

Snapshot Torah

GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

THIRD EDITION / ISSUE 7

21st November 2015

VAYETZAY

9th Kislev 5776



Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 28, verses 10 - 22

- ✚ Yaacov was travelling from Beersheba en-route to Haran. Night was drawing in so he stopped and made a camp to rest. Placing stones under his head as a pillow, he soon went off to sleep.
- ✚ Yaacov dreams of a very tall ladder which reached right up to shamayim (heaven), with malachim (angels) ascending and descending from it. (
- ✚ Hashem reveals himself to Yaacov, telling him I, Hashem will be forever with you and that you and your descendants will one day inherit the land of Canaan.
- ✚ Realises the sanctity of where he slept, Yaacov renames it Beit El (the house of G-d)

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 29, verses 1 - 17

- ✚ Yaacov arrives in Haran and approaches a well which is covered over by a huge rock, too large to push off the well without help.
- ✚ Upon seeing Rachel approaching, Yaacov quickly jumps up and single-handedly rolled the rock in order that Rachel could water her flock.
- ✚ After Yaacov introducing himself, Rachel ran and told her father Lavan; who welcomes Yaacov into his home, where he is also greeted by Rachel's older sister Leah.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 29, verse 18 - Chapter 30, verse 13

- ✚ Lavan offers employment to Yaacov to work for him as a shepherd. Yaacov tells Lavan instead of wages he would like to marry Rachel in exchange for his labours. They agree on a seven year term.
- ✚ As it was customary to wed the eldest daughter first; when the time came, Lavan tricks Yaacov into marrying Leah. Yaacov works another seven years in order to then marry Rachel.
- ✚ Leah gives birth to Reuven, Shimon, Levi and Yehuda.
- ✚ As Rachel is barren she gave Yaacov her handmaid Bilhah who later bore him Dan and Naphtali.
- ✚ Leah's handmaiden Zilpa also marries Yaacov and gives birth to Gad and Asher

R'VI' - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 30, verses 14 - 27

- ✚ Leah gives birth to two more sons Yisachar & Zevulan and a daughter called Dinah.
- ✚ Rachel finally conceives and later gives birth to Yosef

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 30, verse 28 - Chapter 31, verse 16

- ✚ Yaacov wishes to leave Lavan along with his wives and children, Lavan wants him to stay so he gives him a flock of spotted sheep and some rejected goats which Yaacov can call his own.
- ✚ Hashem appears to Yaacov telling him to return back now with your wives and children to your birthplace.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 31, verses 17 - 42

- ✚ Realising Yaacov and his family were gone Lavan gives chase and catches up with them accusing them of stealing an idol from him. Insisting his family is not guilty of the theft and unaware that it was Rachel who stole the idol, Yaacov places a curse on the thief.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 31, verse 43 - Chapter 32, verse 3

- ✚ Lavan and Yaacov erect a monument of stones which forms a boundary and makes a covenant with each other that neither party will cross each other's path again

Haftorah – HOSHEA Chapter 12 verse 13 to Chapter 14 verse 10

OVERVIEW:

- Following the death of Shlomo Hamelech, (King Solomon) the kingdom was divided between his son Rechavam, and Yiravam ben Nivat from the tribe of Ephraim.
- Yiravam had it within his power to join with Rechavam, uniting the two kingdoms back into one which would have culminated in the arrival of the Mashiach.
- Instead however Yiravam erected two golden calves, one in the north of Israel and the other in the south, and encouraged the people to serve them rather than traveling to the Bais Hamikdash and give korbanos (sacrifices) to Hashem.
- The prophet Hoshea cried out against this terrible defection from Hashem and prophesied the destruction and exile of the 10 Tribes that followed.

GEMATRIA LINKED TO THE SEDRA:

- During Yaacov's dream, Hashem showed him a life changing event which would occur in the future.
- The Hebrew word for ladder is 'סולם Sulam' which has a numerical value of 130. 130 is also the same gematria for the word 'סיני Sinai' Our sages derived from this that Hashem was revealing to Yaacov the actual place where his descendants would one day receive the Torah.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

When we picture angels in our minds, we usually conjure up an image of white flying beings with lovely wings. In the Jewish tradition, angels appear as bearers of good and bad news, and are at times disguised as humans as we saw in Parsha Vayera. The Hebrew word for angel is "Malach", which means messenger. On Friday nights, we are accompanied home by angels from the synagogue, at our Shabbat tables where we welcome them with the "Shalom Aleichem" song. And every night, when we recite the bedtime Shema prayer, we thank and ask the angels to protect and accompany us through the unknown of the night.

At the beginning of the Parsha, Yaacov is headed toward Charan. He is at the lowest point in his life. Penniless, running away from his brother, and homeless Yaacov experiences an encounter with Hashem. In a form of a dream angels are climbing and descending a ladder connecting heaven and earth, Yaacov is relieved when he sees that Hashem is there for him, and he will be protected by guardian angles. Why were the angels traveling in both directions? Wouldn't a set of angels rising up be a more powerful symbol of Hashem's protection?

One answer given is that the movement of the angels both up and down the ladder is to teach us a lesson about life. Even though Hashem is blessing Yaacov with many descendants and an inheritance of a great land. Yaacov still needs to recognize that there still is going to be many more ups and downs" along the way. Yaacov had already experienced some bitter disappointments in his relationships with his parents and his brother; and he knew he was about to face further disappointment and misery with Lavan and yet Hashem told him not to be despondent or give up on your current predicament and situation you have found yourself in because everything in life eventually leads to the greater good.

The angels are teaching Yaacov that on his path to becoming a leader, there are always going to be some hardships and trials. Just because you've got Hashem's divine blessing doesn't mean you're insulated from problems and obstacles. In order to become a responsible and respected leader means you must be able to cope with the challenges and make very difficult decisions when called for in order to resolve them.

In the end, the ups and downs of the angels accurately predict Yaacov's future. Yet after all of these challenges, which include living with the deceitful Lavan, marrying 2 wives, as well as sibling jealousies and unexpected battles along the way; Twenty years later Yaacov is ready to return back to the land of Canaan to become the leader he was destined to be.

The main lesson I learn from this that we are all embarking on a journey. Not necessary a geographical trip; rather a spiritual one. Although ultimately everyone will be heading towards the same destination, Hashem has given us our own unique and personal mission to accomplish filled with many ups and downs combined with a multitude of obstacles and challenges to overcome on route.

May we like Yaacov understand that we must all remain resolute, both in success and in failure because Hashem, has given us all the reassurance that there will always be angels accompanying us along the way to give us guidance and protection.

