

Shiur L'Yom Sh'lishi¹

[Tuesday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Vayetze:*** **Genesis 29:1-30**
 Haftarah: **Hosea 13:4-11**
 B'rit Chadasha: **John 1:40-42**

Lavan had two daughters

[Genesis 29:16]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 85:4-7;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition # 4, *Ga'al* [*Kinsman Redemption*]

Our ancestor Ya'akov has begun his *season of departures*. And, of course, so have we. Like Ya'akov, we think we are determining our own destiny. But like Ya'akov, we are wrong. We are being *led on this journey by an invisible Divine Hand*.

Things are changing around us so rapidly it is hard to keep up with it all. Doors are closing behind us; but other doors are opening in front of us. Relationships we once cherished are phasing out behind us; but other relationships are simultaneously beckoning to us from the foreground.

Ya'akov is a son of THE COVENANT. And that means that he is *never forsaken, never abandoned, and never alone*. There are *Divine Watchers* all around him wherever he goes – and a Glorious Keeper in charge of the Greatest Witness Protection Plan in the Universe.

The Great Witness Protection Plan – and the Glorious Keeper of Souls

The Glorious Keeper of Covenant Souls never, ever takes leave from His post. He does not grow weary, nor need or seek a vacation. This is His joy. This is His delight. For as the Psalmist says:

***Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.
YHVH is your keeper; YHVH is your shade at your right hand.
The sun will not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.
YHVH will preserve you from all evil; He will preserve your soul.
YHVH will preserve your going out and your coming in
From this time forth, and even forevermore.***

[Psalm 121:4-8]

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In the passage of Torah we studied yesterday after departing Beer-Sheva in search of a wife what Ya'akov found instead was *a stairway to Heaven* – and the Great Keeper of Covenant Souls sitting on a Throne at the top. Instead of a *dream girl* Ya'akov found a *dream God*.

With this personal encounter with the God his grandfather Avraham and his father Yitzchak had told him so much about *Ya'akov's dream* truly began. In today's aliyah, as the embers of his spirit still glow white hot from his first encounter with the Creator of the Universe Ya'akov will depart the place he now calls *Beit-El* and resume his quest to locate a wife. Ah Ya'akov - things along that line are not going to not turn out exactly the way you have in mind. Let's just say what you are about to receive is a "double portion".

. . . And He Arrived . . .

As we have discussed previously the primary theme of the *parsha ha-shavua* is *critical departures*². Critical departures are not however an end unto themselves. They are merely a means to an end. The *goal of every departure* is an *arrival*. Hence, while Ya'akov does depart Beit-El today the focus of today's aliyah is not going to be on *departing* but is instead going to be on *arriving*. Today's aliyah is going to be about *making a transition from one environment to another*. And the most substantive thing we will study today will be *the changes which this transitioning process brings about within a child of the covenant*.

The process of arriving is designed by the Holy One to change the child of the covenant's *approach to life*. It is designed by the Holy One to change the child of the covenant's *worldview*. And it is designed by the Holy One to change the course of the child of the covenant's *future*.

How will Ya'akov fare upon arrival in his new environment? What kind of *first impression* will he make on that new environment – and what kind of first impression will that new environment make on *him*? How will what he discovers in that new environment *change him*? And what are we as his descendants to learn from it all? These are some of the questions we should have in mind as we begin our study of this aliyah of Torah. The experiences of the patriarchs, you see, form the blueprint for our lives as well³.

² The author defines a 'critical departure' as a leaving of that which is familiar and comfortable and stepping out into a place where the ordinary schedules and routines of life have to be abandoned in order to deal with a new set of physical, emotional, and spiritual challenges. A critical departure involves significant risk and requires major adjustments to the way one looks at, thinks about, and engages with the world.

³ See Ramban's commentary to Genesis 12:6, *Or HaTorah*, beginning of parsha *Lech Lecha*.

The Initial Descent of Ya'akov into Lavan's Lair

In today's aliyah of Torah Ya'akov the fleeing fugitive who has just met the Holy One at Beit-El (Bethel) will arrive at his destination in what Torah calls *ar'tzah b'nei-Kedem* – i.e. *the land of the sons of Kedem*. The name by which the place is usually known in Scripture is the village of **Charan** in the upper-Mesopotamian region of **Paddan-Aram**. The remains of this ancient Akkadian village lie near *Altınbaşak* in the Muslim country we know in our times as Turkey.

Charan - the place at which Ya'akov arrives in today's aliyah - is not a place he will just 'pass through'. It is the place he was sent by his father to find a bride. He will take up residence there. He will consider it his home for well over 20 years. Indeed Charan will become for Ya'akov exactly what the Russian village of Anatevka became to Tevye and Golda and family in *Fiddler on the Roof*⁴. And in the end, after those 20 or so years have passed, Ya'akov will find suddenly himself no longer welcome in, and will have to flee from, Anatevka – er, uh, I mean *Charan* – in a manner not altogether unlike the flight of the Anatevkan Jews of the *Fiddler* story.

This place in what Torah labels as the *land of the sons of Kedem* will be Ya'akov's first land of exile. And his experiences there will be prototypical 'life-in-exile' experiences for all people of the Covenant.

The exact same kind of wounded, angry, deceived, untrustworthy and neurotically narcissistic people that Ya'akov is going to find in the House of Lavan make up by far the bulk of the population of each of our lands of exile today. The exact same kind of self-centered, intellectually dishonest, spiritually bankrupt, demonically influenced lifestyles as Ya'akov encountered in Lavan's lair shape the cultures of our present lands of exile. Let us take a moment and explore why that is so.

Understanding Our Places of Exile

As aforesaid the village at which Ya'akov arrives in today's aliyah is the same village his grandfather Avraham knew as **Charan**⁵. As pointed out in the introductory shiur for parsha **Lech Lecha** this was the very place from which the Holy One had called Avram to depart.

As we have discussed previously in these studies Charan was the place where

⁴ *Fiddler on the Roof* is a fictional account of life in a particular Russian *shtet'l* between the turn of the Twentieth Century and the Bolshevic Revolution. Tevye was a milkman; Golda was his wife. Together they had five daughters. They, along with all Jewish residents of the village of Anatevka, were ordered to evacuate their homes and be out of the village on 3 days' notice.

⁵ Charan is spelled *chet, resh, nun sofit*. Strong's Hebrew word #2771, it is pronounced *khaw-rawn'*

Avraham's father Terach settled after leaving Ur of the Chaldees *en route* to the land of Kena'an. We are not told *why* Terach settled in this place only half way to his declared destination - only that he did.

Charan thus represents a place of *compromise* and of *settling for less than one's destiny and purpose in life* in favor of that which the world has to offer. It is, granted, a step or two removed from the obvious perversion of Babylon; but it is still a 500-mile or so desert trek short of where a person called to covenant with the Holy One should begin to feel comfortable.

Alas Terach, his son Nachor, and their families are by no means the only ones willing to settle for a *Charan* instead of pressing on to where they truly belong. So it goes.

The last time Torah 'peeked in' on this sleepy Mesopotamian village it did so through the eyes of Avraham's servant, who in Genesis 24 visited Charan in search of a bride for Yitzchak. At that time the village was referred to only as *Aram Naharayim el-ir Nachor* [the village of Nachor in the land of the two great fortified rivers]. It was at that time that Torah introduced us to Lavan – the man who will soon become the prototypical villain of parsha *Vayetze*⁶. A new – and lengthy - chapter in Ya'akov's life begins upon his arrival in this Mesopotamian village. He will learn a lot here about life, about love, about evil, about himself, and about God.

So . . . where are you sojourning, Dear Reader? Are you living at the place – physically and spiritually – to which the Holy One has called you? Or do you find yourself sojourning in a Charan or Anatevka - a place of *compromise*, of *settling for less than God's best*? If you are in the latter then I have a word of counsel for you. Learn the lessons such a place has to teach you as quickly as you can. Be listening, carefully and constantly, for the Holy One's Voice to whisper to you that it is time to leave. And then press on – until you reach the place to which you are truly called at such a time as this.

The Well of Future Spouses

When Ya'akov finally reaches "*the land of the sons of kedem*" the first thing he finds there is a *well*. Now, of course, a well would be a welcome sight for any ancient traveler. But does this scenario conjure up a sensation of *déjà vu* with anyone besides me? What do I mean? Well think back to parsha *Chayei Sarah*, 5 chapters and at least 40 or 50 years ago. That was the parsha in which Avraham sent his servant to Charan to find a wife for Yitzchak. When the servant arrived in

⁶ For an introductory discussion of Lavan, please see the Rabbi's son's *Shiur L'Yom Chamishi [Thursday's Study]* for parsha *Chayei Sarah*.

Charan where did he go? He went to the well in that place. It was at the well that he met Rivkah, Yitzchak's intended - and mother of Ya'akov.

The well at Charan could it seems be referred to as *the well of future spouses*. Was this the same well where Avraham's servant met Rivkah? It is impossible to say. We are told, however, that the particular well Ya'akov happened upon was located *in a field*.

Here is the way Torah describes the scene Ya'akov saw at this location:

Vayar v'hineh v'er b'sadeh

He came to a place and behold, a well in a field!

v'hineh-sham sh'loshah edrei-tzon rovtzim aleyha

And behold, three flocks of sheep lay beside it,

ki min ha-be'er hahi yashku ha-adarim

since it was from this well that the flocks were watered.

V'ha-even gedolah al-pi ha-be'er

The top of the well was covered with a large stone.

V'ne'esfu-shamah chol ha-adarim

When all the flocks would come together there,

V'galelu et-ha-even me'al-pi ha-be'er v'hish'ku et ha-tzon

they rolled the great stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep.

V'heshivu et ha-even al-pi ha-be'er l'mekomah

Then they would replace the stone on the well.

A well. A field. 3 different flocks of sheep, each with its own shepherd. A stone needing to be rolled away. The scene reeks with symbolism, doesn't it? No time for that now though. Just picture this. There is a well in a field. Sitting around the well are three shepherds, each with a flock of sheep.

For some reason however *no one is drinking*. The well, it seems, has been sealed off with a heavy stone. No water is being poured for the men or for the animals. They are all waiting, it seems - for the arrival of a fourth shepherd. When that fourth shepherd arrived with his [or, in this case, *her*] flock, the shepherds will work together to dislodge the stone and open the well so all can drink.

I'll wager to say that Ya'akov never saw anything remotely like this back in Hebron or Beer-sheva. Apparently the shepherds here do not trust each other. They do not operate on the "merit system", taking just what they need for their flocks and moving on. They have set a huge stone cover over the well which requires four

shepherds to move it. In this way they can *control the outflow of the water in the well* – in other words they can “ration” water.

Water From a Rock

Please note at this point that our ancestor Ya’akov, unlike Avraham or Yitzchak, seems to have a number of very interesting interactions with something Torah calls ‘stones’. In the aliyah we read yesterday Ya’akov took one of the stones of the place he later called **Beit-El** (*Bethel*) and lay his head upon it, whereupon he had both his famous *stairway to heaven vision* and his first God-encounter. **Genesis 28:11**. The next morning he took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a *pillar* marking the place upon which many believe Solomon’s Temple would one day be built, and poured oil on top of it. **Genesis 28:18**.

In today’s aliyah, as we have seen, Ya’akov deals with a stone used to seal a well which provided water for the sheep of Rachel and of others. **Genesis 29:2-3, 8, 10**. Perhaps foreshadowing what his descendants would experience in connection with the Exodus and the wilderness wanderings Ya’akov actually ‘*brings forth water from a rock*’.

Near the end of our **parsha ha shavua**, in chapter 31, Ya’akov will again interact openly with a stone. For we are told:

*So Ya’akov took a stone and set it up as a pillar.
Then Ya’akov said to his brethren, "Gather stones."
And they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there on the heap.
Lavan called it Jegar Sahadutha, but Ya’akov called it Galeed.
* * *
Then Lavan said to Ya’akov, "Here is this heap and here is this pillar,
which I have placed between you and me.
This heap is a witness, and this pillar is a witness,
that I will not pass beyond this heap to you,
and you will not pass beyond this heap and this pillar to me, for harm.
The God of Avraham, the God of Nahor,
and the God of their father judge between us."
And Ya’akov swore by the Fear of his father Yitzchak.
[Genesis 31:45-53]*

After Ya’akov returned to Beit-El and had another God-encounter there, we are told:

*Ya’akov set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, a pillar of stone;
and he poured a drink offering on it, and he poured oil on it.
[Genesis 35:14]*

Are you seeing a pattern developing here? What is it with Ya’akov and ‘stones’?

Déjà vu – All Over Again

Before we move on however I want us to look backward. 40 or 50 years ago when Avraham's servant came to a well near Charan - perhaps this same well - he did something Ya'akov is not recorded as doing. What the servant did that Ya'akov did not do is recorded in Genesis 24:12:

*“Then he prayed, **“O Lord, God of my master Avraham, give me success this day, and do deeds consistent with Your covenant with my master Avraham.”***

Well, at this stage in his life Ya'akov was, unlike the aforementioned servant of Avraham, not much of a man of prayer. If he had been, perhaps he could have saved himself a lot of trouble.

Instead of being a man of prayer however Ya'akov was a man of glib and polished speech. He did not yet trust in prayer as much as he trusted in his own ability to make winsome *conversation*. He immediately engaged the three shepherds in *small talk*, which was probably a reasonable thing to do, of course, as he was a stranger and he might expect them to question his intentions with regards to the sheep in their care.

V'yomer lahem Ya'akov achai me'ayin atem
Ya'akov said to them, "My relatives, where are you from?"

V'yomeru m'Charan anachnu
They said, "We are from Charan."

V'yomer lahem ha-yedatem et-Lavan ben-Nachor
He said to them, "Do you know Lavan, the son of Nachor?"

V'yomeru yadanu
They said, "We know him."

V'yomer lahem ha-shalom lo
And he asked them "Is he doing well?"

V'yomeru shalom
They replied: "He is well."

v'hineh Rachel⁷ bito ba'ah imp-ha-tzon
Behold his daughter Rachel coming with the sheep."

At this point Ya'akov should know beyond a shadow of a doubt that he is among

⁷ Rachel is a transliteration of the Hebrew name spelled *resh, chet, lamed*. The name means 'ewe' – a female sheep kept and pampered for the purpose of producing commercially saleable offspring (marketable lambs).

kinsmen, and that the Holy One has enabled him to reach his destination in peace. 40 or 50 years ago when the servant of Avraham had a similar revelation at the well of Charan, he *bowed and worshipped the Holy One*. Did Ya'akov? No, I am afraid he did nothing of the sort. He was not, it seems, at this stage of his development, any more a man of *worship* than he was a man of *prayer*.

Emboldened, Ya'akov graduated from *small talk* to a *discussion of shepherding technique*. Quickly he started *telling the 3 shepherds what to do* in a most arrogant and condescending way. He said:

V'yomer hen od ha-yom gadol

'But it's still the middle of the day.

lo-et he'asef ha-mikneh hashku ha-tzon ulechu re'u

It's not time to gather the livestock. Water the sheep, and go and feed them."

[Genesis 29:7]

I do not doubt that the 3 shepherds at the well resented Ya'akov's lecture on sheep herding in no small amount. I also do not doubt that they now snickered to themselves remembering that he had asked of Lavan. No doubt these shepherds knew Lavan, and his treacherous and deceiving ways. [Indeed, when Ya'akov inquired about Lavan, their response was simply "*Shalom!*"]. No doubt they now thought to themselves "*let us see how this arrogant stranger fares in the house of Lavan!*" But they answered him politely enough:

V'yomeru lo nuchal ad asher ye'asfu

'We can't until all the flocks have come together.

Kol ha-adarim v'galelu et ha-even me'al pi ha-be'er

[All of us] then roll the great stone from the top of the well.

V'hishkinu ha-tzon

Only then can we water the sheep.'

Enter Rachel, Stage Right

Ya'akov's 'know-it-all' speech is mercifully interrupted by the appearance of the fourth shepherd – Lavan's daughter Rachel [*resh, chet, lamed*, pronounced *raw-khel'*]. Torah records it thusly:

Odenu m'daber imam

While he [Ya'akov] was yet speaking with them

v'Rachel ba'ah im ha-tzon asher l'aviha

Rachel came with her father's sheep,

ki ro'ah hi
for she was the shepherdess.
[Genesis 29:9]

Now, if you will remember, back in the narrative of Genesis chapter 24 when the girl for whom the servant had come to Charan came into his view he worshipped the Holy One, bowing down and acknowledging His greatness and goodness.

Will seeing Rachel have the same effect on Ya'akov as seeing Rivkah had on Avraham's servant? Hardly. For Ya'akov, his first sight of the beautiful Rachel induced neither prayer nor worship.

Romancing the Stone

Ya'akov response to the appearance of Rachel was very much in the flesh, not the Spirit. Here is how Torah describes the meeting:

Vayehi ka'asher ra'ah Ya'akov et-Rachel
Ya'akov looked at Rachel

bat-Lavan achi imo v'et tzon Lavan achi imo
the daughter of Lavan who was with his uncle Lavan's sheep.

v'yigash Ya'akov v'yagel et ha-even me'al pi ha-be'er
He stepped forward, and rolled the stone from the top of the well,

V'yashk et-tzon Lavan achi imo
And he watered the sheep of Lavan, his mother's brother.

Notice the ironic reversal of the roles here. 40 or 50 years previously Rivkah had come forth in humility and watered Avraham's camels for his servant *without being asked*. Now Ya'akov steps forth in prideful arrogance and waters Lavan's sheep for Rachel – also without being asked. And then Ya'akov followed up this display of worldliness with an outburst of *outrageous* and absolutely *absurd* behavior. Yielding to impulsiveness, he broke all acceptable social protocol, approached and sullied the reputation of an unmarried female with an unsolicited embrace - and then allowed himself to become an emotional basket case to boot.

Vayishak Ya'akov l'Rachel
Ya'akov kissed Rachel,

V'yisa et-kolo v'yev'k
and he lifted up his voice, and wept.

Ya'akov *kissed*⁸ Rachel? *Unthinkable! Unheard of!*

⁸ The Hebrew verb used is a form of the verb root **nashaq**, *nun, shin, kuf*, Strong's Hebrew word #5401, meaning to draw very close and kiss.

What on earth was he *thinking*? This is not the Twenty-First Century silver screen – this is a *rural village in Mesopotamia circa 1650 BCE!*

The little which Ya'akov knew of the Holy One appears to have flown right out the window. A pretty face and a demonstration of a little wealth, and there goes all the teaching of his father and his grandfather – and of his own dramatic God encounter along the way - concerning the ways of the Holy One.

Do you remember the last time Ya'akov kissed anyone, Beloved? It was in Genesis 27:27, when he was dressed up in Esav's clothes. In the course of conning his father out of the *b'racha* [blessing] of the firstborn, Ya'akov had kissed his father in order to seal the deception. So just how much do you think a kiss – and a few tears - meant to Ya'akov, Beloved?

Did I mention Ya'akov still had a lot to learn? Well, I have a feeling he's come to the right place.

The Law of Sowing and Reaping

Ya'akov sowed an inappropriate and meaningless kiss. He will quickly reap exactly what he sowed, measure for measure. Let's continue the narrative:

Vayehi chishmoa Lavan et-shema Ya'akov ben-achoto

When Lavan heard the news that Ya'akov had arrived,

vayarotz likrato v'yechabek-lo v'yenashek-lo

he ran to greet him. He embraced and kissed him,

vayevi'ehu el-beito

and brought him home.

The events of today mark the beginning of over twenty years of Ya'akov's enslavement in Lavan's house. And it all began, appropriately enough, with an *embrace* and a *kiss*. But do not weep for Ya'akov. The Holy One knows where Ya'akov is, and what Ya'akov is experiencing. The Holy One is *building Ya'akov's character* by allowing him to experience the fruit of his own deceptiveness.

Someone will later say “*that which you sow, you shall also reap.*” For, you see, as we begin parsha *Vayetze*, Ya'akov resembles his uncle Lavan much more than he resembles his father, Yitzchak. And all that has to change. Ya'akov has to be purged of the deceit and trickery which, up to this point in life, has defined his identity. He is about to discover that His new Acquaintance – the Holy One of his

grandfather Avraham and his father Yitzchak, knows how to *fight fire with fire*.

Ya'akov's First Week of Years in Exile

Here is how the stage was set for Ya'akov's first seven years – his prophetic 'first week of years' – in exile in Lavan's house. Note that the initial period of exile was not against his will – it was the product of Ya'akov's own plan. Enamored by Rachel, Ya'akov proposed to Lavan:

e'evadcha sheva shanim b'Rachel bit'cha ha-ktanah

'I will work for you seven years for Rachel, your younger daughter'

Torah does not record Lavan's response to this proposition. It does not record the execution of any betrothal contract, or the sealing of an agreement along the lines of what Ya'akov proposed with either the shedding of blood or a covenant meal.

Lavan *never committed to anything*. But Ya'akov apparently never noticed. He *jumped right in with both feet*. And Lavan *let him*.

Vaya'avod Ya'akov b'Rachel sheva shanim

And Ya'akov worked for seven years for Rachel.

vayihyu v'eynav k'yamim achadim b'ahavato otah

But in his eyes it seemed like no more than a few days, because he loved her.

After completing seven years of building Lavan's flocks and herds without pay, Ya'akov appeared to Lavan and said "***havah et-ishti ki male'u yamay*** - i.e. "Give me my bride, for her days are fulfilled."

Please note that he left out one important detail – he forgot to specifically mention the name of the daughter for whose hand he was asking. Lavan, of course, took careful notice of Ya'akov's omission. Hence we read:

Vaye'esof Lavan et-kol-anshei ha-makom v'ya'as mishteh

[Lavan] invited all the local people and made a wedding feast.

Vayehi v'erev v'yikach et-Leah vito

In the evening, he took his daughter Leah

V'yave otah elav v'yavo eleyha

and brought her to [Ya'akov] who consummated the marriage with her⁹.

V'yehi v'boker v'hineh-hi Leah

In the morning, behold, she was Leah.

⁹ It is interesting to note that Torah expressly prohibits a man from engaging in intimate relations with sisters [as Lavan tricked Ya'akov into doing]. See **Leviticus18:18**.

Wow! *Flash back 7 years, Ya'akov!* Do you remember what your mother Rivkah had you do to seven years ago to secure what she wanted for *you*? Do you remember her having you pose as your brother to deceive Yitzchak? Did you not know that Lavan is your mother's brother?

V'yomer el-Lavan mah-zot asitah li
He said to Lavan, 'How could you do this to me?'

halo v'Rachel avadeti imach
Didn't I work with you for Rachel?

V'lamah rimitani
Why did you cheat me?'

Skin for skin, Dear Reader. What you sow you shall also reap.

Congratulations Ya'akov - you have just completed the requirements for the Holy One's *school of righteous conduct course 101*. Second semester advanced studies will be coming your way soon.

Living in a World Full of Lavans

The world in which we live is full to overflowing with beautiful girls/women (and with handsome boys/men) and crafty Lavans. They are a “dime-a-dozen” in our society. Take a walk in a shopping mall, check out the billboards in any city, or turn on the television or radio – even for an advertisement or two - and you will see exactly what I mean.

Please understand that ***it is all a test***. The Holy One knows where you are. He knows what you see every day. He is allowing you to be tested to see if you will, like Ya'akov in today's aliyah, allow yourself to be distracted from your destiny by physical beauty and high-sounding but meaningless talk. Your destiny in THE COVENANT is far too precious to “throw it all away” for either a pretty girl [or guy] or a smooth-talker's line.

Keep this principle in mind: ***what you see as important and valuable in life will determine whom you serve – the Holy One . . . or Lavan***. Whom will you serve, Dear Reader?

Introducing Leah of the Tender Eyes

As we now know very well, Lavan had two daughters. The elder was named Leah¹⁰, and the younger was named Rachel. Leah's eyes were her most

¹⁰ *Leah* is a transliteration of the Hebrew letters *lamed, alef, hey*.

distinguishing feature. In Hebrew Leah's eyes are described as being *rakhot*, a term that can be translated 'tender, soft or delicate, compassionate, gentle or mild.' The point is this: Leah's was a quiet, hidden, inner beauty. By contrast, Rachel's beauty was external and, to some degree, at least early in her life, superficial.

After the fiasco of Ya'akov's wedding Lavan allowed Ya'akov to marry Rachel as well as Leah, in exchange for another seven years of servitude. Imagine, however, for a moment, the impact this had upon Leah. That she felt unloved by Ya'akov is a given. But though Ya'akov may not love Leah the way he loves Rachel, the Holy One loves her more than Ya'akov ever could. How do I know? Consider Leah's third and fourth sons, Levi and Y'hudah. From Levi will come the first deliverer, *Moshe* [Moses] and the fountain of all priests, Aharon [Aaron]. From Y'hudah will come the first king to reign in Jerusalem, David, and the ultimate deliverer, Messiah Himself.

And lest you truly believe that Ya'akov loved only Rachel and not Leah, fast forward with me for a moment to the end of Ya'akov's life. When Ya'akov was preparing to die, with which of these sisters – his two wives – did he request to be buried? Not with Rachel, Beloved. Oh no, not with Rachel. She was buried on the road near Beit-Lechem. Instead Ya'akov requested – of Rachel's son Yosef, no less - to be buried with Leah, in the cave of Machpelah, with his father and mother, Yitzchak and Rivkah, and his grandfather and grandmother, Avraham and Sarah. Leah had a beauty, you see, which *never faded*.

The truth of the matter is that Ya'akov, upon his arrival at Charan, was simply too immature, too superficial, and too spiritually blind to see in Leah what the Holy One had deposited in her. And though we certainly do not commend his methods or sanction his behavior, we have to admit that in the long run Lavan actually did Ya'akov – and all of us – a tremendous favor when he tricked Ya'akov into taking Leah as a wife.

A Parallel Passage in the Apostolic Writings

In today's B'rit Chadasha reading *Sh'mon* [Peter], a burly fisherman from *Kafer-Nahum* [Capernaum] meets Messiah Y'shua for the first time.

*One of the two who heard Yochanan, and followed him, was Andrai, Sh'mon Rock's brother.
He first found his own brother, Sh'mon,
and said to him, "We have found the Messiah!"
(which is, being interpreted, Anointed One).*

*He brought him to Y'shua.
Y'shua looked at him, and said, "You are Sh'mon the son of Yonah.
You shall be called Kefa" (which is by interpretation, Rock).*

The introduction comes from Sh'mon's brother, *Andrai* [Andrew]. Sh'mon will never be the same; even his *name* will be forever changed. But except for the *name* the change did not happen overnight. For 3 1/2 years prior to His death and resurrection, and for the rest of Kefa's life after Y'shua's death and resurrection, Y'shua continually molded and shaped and rebuked and restored Kefa time and time again, making "attitude adjustments" and behavior modifications when necessary, and slowly, methodically, teaching him *tongue-control*.

Do not miss the parallel between Sh'mon Kefa and Ya'akov. In the case of both men the action of a brother led them to an encounter with the Creator of the Universe. In both cases they were rough – even downright seedy – characters who changed slowly.

Ya'akov's transformation began when he picked up a rock on Mount Moriyah and put it under his head so he could go to sleep. He encountered the Holy One in the night, then rose and took the rock, poured oil on it, and made it into an altar to the Holy One.

Y'shua saw Sh'mon Kefa as like unto Ya'akov's rock. A rough-hewn stone (no cut stone could become an altar) which, when the oil [the symbol of the *Ruach HaQodesh*, or Spirit of the Holy One] was poured on it, became an altar to give glory to the Holy One. Out of Ya'akov the Holy One brought forth His nation – Israel. Out of the revelation which would be revealed through Sh'mon Kefa's teaching on *Shavuot* the Holy One would bring forth His *Kehilah* [called out ones – the believing remnant of Ya'akov's descendants].

Note that as in the opening part of our aliyah regarding Ya'akov the "watering of the sheep" by Kefa could not take place until the sheep were all gathered in one place [the pilgrimage to Y'rushalayim on *Chag Shavuot*], and the *stone was rolled away*. Note also that after the watering the job of Kefa was to "feed" Y'shua's sheep, as the final feeding of the sheep of Charan was to take place (as Ya'akov pointed out) after they were watered by the water of the well where Ya'akov met Rachel.

And do you remember our discussion a little earlier in this shiur about Ya'akov's interactions with 'stones'? Now do you sense why Y'shua changed Sh'mon's name to what in the Greek translation we have comes across as '*petra*' – a *stone*?

Y'shua purposely played on these parallels. Indeed they were the basis for all of Y'shua's interactions with Kefa – and the rest of His *talmidim*. Y'shua did not, you see, have any intention of starting a new religion. What He was doing was calling all people of the world, starting with His own people the Jews, back to the *sh'ma*

lifestyle modeled for us by Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov. Hence when Y'shua said to the one we call *Peter* [a stone], upon this 'rock' I will build my *ecclesia* [called out witness-throng] do you really think He was saying something different than Ya'akov said in Genesis 28:22?

Questions For Today's Study

1. In today's aliyah of Torah:

[A] Why were the three shepherds *sitting by the well and waiting* rather than watering their flocks and seeking pasture for the rest of the afternoon?

[B] How did Ya'akov offend the three shepherds?

[C] How old do you think Rachel was when this event occurred? Check out a Bible Dictionary and some Jewish Commentary, and see if they say anything about her age.

[D] What was Lavan's response when Rachel told him that his kinsman Ya'akov was at the well? List each response in the order Torah records it.

[E] Do you think Lavan was sincere in his greeting?

[F] In verse 13, Torah tells us that Ya'akov told Lavan "all these things". What do you think he told him? Address whether you think he told him of the deception he and his mother practiced regarding the birthright, whether you think he told him of the real reason(s) he left home, and whether you think he told him of the experience with the Holy One at the place he named *Beit-El* [Bethel].

[G] In light of your answer to the previous subpart what do you think Lavan meant when he said, in verse 14, "*you are my own flesh and blood*"?

[H] How long did Ya'akov work for Lavan for mere room and board?

[I] Torah introduces us to Lavan's oldest daughter, Leah, who would become the mother of 6 of the tribes (more than any other of Ya'akov's wives), merely by saying she had a certain "quality" of eyes. In Strong's and in Gesenius, look up the word translated in our English Bibles as "weak", and write the Hebrew word and its various meanings.

[J] Is it possible the Torah is giving her a *compliment* by thusly describing her eyes? Explain your thoughts. [In this regard, consider the Hebrew idiom of the "good" or "single" eye, as used by Y'shua, in Matthew 6:22-24].

[K] If the Torah in describing Leah to us is using the Hebrew idiom of the eye, rather than referring to a physical condition, what do you think it is trying to tell us?

[L] Does the Torah ever say anything bad about Leah? If so, what and where? What seems to be Leah's primary motivation in life?

[M] By what two phrases does Torah describe Rachel, Lavan's youngest sister?

[N] In Strong's and in Gesenius look up the words translated as "lovely", "form", and "beautiful" [NIV]. Write the Hebrew words [in Hebrew letters, with

vowel markings] and describe the word pictures these words present.

[O] What do you think Torah wants us to know about Rachel at this point?

[P] How many years into Lavan's service does Ya'akov receive Rachel as his wife?

[Q] In verse 30 it says that Ya'akov "loved" Rachel "*more than Leah*". What do you think this means, and why do you think it was so?

[R] Does Torah describe anything "bad" about Rachel? If so, what and where is the information found?

2. In today's reading from the haftarah the prophet Hoshea continues giving voice to the Holy One's indictment of the Northern Kingdom [Israel], descended from Ya'akov's sons Efrayim and Menashe. The timing of Hoshea's message is shortly before the invasion of Israel by the sons of Ashur, who will take them into captivity, beginning the Diaspora which continues even today.

The tribes of which Efrayim and Menashe are the head are about to go into captivity. But they are not unloved.

*Yet I am the Holy One your God from the land of Mitzrayim;
And you will know no god but me,*

lo teda umoshia ayin bilti [And besides me there is no savior].

*I knew you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.
According to their pasture, so were they filled;
They were filled, and their heart was exalted.*

al-ken shechchuni [Therefore they have forgotten me].

*Therefore am I to them like a lion;
Like a leopard I will lurk by the path.*

I will meet them like a bear that is bereaved of her cubs,

v'ekra segor libam [And will tear the covering of their heart].

And there I will devour them like a lioness. The wild animal will tear them.

You are destroyed, Yisra'el, because you are against me - against your help.

Ehi malkecha efo [Where is your king now]
that he may save you in all your cities?

V'shofteycha [and your judges], *to whom you said,*

Tnah-li melech v'sarim ['Give me a king and princes?']

*I have given you a king in my anger,
And have taken him away in my wrath.*

[A] How does the Holy One describe the sin of the Northern Kingdom [see verse 6].

[B] In verses 7-8 Hosea uses a series of verb phrases in sequence, to describe what the Holy One is going to do to address the sin of Israel. List, in sequence, the

things the Holy One is going to do.

[C] In the same verses, Hosea describes the Holy One, as He engages in the actions you have just described, as having a resemblance to various types of animals. List in order the animals the Holy One will act like.

[D] What does the Holy One say will happen to the dynasty [the line of kings] of the Northern Kingdom?

3. In today's B'rit Chadasha reading *Sh'mon* [Peter], a burly fisherman from *Kafer-Nahum* [Capernaum] meets Messiah Y'shua for the first time.

[A] We are told the name on one of Yochanan the Immerser's talmidim, who followed Y'shua after Yochanan revealed Him as "the Lamb of God". What is this man's name, and what does it mean?

[B] Look up as much information as you can about this individual (in Smith's Bible Dictionary or other resource material) and write a one-page essay on his life and deeds.

[C] Who was the first man to whom this man introduced Messiah?

[D] Why do you think English-speaking people today all call this second man "Peter"?

[E] In verse 41 the former talmid of Yochanan introduces Kefa to Y'shua by saying "*We have found the Messiah*". In Strong's, look up the words translated as "found" and "Messiah". Write the Greek words and their definitions. Then find the corresponding Hebrew words and write them, and describe the Hebraic word pictures they present.

[F] What do you think led Andrew to the conclusion that Y'shua was the Messiah? What evidence did he have?

May your eye be good.

And may you learn to recognize the inner beauty God has placed in others.

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 85:4-7

*Turn us, God of our salvation,
And cause your indignation toward us to cease.
Will you be angry with us forever?
Will you draw out your anger to all generations?*

*Won't you revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?
Show us your lovingkindness, O Holy One.
Grant us your salvation.*