

Kriyat HaTorah Companion 2.0

Questions Raised in Each Aliya

Vayetzei

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Italics are author's comments

Aliya 1 | 28:10-22

Examine verse 22:10.

Why does the Torah repeat a detail already mentioned in verse 22:7? Why does the Torah record that Ya'akov left?

Rashi suggests that when a righteous person leaves a place there is a vacuum left behind. The **Sforno** & the **Bekhor Shor** say that practically the events of the upcoming verses happened on Ya'akov's journey from Be'er Sheva to Haran, and therefore the scope of the journey is mentioned in the verse. The **Netziv** sees this verse as proof that Ya'akov spent 14 years in the Yeshiva of Shem & Ever before he fled Be'er Sheva. Therefore there was a two-stage process happening now, leaving yeshiva and heading to a new destination. The **Radak** points out that this verse is a general stylistic device to detail the scope of the journey even though it does not all happen in one day.

Aliya 2 | 29:1-17

Examine verse 29:1.

Why does the Torah tell us that Ya'akov now 'lifted up his feet'?

Rashi suggests that the nature of Ya'akov's journey had now changed since he had God's reassurances and therefore he was now light-footed. The **Sforno** & the **Malbim** suggest that when one undergoes a journey unwillingly, one's feet carries one forward. When one takes ownership of that journey, one carries one's feet forward. Ya'akov goes through this transformation with the mission and promise God has now given him. The **Ohr HaChaim** points out that, unlike the other journeys taken by his father/grandfather, Ya'akov was impoverished and without any items, thus all he had to carry with him were his feet beneath him.

Aliya 3 | 29:18-30:13

Examine verse 29:18.

Why does Ya'akov offer to work for such a long period of time for Rachel?

Rashi says that Ya'akov realized there would be a delay in finding a wife, as his mother had said to him (see: 27:44). The **Sforno** suggests that Ya'akov had to find a way to pay an appropriate dowry for Rachel. Being that he did not own any livestock at the time, his offer was to exchange his work for a dowry. The **Ktav VeHakabalah** suggests that Ya'akov was waiting for Rachel to become older so that she would be able to have children. The **Ohr HaChaim** suggests that the righteous person always works within the context of a complete cycle, which is naturally the number seven. Just as the slave does not work for more than seven years according to Jewish law, Ya'akov wanted to work as much as was possible for Rachel.

Aliya 4 | 30:14-27

Examine verses 30:14-15.
What were the *duda'im* and why were they so significant?

Rashi suggests that they are either violets or, in Arabic, Jasmin. The **Ibn Ezra** suggests that these flowers have a sweet smell and look like the form of a human being. He doubts that Rachel was using them as some kind of aid to conceive. The **Ramban** suggests that Rachel merely wanted to enjoy these flowers fragrance. Rachel becomes pregnant as a result of her prayers and not due to smelling these flowers. The **Ramban** sees no medical benefit to smelling these flowers. The **Rashbam** suggests that these were flowers of the fig tree. The **Torah Temimah** suggests that whatever flower this was, it produced a sweet smell. *Perhaps Rachel was looking for something to remind her of the beauty of this world in light of her difficulty conceiving.*

Aliya 5 | 30:28-31:16

Examine verse 31:1.

What did Ya'akov hear? Did Lavan have sons?

The **Ibn Ezra** says that Lavan did indeed have sons. The **Sforno** says that Ya'akov heard the sons of Lavan badmouthing Ya'akov's wealth and prosperity because they were jealous. The **Netziv** suggest that Ya'akov heard accusations that all the wealth that he had recently acquired from Lavan actually had been stolen. *This was obviously not an environment Ya'akov could associate himself with.* The **Bekhor Shor** points out three items that informed Ya'akov that now was the right time to go: 1. He heard what the children of Lavan were saying 2. He saw Lavan's reaction to his children's jealousy 3. God told him that this was the right moment to go (see verse 31:6-7, 11-12 for proof of this).

Aliya 6 | 31:17-42

Examine verse 31:19.

Why did Rachel steal her father's *teraphim*? What are *teraphim* and what was her error?

Rashi suggests that Rachel wanted to remove idolatry from her father's life. **Rabbeinu Chananel** suggests that Rachel's thinking was that Lavan would stop believing in these idols because they were powerless to stop themselves from being stolen. The **Chizkuni** & the **Da'at Zkenim** suggest that these *teraphim* were oracles, and Rachel was concerned that they would communicate Ya'akov's location to Lavan. The **Ramban** suggests that *teraphim* were a form of hour-glass used to tell future events. **Rabbeinu Bahya** says that this region was notorious for its reliance on oracles (unsurprisingly, this was where Bila'am came from) & Lavan had a lot of faith in his *teraphim*.

Aliya 7 | 31:43-32:3

Examine verses 32:2-3.

What was the purpose of these angels? What is the nature of this interaction?

Rashi suggests that these angels were the angels sent to minister the land of Israel who had come to greet Ya'akov. The **Ramban** is baffled by Rashi's suggestion, largely because Ya'akov had not returned to the land yet. He still had some distance to travel, so why did the angels of Israel join him already at this point? Rather, this event was to illustrate to Ya'akov that he had more merit and spiritual forces on his side as he was preparing to meet his murderous brother. **Rabbeinu Bahya** comments that these were the same angels Ya'akov sees ascending and descending the ladder at the beginning of the *Parsha*.

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