYHS PARSHA PUBLICATION



[RAVH@YESHIVAHS.ORG](mailto:RAVH@YESHIVAHS.ORG)