

Candle Lighting

5:11

S”Z Kriat Shema

9:25

Sunset

5:29

Motzei  
Shabbat

6:06



Parshat HaShavuah

ויצא

VAYEITZEI

ט' כסלו תשע"ו

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חלקינו מה טוב

Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

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CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

MRS. ORA LEE KANNER

I've been thinking about the word ויפגע...

Twice in our parsha the word appears; in the opening, as Yaakov leaves to Charan, and at the end, as he returns to Eretz Yisrael. Yaakov's twenty years in Charan are sandwiched between "ויפגע במקום" and "ויפגעו בו מלאכי אלוקים", yet the interpretation of these words by Rashi is vastly different in each of these

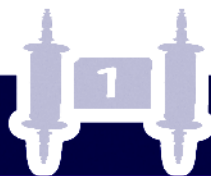
places. In explicating the words ויפגע במקום, Rashi cites the words of our Rabbis, that it is a לשון תפילה (words of prayer), yet when the same word is used at the end of our parsha, Rashi explains that the angels were מלוה (escorting) Yaakov. How do we understand the vastly different interpretations for the exact same root word?

The first time this word is found in our Chumash is when Avraham asks to meet Efron, intending to convince him to sell the המכפלה. Rashi explains (as is his custom when a word is first used) that פגע is a לשון בקשה, a word that connotes an impassioned plea.

With this in mind, we can understand that Rashi is merely utilizing this meaning in explaining each of the verses in our parsha. When Yaakov first confronts his awareness of the God-filled universe encapsulated in the name מקום, he is filled with awe and fear. Accordingly, he turns to God in a posture of tefilla and offers his heartfelt בקשה, imploring God to keep him alive and safe until his return to Israel.

At the end of his sojourn in Charan, God dispatches angels to fulfill the בקשות of Yaakov, made twenty years earlier and escort him safely to his father's home. With the fulfillment of his tefillot, God has literally closed the chapter on Yaakov's extended exile.

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Mrs. Kanner continued

Perhaps the Torah is indicating that what seemed like a momentary encounter with God was actually an extended 20 year rendezvous with Yaakov throughout his journey. May we merit to see our elongated exile end with all of our בקשות fulfilled, knowing that throughout our difficult exile, God is always with us.

## THE POWER OF UNITY

Yael Attias ('16)

This week's parsha is the famous story of Yaakov running away from his home, Be'er Sheva, and stopping to rest for the night, where he has the dream of the angels ascending and descending a ladder. The pasuk says that Yaakov, "took the stones of that place and put them under his head, and lay down to sleep there and he dreamed... And Yaakov rose up early in the morning, and took the stone which he had put under his head..." (Bereishit 28:1-19).

As we know, the Torah makes no mistakes. Therefore, it is difficult not to question the reason why the Torah says that Yaakov gathered "stones" (in plural), but when he woke up there was only a "stone" (singular). Rashi quotes a well-known midrash, which says that when Yaakov gathered the stones they began arguing over which stone Yaakov would rest his head upon. Consequently, God molded all of the stones together into one stone. Although the idea is nice, is it possible that there is a deeper idea behind this midrash?

Intrigued by this question, Harav Yehuda Amital z'l suggests the following idea. Starting with Avraham Avinu, the Avot lived with the consciousness that they would build a nation. Perhaps one of the biggest reasons why Avraham and Yitzchak suffered is that they both thought they would build a nation with ALL their children. This idea is clear from a midrash that Rashi quotes about the episode of Akeidat Yitzchak. In this midrash, God says to Avraham, "Take your son." Avraham replies, "I have two sons", to which God finally says, "take Yitzchak" (Bereishit 22:2, based on Bereishit Rabba 55:7). As seen in this midrash, Avraham was constantly looking for a way to include Yishmael in the mission of building a nation, until he finally must accept that Yishmael would not be part of his nation.

Yitzchak was similar to Avraham in this way. The Sforno (Bereishit 27:29) explains that when Yaakov stole the blessing from Esav, he did not receive the blessing of inheriting the land of Israel because Yitzchak never intended to give that blessing to Esav. Yitzchak planned to divide the blessing in half and give the material blessing to Esav and the spiritual one to Yaakov because he wished for the nation to consist of both of their halves. He also eventually accepted that this would not be possible.

Similarly, when Yaakov left Be'er Sheva, he could not help but wonder about the fate of his children. Would he also be required to choose between them, or would they all be part of his nation? These questions are reflected in Yaakov's dream of the angels ascending and descending. This dream represents Yaakov's uncertainty regarding which of his children would rise and which would fall. Ultimately, the meaning behind the rocks coming together is a message to Yaakov that not one of his children would go astray; rather they would all be unified in order to form the nation of Am Yisrael.





## WELL-TO-DO PEOPLE

SARA MERKIN ('17)

In this week's parsha, Vayeitzei, Yaakov runs away from his home after “stealing” Esav’s bracha, and he ultimately arrives at a well. At this well, Yaakov meets his future bride, Rachel, the daughter of his uncle, Lavan. Why does the Torah have to tell us the details of their meeting, and what is the significance of Yaakov and Rachel meeting at a well?

Water symbolizes transformation. This symbol is apparent in western culture through classic Baptist references, but it is also found in Judaism through our mitzvot and in the Torah. For example, we wash our hands every morning when we wake before we say brachot, we wash before we eat bread, and Kohanim wash before they go up for Birkat Kohanim. All of these instances of washing symbolize the removal of impurities from our hands and the transformation of our bodies into holy vessels.

The water motif is also prevalent in the Torah, most famously in the stories of Noach and Moshe Rabbeinu. Water was one of God’s first creations, a creation essential to our very existence as human beings. Only a few centuries later, Hashem destroyed the people of Noach's generation with the one thing they needed to survive: water. Likewise, while Moshe Rabbeinu was saved by being placed in a basket in the river as a baby, his downfall was also caused by water. Hashem commanded Moshe to speak to a rock in order to provide Bnei Yisrael with water, but Moshe hit the rock instead (according to Rashi), and as a punishment he was forbidden to enter into the land of Israel.

In both stories, water was a transformative factor. Water transformed the world into a place of life, and afterwards into one of destruction. Water transformed Moshe from a boy destined to die into a prince who led the Jewish people to freedom, but the water caused his downfall as well.

It seems only fitting that Yaakov, the man after whom our nation is named, met Rachel at a well. Rachel would give birth to Yosef, the catalyst for the nation's exile to Egypt. The exile enslaved us, and we were freed by the splitting of the sea, yet another story beginning and ending with water. At this point we were transformed into a free people, free to serve Hashem and become Bnei Yisrael, the sons of Yaakov.

So, when you wake up to wash your hands tomorrow morning, remember the importance of water, and thank Hashem for giving you the ability to transform your life.

## WATER THEY DOING AT THE WELL?

SHANI WOLFSON ('17)

This week's parsha, Vayeitzei, opens up with Yaakov meeting his future wife, Rachel, at a well. Yaakov is not the first or only person to have met his spouse at a well. Eliezer, Yitzchak’s agent, met Rivka at a well and, later, Moshe meets Tziporah at a well too. Why are wells so special that three of our biggest role models meet their spouses there?

In our modern world, we cannot see the importance or deeper meaning of a well like the people of those days saw. Today we have running water and we view wells as mystical places to throw pennies and make wishes. However, in those days, in order to obtain fresh water, one had to go out every day to the well. This made the well a central and daily part of people’s lives. The Torah is trying to teach us, with the meeting of three pairs of Jewish leaders at wells, that our actions reflect the types of people we are.

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Eliezer knew that Rivka was the perfect wife for Yitzchak because she was kind to him and to his camels. In the case of Moshe and Tziporah, Moshe was very generous in helping give water to Tziporah's flock and, on the flip side, Tziporah was thoughtful in telling her father about Moshe. This led to Moshe being invited in and eventually marrying Tziporah. As for Yaakov and Rachel, the protagonists of this week's parsha, they met when Yaakov lifted a very heavy stone off the well so Rachel could access the water within. Yaakov was not only extremely kind and thoughtful but also strong. He was not only physically strong, but he was cognizant of his actions and went out of his way to do the right thing.

We encounter many different people every day and every where we go. Our presentation of ourselves as Jewish people gives the world an impression of who we are and what values we believe in. In each story, when our leaders first got to the well, they did not know they were communicating with their future spouses. This message is crucial; always act in the *derech* of Hashem because we are an *ohr l'goyim*, and we therefore have to be kind not just to family, friends, and Jews, but also to everyone around us.

## MA'ARIV: INDIVIDUAL PRAYER? ARI COHEN ('18)

In this week's parsha, Vayeitzei, the Torah states, "וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמְקוֹם" (Bereishit 28:11). According to Rashi's interpretation, this line means, "And Yaakov davened." The Gemara Brachot (26b) quotes this pasuk as the source for Ma'ariv. The gemara debates the source for the three daily prayers that we say. One option is that they are derived from the daily korbanot. The second opinion is that they are derived from the prayer times of the three Avot. The gemara goes on to say that although Shacharit and Mincha are obligatory, Ma'ariv is actually optional (Tosafot point out that when the gemara says optional, it means that in a case where one can daven Ma'ariv or perform a mitzvah, he should do the mitzvah).

So the obvious question becomes: why is Ma'ariv optional when the other two prayers are obligatory?

If one follows the first opinion, that the prayers correlate to korbanot, it makes sense that Ma'ariv is optional. There used to be a korban offered in the morning and the afternoon, but there was none in the evening; rather, the korban remained smoking during that time. However, if one follows the second opinion and says that our three prayers come from the Avot, then why would Ma'ariv be optional? Why is Yaakov's tefillah any less important than Avraham's and Yitzchak's?

The Ran (Chulin) suggests an answer to our question. When Avraham goes out to pray, the pasuk says, "וַיִּשְׁכַּם אַבְרָהָם בַּבֹּקֶר" - "And Abraham got up early to go daven." (Bereishit 22:3). With Yitzchak, the pasuk writes, "וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לְשׂוּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶה" - "And Yitzchak went out to converse in the field." (Bereishit 24:63). Both Avraham and Yitzchak had the intentions to go and pray. However, with Yaakov the pasuk says, "וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמְקוֹם" - "And Yaakov met the place." Yaakov didn't have the intentions to pray to Hashem; rather, once he came across a site worth davening at, he paused and went out to daven, as opposed to Avraham and Yitzchak who had the intentions to daven. From this, the Ran learns that Ma'ariv is optional because Yaakov never had the intentions to daven specifically at that time.

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