

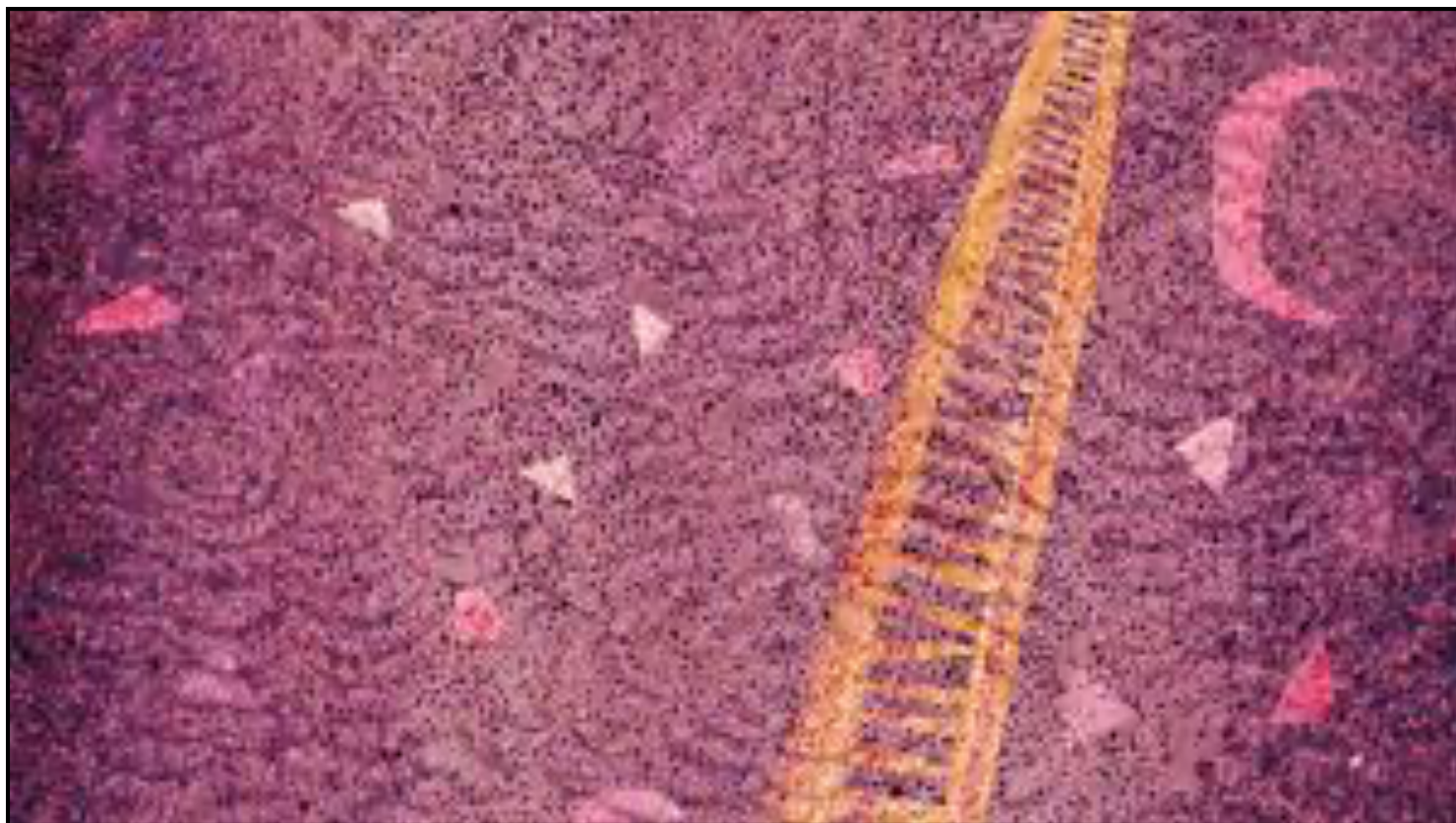
# VAYETZEI - GENESIS

*- And He Went Out -*

Dan Stolebarger - Holy Ground Explorations

Chapter 28:10 - 32:2

# INTRODUCTION



PARASHAT VAYETZEI - 'And He Went Out'

# INTRO

In the Torah portion of VaYeitzeh (Genesis 28:10–32:3), we see Yaacov fleeing from his home. He was escaping from a brother who was set to kill him. He was running from a father who may have lost some measure of faith and confidence in his son. He was leaving without knowing when he was to return. And he was leaving into a land of the unknown, and into a future filled with challenges and doubt.

It was this flight into exile and the accompanying sense of insecurity that would become the shared experience of his descendants as they themselves would stumble from exile to exile. Yaacov runs away feeling very unsure about himself and his worthiness.

<sup>10</sup> Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. <sup>11</sup> He came to a certain place, and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. He took one of the stones of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep. <sup>12</sup> **He dreamed and saw a stairway set upon the earth, and its top reached to heaven. Behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.**

The dream had an ultimate messianic application - the very reason for it. Jesus was humanly descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is our *stairway to heaven* that will provide us with the way to get from down here to up there. He directly referred to Himself as the true object of Jacob's dream -John 1:51: "Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man."

# 28

<sup>13</sup> Behold, Yahweh stood above it, and said, "I am Yahweh, the God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac. **I will give the land** you lie on to you and to your offspring. <sup>14</sup> Your offspring will be as the dust of the earth, and you will spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south. In you and in your offspring, all the families of the earth will be blessed. <sup>15</sup> **Behold, I am with you, and will keep you, wherever you go, and will bring you again into this land. For I will not leave you until I have done that which I have spoken of to you.**"

God gives to Jacob the same kind of promise found in Philippians 1:6: being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. God won't let us go until His work is complete in us.

# 28

<sup>16</sup> Jacob awakened out of his sleep, and he said, "Surely Yahweh is in this place, and I didn't know it." <sup>17</sup> He was afraid, and said, "How awesome this place is! This is none other than God's house, **and this is the gate of heaven.**" ... Jesus is this way to heaven. He does not show us a way, He is the way. Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6)

<sup>18</sup> Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil on its top. <sup>19</sup> He called the name of that place **Bethel**, but the name of the city was **Luz** at the first. <sup>20</sup> Jacob vowed a vow, saying, "**If** God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and clothing to put on, <sup>21</sup> so that I come again to my father's house in peace, and Yahweh will be my God, <sup>22</sup> **then** this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, will be God's house. Of all that you will give me I will surely give a tenth to you."

The city of **Bethel** plays an important (though not glorious) role in Israel's history. It is second only to Jerusalem in the number of times mentioned in the Old Testament. Later, when speaking to Jacob, God refers to Himself as *the God of Bethel* (Genesis 31:13). God had appeared to Abraham near Bethel (12:7,8). Bethel would eventually become a high place, notorious for idolatrous sacrifice (1 Kings 13:32, Hosea 10:15, Amos 4:4).





# 28

22 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."

**Troy Anderson** - There are ruins at the City of David archeological site that indicate an early temple prior to the construction of Solomon's temple where they found a pillar set up in the way that Jacob did here. I cannot describe what it is like to be in the land where the Bible stories took place and where the Jewish people have worshiped God and to experience the land that God calls His own. I want to encourage every follower of Jesus to experience His land for themselves.



Eli Shukron says the pillar, found in the City of David, is just like the one described in Genesis 28 when Jacob had a dream in Bethel of a ladder reaching up to Heaven. After the dream, Jacob said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven! Shukron believes Melchizedek set a stone pillar up in Jerusalem just as Jacob did in Bethel. "If you're going at that time to other places in the world in Egypt or Mesopotamia you can see temples, gold and idols. But here it's simple. The stone, animals and animal sacrifice. The stone is the house of God. No gold and diamonds. Everything is simple. This is what God wants us to be, simple. It's fantastic. For what? For what reason? To connect with God."

Shukron says the combination of the altar for sacrifice, the blood channel, the olive press for anointing oil, the place to tie up the sacrificial animals; where they divided the sacrifice that led him to believe this was the place where Melchizedek met Abraham.



# 29

<sup>16</sup> Laban (name synonymous with self-righteous dishonesty) had two daughters. The name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. <sup>17</sup> **Leah's eyes were weak**, but Rachel was beautiful in form and attractive. <sup>18</sup> Jacob loved Rachel. He said, "I will serve you seven years for Rachel, your younger daughter."

<sup>19</sup> Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you, than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me."

<sup>20</sup> Jacob served seven years for Rachel. **They seemed to him but a few days, for the love he had for her.**

The midrash states that when Rebekah bore twins, Esau (the eldest) was promised to her brother's eldest (Leah), and Jacob was promised to Rachel. Leah's eyes were puffy and red from her constant crying over the prospect of marrying Esau.

According to David Friedman's commentary the word can mean "weak" or "gentle" or "soft" or "delicate" ... which would mean that Leah's best feature was her soft, beautiful eyes.

A rare statement in the Bible on romantic love.

# 29

<sup>22</sup> Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. <sup>23</sup> In the evening, he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to Jacob. He went in to her. <sup>24</sup> Laban gave Zilpah his servant to his daughter Leah for a servant. <sup>25</sup> **In the morning, behold, it was Leah!** He said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Didn't I serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?" <sup>26</sup> Laban said, "**It is not done so in our place, to give the younger before the firstborn.** <sup>27</sup> Fulfill the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you will serve with me for seven more years."

Laban tricked Jacob. Because of this, the custom of *bedeken ha-kallah* (veiling the bride) includes a ritual where the groom lowers the veil to make sure his bride is there! This is called "Bedeken."

Jacob ...payback / karma ... think Esau

# 29

**Sharon Stolebarger** - This chapter is somewhat inconceivable to me (pun intended - get it?). As the story was unfolding, I could not help but wonder at Jacob. Why didn't he open his eyes? I guess many sermons could be written from this if someone so dared to broach the subject. But the person I felt for was Leah. All she wanted was for her husband to love her, but he had eyes only for Rachel (again, pun intended). I noticed that God continued to open her womb, and then she praised the Lord, and her childbearing days were over.

Reuben: "Because the Lord has looked upon my affliction..."

Simeon: "Because the Lord has heard that I am hated..."

Levi: "Because I have born him three sons."

Judah: "This time I will praise the Lord."

I think Leah was very sad that she lived in a loveless marriage and yet she praised the Lord!

# 30

<sup>22</sup> God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her, and opened her womb. <sup>23</sup> She conceived, bore a son, and said, "God has taken away my reproach." <sup>24</sup> She named him **Joseph**, saying, "May Yahweh add another son to me."

Overall Joseph was the 11th son born out of the 12  
Name literally means ... May Jehovah add/give increase

# 30

22-24 Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. She conceived and bore a son and said, "God has taken away my reproach." And she called his name Joseph, saying, "May the LORD add to me another son!"

**Andrew Suedkamp** - Once again, we read, "Then God remembered Rachel," almost as if it could be written like: "Whoops, I almost forgot all about you." I don't know why the Holy Spirit guided Moses to write it like this (and in several different circumstances) - we know that God doesn't forget, although it might feel like that to us. Notice Rachel's humanity in her response; here she went from years of barrenness to conceiving and giving birth and she's so ecstatic and grateful...for about 5 minutes, and then she wants more!



# 31

Jacob heard Laban's sons' words, saying, "Jacob has taken away all that was our father's. He has obtained all this wealth from that which was our father's." <sup>2</sup> **Jacob saw the expression on Laban's face, and, behold, it was not toward him as before.** <sup>3</sup> Yahweh said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers, and to your relatives, **and I will be with you.**"

Jacob worked for Laban for 20 years.

This was the most important aspect. The promise of God's presence meant everything. If God were **with** Jacob, he could be at peace and confident in any difficulty - or at least had the opportunity for peace and confidence.

# 31

<sup>25</sup> Laban caught up with Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountain, and Laban with his relatives encamped in the **mountain of Gilead**. <sup>26</sup> Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done, that you have deceived me, and carried away my daughters like captives of the sword? <sup>27</sup> Why did you flee secretly, and deceive me, and didn't tell me, that I might have sent you away with mirth and with songs, with tambourine and with harp; <sup>28</sup> and didn't allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters? Now have you done foolishly. <sup>29</sup> It is in the power of my hand to hurt you, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful that you don't speak to Jacob either good or bad.' <sup>30</sup> Now, you want to be gone, because you greatly longed for your father's house, but why have you stolen my gods?" <sup>31</sup> Jacob answered Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I said, 'Lest you should take your daughters from me by force.' <sup>32</sup> **Anyone you find your gods with shall not live. Before our relatives, discern what is yours with me, and take it."** For **Jacob didn't know that Rachel had stolen them.**

Jacob denied the accusation and (unwittingly) proclaimed that the real thief would die (a prophecy that was later to be fulfilled with the premature death of Rachel)

<sup>36</sup>Jacob was angry, and argued with Laban. Jacob answered Laban, "What is my trespass? What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued after me? <sup>37</sup>Now that you have felt around in all my stuff, what have you found of all your household stuff? Set it here before my relatives and your relatives, that they may judge between us two. <sup>38</sup>"These twenty years I have been with you. Your ewes and your female goats have not cast their young, and I haven't eaten the rams of your flocks. <sup>39</sup>That which was torn of animals, I didn't bring to you. I bore its loss. Of my hand you required it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. <sup>40</sup>This was my situation: in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep fled from my eyes.

**<sup>41</sup>These twenty years I have been in your house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times.**

# 31

<sup>43</sup> Laban answered Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine! What can I do today to these my daughters, or to their children whom they have borne?" <sup>44</sup> Now come, let's make a covenant, you and I. Let it be for a witness between me and you."

<sup>45</sup> **Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar.** <sup>46</sup> Jacob said to his relatives, "Gather stones." They took stones, and made a heap. They ate there by the heap. <sup>47</sup> Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed. <sup>48</sup> Laban said, "This heap is witness between me and you today." Therefore it was named Galeed <sup>49</sup> and Mizpah, for he said, "Yahweh watch between me and you, when we are absent one from another.

Why is Laban considered to be the first enemy of Israel? He was the first person who attempted to enslave the Jewish people and thereby thwart God's redemptive plans for Israel. According to Jewish tradition, his grandson Balaam later became an advisor to the Pharaoh of Egypt who suggested the genocide of the Jewish people.

# 31

30-32 And now you have surely gone because you greatly long for your father's house, but why did you steal my gods?"

Then Jacob answered and said to Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I said, 'Perhaps you would take your daughters from me by force.' With whomever you find your gods, do not let him live. In the presence of our brethren, identify what I have of yours and take it with you." For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

**Glen Iverson** - This is one of those situations where I ask 'why did Rachel steal Laban's idols'. I don't have a good answer, but I'll speculate that Rachel was leaning on her own understanding, not on God. I don't get the impression in the text that Rachel is an idol worshiper, but it's possible that she believed that the idol's might give Laban 'favor' with God and she wanted to take that away. Rachel wasn't a theologian and what she understood about God came from Jacob who was deceitful, yet God blessed him. Just as Rachel should have let go of pagan practices, Christians also need to be separate from pagan practices and not mix them in our worship. That's probably a fairly big rabbit trail that I'll leave to the reader to dig into.

# 32

Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. <sup>2</sup> When he saw them, Jacob said, "This is God's army." He called the name of that place Mahanaim.

In some visible and glorious forms, as they frequently appeared to the patriarchs. Probably only Jacob saw them. They met him to bid him welcome to Canaan again; a more honorable reception than ever any prince had that was met by the magistrates of a city. They met him to congratulate his arrival, and his escape from Laban. They had invisibly attended him all along, but now they appeared, because he had greater dangers before him.

When God designs his people for extraordinary trials, he prepares them by extraordinary comforts.



# CONTRIBUTORS

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**The Complete Jewish Study Bible - David Stern**

**Tanach - STONE EDITION - Rabbi Nosson Scherman**

**Hebrew4Christians.com**

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