

# *V'yeitzei* וַיֵּצֵא

## He went out

### “Jacob’s Maturation (Part 1)”

Genesis 28:10-32:2  
Hosea 12:12-14:10 (A); 11:7-12:12 (S)

As you prepare to read through this week’s Torah portion, *V’yeitzei*, you may conclude, as I have, that both this *parashah* and next week’s *parashah* (*V’yishlach*: Genesis 32:3-36:43) together, are a two-part rendition of the main substance of the life of the Patriarch Jacob. The Torah specifically dedicates about nine chapters to describing the main experiences of the life of Jacob—largely trials and tribulations—as he developed from a young man in laboring to start a family, to being a more tempered and seasoned elder who would finally reunite with his brother Esau to bury their father Isaac.

*V’yeitzei* covers approximately twenty years in the life of Jacob as he departs for Haran,<sup>48</sup> and then after laboring for his father-in-law Laban,<sup>49</sup> begins his return back to Canaan.<sup>50</sup> In *V’yishlach* next week, we encounter the intensity when Esau and Jacob are brought back together,<sup>51</sup> and we see some of the challenges Jacob’s family has living in the Shechem area,<sup>52</sup> before they ultimately turn south back to Hebron.<sup>53</sup>

During this first score of years detailed in *V’yeitzei*, Jacob marries Leah<sup>54</sup> and Rachel,<sup>55</sup> takes on Zilpah<sup>56</sup> and Bilhah<sup>57</sup> as concubines, and he fathers eleven sons<sup>58</sup> and one daughter.<sup>59</sup> It is during this two-decade period of Jacob’s life when he experiences some rather dramatic encounters with the Creator God, which begin to solidify his relationship with Him. Here for all to read, are some chronicled events that give one a sense of Jacob’s real humanity and mortal limitations.

## On the Road of Escape

Jacob is one of the unique characters in the Scriptures who exemplifies the common dichotomy present in each person, the struggle that too often—and most unfortunately—ensues between a natural inclination toward the flesh and a desired inclination toward the Divine (cf. Romans 7:14-25). On various levels, I would submit that the life of Jacob is something that all of us can identify with, as we each have had times in our lives when putting ourselves in the complete will and care of God has been most difficult. Jacob, after

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<sup>48</sup> Genesis 28:10-22.

<sup>49</sup> Genesis 29:1-30:43.

<sup>50</sup> Genesis 31:1-32:2.

<sup>51</sup> Genesis 32:2-33:17.

<sup>52</sup> Genesis 34:1-35:22.

<sup>53</sup> Genesis 35:23-29.

<sup>54</sup> Genesis 29:21-27.

<sup>55</sup> Genesis 29:28.

<sup>56</sup> Genesis 29:24.

<sup>57</sup> Genesis 29:29.

<sup>58</sup> Genesis 30:1-24.

<sup>59</sup> Genesis 30:21.

all, had to leave the relative comfort and security of his home, under the threat of retribution from his brother Esau, and was in desperate need of assurance that what he did and where he was to go were for a bigger purpose. The immediate need for Jacob to actually escape from Esau's vengeance, certainly factored in to his decision to obey his parents' direction to head eastward to find a wife from their relatives in Paddan-aram:

“So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him, and said to him, ‘You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. **Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.** And may God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you; that you may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham” (Genesis 28:1-4).

But what about the promises bestowed upon Jacob as the heir of God's previous promises made to his grandfather Abraham and father Isaac (cf. Genesis 27:27-29)? Now with Jacob as the recipient of the birthright and the blessing, would God be able to fulfill these promises if he relocated outside of Canaan? Certainly, the thought might have arisen that perhaps some things would be altered as a result of the ongoing problems with Esau. We later see that in contrast to Abraham, who simply moved when God told him to, how young Jacob did not have his grandfather's faith.

From the very beginning of his moving eastward on the road to Haran, Jacob had an encounter with the Lord, as the angelic host appeared on a ladder just after his departure from Beersheba, at Bethel or Luz:<sup>60</sup>

“And he had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, ‘I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And behold, I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you” (Genesis 28:13-15).

Jacob surely had a very inspiring encounter with the Almighty and His angels! In this scene it is recorded how God will be faithful to the promises He gave to Abraham and Isaac before him, including: the inheritance of the Promised Land, a vast multitude of descendants, and that future blessings to the nations will come through Jacob. God's final declaration is: **“Remember, I am with you: I will protect you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you”** (Genesis 28:15, NJPS). In categorical terms, God affirmed to Jacob that everything was under His control, and that He would not only be with him during his trip eastward—but that He would safely return him back to Canaan to complete all of the promises which have been made. Apparently, Jacob was convinced that he has heard from the Most High, because his actions reflected convictions that were laced with awe and reverence:

“Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, ‘Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.’ **And he was afraid and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is**

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<sup>60</sup> Genesis 28:19.

none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.’ So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on its top. **And he called the name of that place Bethel; however, previously the name of the city had been Luz**” (Genesis 28:16-19).

Jacob’s action, especially in renaming the location *Beit-El* (בֵּית־אֵל) or “house of God” (BDB),<sup>61</sup> speaks for itself. But, it is also followed by a rather significant vow he took:

“Then Jacob made a vow, saying, **‘If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, and I return to my father's house in safety, then the LORD will be my God.** This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You” (Genesis 28:20-22).

Here, as Jacob moved forward on his journey eastward, he had an intimate encounter with the Creator. *He saw a ladder appear, and a portal opens up into Heaven* with supernatural beings going up and down. Jacob recognized this spot as being “the house of God,” a place where His presence had appeared. Yet, where you would expect his grandfather Abraham to have simply praised the Almighty or have expressed great thanks for witnessing this, Jacob instead made an “if/then” vow with God: “If God remains with me, if He protects me on this journey that I am making, and gives me bread to eat and clothing to wear...” (Genesis 28:20, NJPS), *v’hayah ADONAI li l’Elohim* (וְהָיָה יְהוָה לִי לֵאלֹהִים) or “then the LORD will be my God” (Genesis 28:21).

### Jacob's Audacity!

When I read in the narrative how Jacob said, “...then the LORD will be my God” (Genesis 28:21), in light of the surrounding events regarding his encounter with the Almighty and Heavenly host, a number of thoughts came to my mind:

- How could Jacob make this statement to the Lord?
- Did Jacob not understand who he was truly addressing?
- Did Jacob not believe in God’s promises that were already made regarding his welfare?
- Can you actually imagine making a conditional bargain with the Creator?

Certainly by the words that Jacob uttered, he knew that he had been in the bone fide presence of God. But to then move from a contrite state of encountering His holiness and magnificence, to putting conditional demands on Him, appears to be quite audacious and presumptuous. **When people know that they have just encountered the sheer glory and awesomeness of God, they should naturally have the faith to realize that He is all powerful!** Is it possible that the conditional statement “...then the LORD will be my God,” is a major clue regarding the relative spiritual immaturity of young Jacob?

Perhaps this is a vivid indication that Jacob was used to striking deals or controlling various situations—and could even have been used to getting his own way. After all, he had been the favored child of Rebekah, and he traded a bowl of lentil soup to his brother Esau for the privileges of the firstborn (Genesis 25:27-34). Before departing for Padan-haram, Jacob had deceived his father, and essentially stole the blessing which Isaac would have otherwise given to his brother Esau (Genesis 27:1-29). One really wonders, in lieu of his

<sup>61</sup> BDB, 110.

past experiences, whether Jacob's vow in Genesis 28:20-22 was really made with any serious thought, contemplation, or consideration for the consequences of his commitment.

Later within the Torah, specific instruction is codified about the significance of making vows (Numbers 30:2; Deuteronomy 23:21). In His Sermon on the Mount, Yeshua the Messiah has to emphasize how by the First Century C.E. making oaths and vows had been severely abused (Matthew 5:33-37). But here in *V'yeitzei*, with little progress made on his journey east—*after hearing* a reiteration of Divine promises made to his grandfather Abraham and father Isaac—Jacob decided to strike a “bargain” with the Lord. If the Lord “performed” for Jacob by providing him with food, clothing, and protection, then Jacob would make Him his God. **This sounds like a very carnal practice for someone to be doing.** We can only speculate as to the specific reasons why this was Jacob's reaction to the great theophany he witnessed.

What we do not need to speculate about is that **Jacob had quite a few things to still learn about his Creator.** Jacob lacked the faith of his grandfather Abraham, because limited human beings take a significant risk when they put conditions on an Eternal God. Rather than live forth His purpose for their lives via His direction, those who operate in faithlessness tend to think that they can manipulate God into following their own will. Unless quickly remedied and fixed, this can result in one having to experience some serious consequences—certainly in terms of Earthly refinement and seasoning if the Lord is going to use you for something beyond yourself.

In reading *V'yeitzei*, it is not difficult to detect that *Jacob had a great deal to learn* and still must mature. During the next twenty years, as he would labor under the watchful eye of Laban and begin his family, his fleshly and mortal inclinations would be challenged through a variety of distinct experiences, as he was doubtlessly forced to understand more about the God of Abraham and Isaac. Jacob would have to learn—largely “the hard way”—that it is the Sovereign One who alone was ultimately in control of his life and destiny. It will only be at the right point in time, though, *when God* would remind him that it is time to return to Canaan (Genesis 31:3).

Many of us in life today fail to place ourselves entirely in the hands of God, or will go through times when we doubt that He is there. Jacob never denied God, but he was certainly faithless at times. *God was never faithless*, because otherwise He would not be God. If you can at all identify with some of the early experiences of Jacob as he left his home, then I would encourage you to take some comfort in a few of the final words of the Apostle Paul, as he was exhorting his friend Timothy who would have to continue in the work of ministry after he passed on:

“It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; if we endure, we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us; **if we are faithless, He remains faithful**, for He cannot deny Himself” (2 Timothy 2:11-13).

Just as we have learned in our Torah portion this week, once you have been in the presence of God—do not try to bargain with Him! Respect your Creator, and cry out to Him that you may never forget His faithfulness toward you.