



# The Marcos and Adina Katz YUTORAH IN PRINT

## Vayeitzei 5783

### The Stone on the Well - Boulder or Pebble?

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm z"l (Originally delivered November 29, 1952)

In reading today's Sidra we are puzzled by some extraordinary incidents therein recorded. Jacob, we read, had chanced upon a group of shepherds waiting to water their sheep from a nearby well. And on it, there rested a stone, a stone big enough to cover the mouth of the opening of the well: *"ve'ha'even ha'gedolah al pi ha'be'er"*. When Jacob notices the shepherds lingering, he tells them, *"hashku ha'tsoan u'lechu re'u"* - why don't you go ahead, remove the stone from the mouth of the well and water your sheep? It all seemed so terribly simple to the naive Jacob. But they answered: *"va'yomru lo nuchal ad asher ye'asfu ha'adrim"* - they said: we cannot, it is impossible, until all the herds gather and the other shepherds help us. Jacob was puzzled by their attitude, and he thought he might be able to do it - and, in the Bible's eloquent simplicity: *"vayigash yaakov va'yegal ess ha'even me'al pi ha'be'er"* - He went over and rolled the stone off the mouth of the well! Just like that!

We can well imagine the attitude of the shepherds when Jacob walked over to the well. "Look," they probably sneered, "look who's going to play big hero - Jacob, the *Batlan*, the *Luftmensch*!" And we can also imagine their amazement - and their embarrassment - when this same Jacob walks up to the stone and effortlessly rolls it off. The stone appeared to Jacob, say the Rabbis, *"ki'mlo pi kvara ktanah"*, as big as a hole of a strainer. What to these mighty muscle men appeared to be a boulder, appeared to Jacob to be a mere pebble!

This narrative certainly is remarkable. The feat of strength of Jacob and the apparent weakness of the shepherds require some explanation. Why could Jacob do it? - and even more important - why couldn't the shepherds? What does all this mean, and what is it that the Bible is trying to teach us?

The *"be'er"*, the well, was interpreted in many different

ways by our Rabbis. Some said that it refers to *Zion* - the love for the Jewish home. Others would have it mean the feeling for Jewish ethics, when they say: *"be'er - zeh Sinai"*. Still others say: *"be'er zeh ha'mehaleches im ha'avos"*, that it refers to the tradition of the Jew and his sense of continuity. In essence, what our Rabbis are trying to tell us is that the *"Be'er"* is the well of the Jewish personality, it is the source of the forces of opportunity and accomplishment which well up in the Jewish soul and beg to be released. It is a man's talents and his innate abilities which seek expression. But we see so many people, you might say, who never amount to much despite the fact that they have a wealth of talent and ability. True - their talents are never released because there is a stone on the mouth of their well, there are difficulties - hard, cold and rocky - which must be rolled away first. The stone represents the difficulties in the way of each and every man in his desire to set free the forces which lie in the great well of his personality and being. And it is his attitude to this stone, his approach to these difficulties, which determines whether he will be able to roll it away, like Jacob, or be forced to keep the well covered - like the shepherds.

Yes, it is the attitude which counts most. It is the idea which gives birth to the fact. The reason the shepherds could not roll the stone away was that they were convinced that they could not do it. Listen once again to the Bible's words: *"va'yomru lo nuchal"*, they said "we cannot - it's impossible". When a man thinks that a particular task is impossible, then for him it becomes impossible.

Jacob, however, had no such difficulty. He did not think that it was impossible. He thought that it certainly was possible for a man to remove the stone from his well. He therefore went over and, without further ado, simply moved it out of the way. He thought it was possible, and so for him it became possible.

That same rule holds true for all of us. If we face the stone on our individual wells, the difficulties which keep us back from doing those constructive things which we want to do, and and we imagine that stone to be a boulder - that that is what it is, and try as we shall it cannot be budged. Our "*lo nuchal*" attitude makes of it an "*even gdolah*". Approach it, however, with the attitude that it is only "*ki'mlo pi kvarah ktanah*", that the stone is only a pebble, then it can be rolled away as easily as a pebble! What you think is impossible becomes impossible. Think of it as possible, and the odds are that you can do it.

Here is a man who would like to get himself an education. He must continue at night-college for two more years in order to get his degree. It is his opportunity to open up the well of his hidden abilities. But there is a stone which lies on that well and threatens to choke it. He must have time for his club, he must finish his office work, he must keep up his social contacts, he must have some rest. "*Lo nuchal*", sorry, I can't do it - it's impossible. And so the stone becomes a boulder, and for him it is now a virtual impossibility to get a degree. The "*lo nuchal*" made a boulder of the stone, and he cannot surmount it.

On the other hand, take a man like the late Pres. Roosevelt. At the prime of his life he was cut down by crippling infantile paralysis. What a stone! What a rock! And yet we know, from the many biographies written of him, that his attitude was anything but that of resignation, anything but "*lo nuchal*" - he was going to beat it. It was for him only "*ki'mlo pi kvarah ktanah*" - and so the stone became not a boulder but a pebble, and he removed it, allowing all the world to benefit from the treasures stored up in the well of his personality.

The story is told of Marshal Foch, the famous World War I commander, who reported to his headquarters the following message: "My right flank is in retreat. My left flank is encircled. My center is caving. I am ready to attack." Here was a man who could not say "*lo nuchal*" and so the stone became as pebbles, and he won.

And what is true for individuals is true for communities and for this community in particular. Of course there are stones on our well. This is not primarily a residential area, the interest in religion in general is waning, and so on and so forth. Look at it that way, and the stone is as formidable as a boulder, and we might as well give up before we start. Think of it, however, as a minor significance, remember that within walking distance of this synagogue there live a

minimum of over four thousand adult Jews, and your stone becomes not a boulder but a pebble. As long as we don't say "*LO nuchal*", we can't, it can't be done, impossible, the well can be tapped to good use.

And so, getting back to Jacob, his show of strength was of the mind and not of the muscles; it was a matter of attitude, not sheer brawn. And it was this very same attitude, this "never say 'die'" attitude, which made him perform such miracles all his life. This ivory-tower scholar, the "*yoshev ohalim*", was able to turn shepherd for 14 long years to work for Rachel whom he loved. Thus the "*ish tam*", the naive student, was able to outsmart Laban in his own game of trickery and deceit. Thus he was able to envision a ladder rising into heaven. All this - because he never said "*lo nuchal*" - impossible.

The Vilna Gaon, according to a folk's legend, was once asked how one becomes a Vilna Gaon. And he answered, "*vil nur, vest du zein a gaon*". Just don't say "*lo nuchal*".

And Jacob's reward was ample. When he crossed "maavar yabok" with his family and then went off by himself, an angel appeared out of heaven and began to grapple with him. The angel who represented, according to Tradition, "*saro shel Esav*", the patron angel of Esau, wrestled with him on the bleak plains of Mesopotamia until morning. It was the battle for spiritual supremacy - who will ultimately control the destiny of the human race:

Jacob, with his religion and faith decency, or Esau, with his treachery and faithlessness and sinister intrigues? Jacob, fleeing from Laban after having been tricked into 14 years of hard labor, and fearful of an uncertain future, could easily have been the pessimist and conceded to the "*sar shel Esav*". But that was not for the Jacob who rolled the stone from the well and never said "*lo nuchal*". And so, it is the angel who conceded to Jacob, and - and this is remarkable - in the very same expression of "*yachol*", the Bible relates: "*vayar ki lo yachol lo*", the angel saw that he could not gain the best of him, Jacob would not surrender, Jacob had never learned the words "*lo nuchal*". How significant and how complimentary, therefore, the encomium which G-d bestows upon Jacob when, changing his name, He says to him: "*ki sarisa im elokim ve'im anashim vatuchal*" - you fought with angels and with men, and you won - "*vatuchal*", and you were able. There was no "*lo nuchal*" on your tongue, you did not regard any great and noble task as "impossible" - *vatuchal*!

The limits of a man's ability are much greater than most

men think they are. Tremendous forces churn incessantly in the well of human nature and particularly in the Jewish soul. The stone upon that well can either block it, or the stone can be cast away. What a man does with that stone depends on what he thinks of it. He can be a peasant and,

in primitive fear, imagine it a boulder and choke off his life's mission. Or he can be a Jacob and understand that the stone is only a pebble, cast it off, and eventually grapple even with angels - "vatuchal," and win.

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## Leadership Dreaming

Dr. Erica Brown

**A**vimelekh, king of Gerar, has the very first dream in the Torah (Gen. 20:3). The second occurs in our Torah reading Vayetze. Jacob had a powerfully symbolic dream: "... a stairway was set on the ground and its top reached to the sky, and messengers of God were going up and down on it" (Gen. 28:12). The dream established a connection between heaven and earth at a time of immense vulnerability for Jacob. He tricked his father for Esau's blessing and had to leave his family home under the threat of death. It was a time for nightmares, not majestic dreams. We can only truly understand this dream if we travel with Jacob after the dream.

As the narrative progresses and the dream unfolds, it is God's voice that Jacob hears beckoning to him: "Your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you and your descendants. 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" (Gen. 28:14-15). The gift of protection was exactly what Jacob needed. In his despair and his loneliness, he needed an intimate connection with God and assurance of his very survival. When he woke from his sleep, Jacob realized that something remarkable had happened, even if he did not understand all its contours: "Surely God is present in this place, and I did not know!" (Gen. 28:16).

Israeli novelist Meir Shalev writes in *Beginnings*, his book of biblical firsts, that Jacob was bestowed with a guarantee of protection that even Abraham had not received. Jacob responded with wonder but also with conditions. "Jacob then made a vow, saying, 'If God remains with me, protecting me on this journey that I am making, and giving me bread to eat and clothing to wear, and I return safe to my father's house— God shall be my God'" (Gen. 28:20-21). Jacob's reaction is puzzling and

a seeming insult to God's magnanimity. God will only be Jacob's God if he provides food, clothing, and safe passage for him? We have a word for this: *hutzpa!*

The classic commentaries all feel a need to explain Jacob's bold vow. Rashi, citing a midrash, relates Jacob's speech to a verse in Psalms: "For I will not forsake you" (Ps. 37:25). One who has to beg for bread is called forsaken. Jacob was asking for external signs of love, nourishment, and care. Nahmanides focuses on the word "if" that begins Jacob's vow. It does not indicate doubt, he writes, but future fulfillment: "when the condition is satisfied, then the deed will be fulfilled." The sixteenth century Italian exegete, R. Ovadia Sforzo, offers a brilliant reading. Jacob asked God to provide these basic needs to relieve Jacob from prosaic pressures. Then, and only then, could he focus attention on the greater purpose God laid out for him.

With these conditions, Jacob makes, in Shalev's words, emendations to his own dream. It was not enough to be protected. Jacob wanted his material needs met. It was not enough to return. Jacob must return "b'shalom," in peace. Jacob was willing to take on a historic mission and the continuity of his family's purpose but only if, Shalev observes, "his personal needs in the here and now" were accommodated because he had "pressing problems of his own."

Now back to the dream. Angels going up and down a ladder vertically represent the relationship Jacob tried to establish with God horizontally: one of symmetry. Jacob's vow emerged from his understanding of a covenantal commitment. True partnership is the result of both sides articulating needs and having them met. God demanded much of Abraham and Isaac personally but neither of them made great demands on God. Jacob, with his requests, created a more intimate partnership of mutual obligation.

In his book, *The Home We Build Together*, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks describes the intimacy of a covenant:

“Those bound by a covenant, voluntarily undertake to share a fate. They choose to link their destinies together. They accept responsibilities to and for one another.” Perhaps this is why we as a nation are referred to as Israel, the children of Jacob. Abraham was a knight of faith. Isaac was almost sacrificed for that faith. It was Jacob who wanted that faith to be bound up in the mutuality of a relationship.

Jacob’s dream in our sedra was his most famous one but not his only one. Later, in Genesis 31, Jacob was tending his flocks when an angel – perhaps one of the angels on the ladder – appeared to him and called out: “Jacob!” Jacob responded with “hineni,” I am here. The angel had been watching Jacob these long years and saw the way Jacob suffered in his father-in-law’s home. Jacob’s dream of heaven and earth morphed, over time, into a dream about sheep. Incrementally, Jacob’s life became one of a physical rather than spiritual existence. Before it changed Jacob, the angel set him free: “... I have noted all that Laban has been doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to Me. Now, arise and leave this land and return to your native land” (Gen. 31:13).

It was time to fulfill the words of Jacob’s first dream that spoke to God’s sheltering love – “I will protect you

wherever you go and will bring you back to this land.” Jacob was to go back to his land. Jacob now had food and clothing. But he needed a reminder to make good on the vow made long ago as a result of a dream. It was finally time to go home.

In *Leaders: Dreaming Matters*, Susanne Biro, of the Forbes Coaches Council, writes that “Inside each of us is a negative internal voice that narrates, judges and critiques what we do.” But there is also a dreaming voice that fills us with longing, inspiration, and ambition. “Mastering the ability to dream,” she argues, “is the essence of truly great leadership.” It is our dreams that stimulate our energies and our ability to focus on larger, higher ambitions. Sharing those big dreams catalyzes the excitement of others.

Leaders cannot afford to let go of dreams because dreams represent the part of us we often admire most. “The dream,” Sigmund Freud contends in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, “is the liberation of the spirit from the pressure of external nature, a detachment of the soul from the fetters of matter.” Jacob asked God to relieve him of the fetters of matter. Then Laban chained Jacob to material servitude. An angel finally liberated him. And all because of a spiritual dream not forgotten.

What dream are you holding onto that awaits realization?

## Sleepless in Be’er Sheva

Rabbi Joshua (*The Hoffer*) Hoffman z”l

Ya’akov, being pursued by his brother, reaches a certain location and stops there to sleep, because the sun had set. The Torah tells us that he lay down “in that place” (Bereishis 28:11). Rashi, citing the Midrash Rabbah, notes that Ya’akov laid down to sleep in that place, in contrast to his practice over the previous fourteen years, during which time he never laid down to sleep, because of his incessant occupation with the study of Torah in the house of Ever. The medieval Talmudic scholar Rabbeinu Ephraim, in his Torah commentary, explains that Ya’akov did, in fact, sleep at short intervals over that period of time, but he never laid down to sleep. Interestingly, if one looks in Rashi’s source in the Midrash Rabbah, he will see that there are two opinions concerning the place and time of Ya’akov’s waking state, as alluded to here to in the Torah by the peculiar wording of the verse. The opinion mentioned by Rashi is that of Rabbi Yehudah, while Rabbi Nechemiah

says that it was in the house of Lavan, for the duration of twenty years, where Ya’akov did not lay down to sleep. Actually, Rashi, at the end of his commentary to parshas Vayeytzei, showed that a study of the timeline of Ya’akov’s life as recorded in the Torah leads us to the inevitable conclusion that there was a fourteen year period of time unaccounted for, and this was the time which he spent learning Torah in the house of Ever. However, I believe that this is not the only reason that led Rashi to cite the opinion of Rabbi Nechemiah in this midrash, and, moreover, that, in fact, the two opinions are not in conflict with each other, as I shall try to demonstrate.

We mentioned in last week’s message that Yitzchok blessed Ya’akov that he should have the ability to attain spiritual blessings from his endeavors in the physical realm. We noted that, in order to do so, he had to remember that all blessings have their source in the Holy Land, and from



there they are distributed to the rest of the world. Yitzchok, by remaining in Eretz Yisroel his entire life and receiving the blessings of God there, served as a living example to Ya'akov of this principle. Still, we need to know the vehicle through which Ya'akov himself would be able to attain spiritual blessings through his activities in the mundane world. I believe that the midrash cited by Rashi provides us with the answer. Ya'akov immersed himself in Torah study for fourteen years, never going to sleep in a bed, but, rather, dropping off to sleep for short intervals, when he felt that he no longer had strength to continue. He applied this Torah learning when he became a worker in the house of Lavan. The Talmud in Bava Metziah (93b) derives laws of a hired watchman from statements made by Ya'akov describing the way in which he tended to Lavan's animals over the years, and the Rambam, in his Laws of Hiring (13:7), points to Ya'akov as a model of the way a worker should perform his duties towards his employer. For example, Ya'akov told Lavan, "These twenty years I have been with you, your ewes and she-goats did not miscarry, nor did I eat the rams of your flock... This is how I was: By day heat consumed me, and snow by night; sleep drifted from my eyes" (Bereishis 31:38 and 40). The Rambam cites this verse to show that Ya'akov displayed complete integrity in his work, never wasting time or cheating his employer, and that this is the way all workers should deport themselves. It was through Ya'akov's fourteen years of Torah learning that he understood how to apply Torah standards to the life in the physical world, and thereby bring down spiritual blessings.

The two opinions in the midrash, then, are really one.

## Hashem Hu Ha-Elokim—Chesed is also Din

Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh (Transcribed and adapted by a talmid from the YUTorah shiur, originally entitled "Parsha Bytes - Vayeitzei 5778," and presented at Gruss Kollel in Yerushalayim on Nov 24, 2017)

At the beginning of this week's Parsha, Yaakov makes a Neder: *Im yihyeh Elokim imadi u-shmorani baderech hazeh asher anochi holeich ve-nosan li lechem le'echol u-veged libosh. Ve-shavti be-shalom el beis avi ve-hayah Hashem li l-Eilokim*, etc. And Ramban thinks, Pshuto Shel Mikra, that *ve-hayah Hashem li l-Eilokim* is not part of the condition. It sounds like it's part of Yaakov's promise. If Hashem gives me food and clothing and guards me until I get home safely, then Hashem will be my G-d. But what do you mean? If Hashem does everything for

Rabbi Yehudah says that Ya'akov did not lay down to sleep for fourteen years while he was studying Torah in the house of Ever. Rabbi Ya'akov Kaminetsky, in his *Emes L'Ya'akov*, writes that though Ya'akov had already studied Torah all the years he was in his father's house, he now needed to learn those sections of the Torah that related to conditions outside of that house. During these years, then, he prepared himself for the challenges he would face in applying the Torah to the multifarious vicissitudes of life that he would encounter in Lavan's house. These years of total immersion in Torah study enabled him to forge his personality in a way that conformed with Torah law and ethics. As a result, he faithfully carried out his duty to his employer, Lavan, and served as an example of a faithful employee, emulating the ways of the Torah. Thus, Rabbi Nechemiah, in saying that Ya'akov did not sleep for twenty years while in the house of Lavan, is giving the other side of the story that Rabbi Yehudah presented. Because Ya'akov studied Torah for fourteen years while in the house of Ever, never allowing himself to lay down to sleep, he was able to serve for twenty years as a faithful employee while in Lavan's house, again never allowing himself to lay down to sleep. In this way, through applying the Torah that he learned to his life situation, he was able to attain spiritual blessing by means of his activity in the physical world. Rashi, then, in citing the opinion of Rabbi Yehudah, was explaining the first step in the process - Ya'akov's fourteen years of Torah study in the house of Lavan - that culminated in his dedicated service for twenty years in the house of Lavan, as indicated by Rabbi Nechemiah..

me, He will be my G-d. And if not, am I going to be an atheist? Am I going to worship idols? Obviously, Yaakov believes in Hashem. Obviously, Hashem is his G-d. This is very problematic from Rashi's point of view. He says: No. This was part of the condition, not part of what Yaakov promised. But Ramban says: No. The pashut pshat in the flow of the pesukim is that Yaakov promised that if Hashem does these good things for him, He will be for him Elokim. True. But what does that mean? You can't make a tenai to decide whether Hashem is your G-d. This is

absolute. Ramban says (based on the mystical approaches that we can't go into)—and it's relevant to all of us sitting here—*ve-hayah Hashem li l-Eilokim* means that I will serve Hashem in Eretz Yisroel. Obviously, I would serve Hashem everywhere. But in Chutz La-aretz, it's like Hashem is not my G-d. Like Chazal say: When you live in Chutz La-aretz, it's as if you don't have a G-d. *Ve-hayah Hashem li l-Eilokim* means that I will serve Hashem davka in Eretz Yisroel where I have a closer relationship with Him. Ok. I don't fully understand the mystical import of Hashem being my G-d only in Eretz Yisroel—though I try to be mekayem it.

Rav Hirsch suggests an easier-to-understand approach based on a diyuk in the words of Yaakov's neder—*ve-hayah Hashem li l-Eilokim. Hashem—shem Havaya*—will be for me *Elokim*. He says that it doesn't mean that Hashem will be my G-d—as if there was a hava amina that something else would be. Obviously not. It means that *Hashem—shem Havaya*—is *Midas ha-Rachamim*. And *Elokim* is *Midas ha-Din*. We all know what those sheimos mean. Putting it all together, we get: *Hashem—my Midas ha-Rachamim*—will be *Midas ha-Din* for me. What does this mean? Rav Hirsch explains by expanding on a very terse comment of Seforno. He says: If Hashem does all the wonderful things for you. If He gives you a lot of Rachamim, tremendous bracha, and everything you need, what would be your natural reaction? So when a person is in trouble, sick, unemployed, has tzaros, etc., they tell Hashem that they will improve this and that and do extra mitzvos. And they will really try to deserve better, do cheshbon hanefesh, and try to improve themselves. But a natural tendency of a person when everything is going well; when Hashem blesses them and relates to them with *Midas ha-Rachamim*—gives them money, health, and happiness—they sit on their laurels. They say: Oh, now that Hashem is good to me, I can relax and don't have to do anything. When things are

easy, people coast. Says Rav Hirsch: No. Yaakov's neder was: Hashem! If you make things easy for me, I will not use that as an excuse for laziness and take things for granted. *Ve-haya Hashem*—if you conduct yourself with me with *Rachamim—li l-Eilokim*—I will still see You as *Midas ha-Din*. Even if things are easy and I am not in a tzara or crisis, I will say: Hashem gave me all these great things. Am I using them well? How is Hashem judging me? He is *meshpia tova* on me. He gave me all these wonderful things. Am I living up to it? He gave me money. Am I using it in the right way? He gave me peace. Am I using my free time in the right way? Hashem, if You make my life good and easy, You will not regret it. I will not just take Your Rachamim for granted. *Ve-hayah Hashem li l-Eilokim*—I will still see you as *Midas ha-Din* and see myself judged for what I do—and I must live up to Your expectations. And that's how Rav Hirsch understands Yaakov's neder. And I think it's relevant in everyone's life. When things are tough, it's very easy to see Hashem as *Midas ha-Din* and realize that you have to live up to a higher standard. Yaakov is telling us that, kol shekein, when things are good—when im yirtze Hashem, Hashem blesses all of us with good things and gives us Rachamim—our job is *ve-hayah Hashem li l-Eilokim*. We must still remember there is still judgment, expectations, and standards. And the more Hashem gives us, the more we must ask ourselves: Are we using those good things that Hashem gives us to serve Hashem better, deepen ourselves, and increase ruchnious in the world? May Hashem be mekayem to all of us *u-shmarticha, ve-nassan li* all the brachos possible in the world. And then we should mekayem *ve-haya Hashem li l-Eilokim* and realize that we are still judged, have standards, and use this realization to inspire us to pass the test, meet the standards, and use these resources to serve Hashem more and more. Shabbat Shalom.

## Religion and Belongingness

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

Ya'akov barely escapes his homicidal brother, fleeing from his family, penniless and alone. Traveling at night to a faraway sanctuary, he is uncertain about his future and uncomfortable about his past. Though his mother supported him and promoted his interests, his father always favored his violent older brother. Even though Ya'akov secured his father's blessings, he never

received his father's explicit endorsement. As Yaakov departed for the unknown, he was still unsure whether his father endorsed his behavior. Carrying all that pain, uncertainty, and feelings of abandonment, Ya'akov flees to a safe refuge, hiding from his angry and vengeful brother. His nighttime journey is probably the loneliest scene in the entire book of Bereishit.

Lost and bewildered, Ya'akov goes vertical. dreaming of a heavenly ladder. Observing the angels hiking up and down, he realizes that he is no longer alone. Positioned atop the ladder, Hashem assures Ya'akov's safe voyage and guarantees his ultimate return to Israel. Realizing that he now journeys under the watchful eye of Hashem, Ya'akov becomes more confident in his future prospects.

Before he dreams of the ladder Ya'akov discovered an additional anchor for his journey. The midrash narrates, that suddenly he realized that he walked where his grandfather Avraham once prayed. Halting his voyage, he too prays on this sacred ground, the very mountain of courage where Avraham was prepared to sacrifice it all. Between his heavenly dream and the memory of his grandfather, Ya'akov no longer travels alone. Protected by Hashem and accompanied by the memories of his legacy, he is filled with belonging and with purpose. With refreshed determination he sprints to his uncle's house, brimming with confidence and optimism. Empowered by his new sense of purpose he hoists a heavy stone covering a well of water, personally lifting a load which an entire team of herdsman couldn't budge. A lonely and frightened traveler has now transformed into a confident and formidable provider. He has been empowered by his meeting with Hashem and by his unexpected encounter with his past. He feels as if he belongs.

### **Belongingness**

Identity is partially composed of our personal traits, values, achievements, dreams, and aspirations. However, these components only form one part of our identity. Additionally, we form our identity based upon the larger groups and institutions to which we belong. Human beings possess a primal need to belong to something larger than themselves. Social scientists refer to this as "belongingness". Biologists trace this inner need to the evolutionary advantages of belonging to a tribe. In a harsh world of survival of the fittest, membership in larger groups assured safety, shelter, and food. Psychologists trace our need to belong to an inner loneliness which produces an unrelenting desire to bond with ideas and people beyond our own small lives. Either way, human identity is forged not only through personal experience and personal values, but through "belonging" as well.

Belongingness also shapes religious identity. As individuals, we yearn for a personal and private

relationship with our Creator in heaven. We search for Him in the heavens and in the solitude of our souls. However, we aren't just individual creatures of Hashem, we also belong to a long and illustrious lineage of people who found Hashem and lived according to His will. Religious identity is carved from personal belief coupled with collective belonging. Since we received the eternal word of Hashem at Sinai, religious experience has been draped in human traditions transmitted across time. Practicing those traditions along with the actual word of Hashem, enables our collective national belonging and forges religious identity.

For this reason, "masorah" or the collected traditions of Jewish ritual life are crucial to successful religious behavior and identity. The norms and conventions of "masorah" may not be legally institutionalized in the same manner as halacha proper, yet they anchor us to our heritage, convey belongingness and enrich religious experience. Whenever we adapt Jewish practice to changing realities, we must take care to also preserve traditions and masorah. Altering a tradition may not violate halacha and may also serve a larger beneficial purpose. However rearranging traditions can also disrupt historical continuity and sever us from belongingness.

In addition to belonging through religious traditions we also belong through affiliation with our national historical project of representing Hashem in this world. Throughout the ages we have paid a heavy price for disseminating knowledge of Hashem to a resistant and often hostile world. Identifying with that historical project also generates historical belongingness, which in turn, deepens religious identity.

### **Unbelonging**

Modern man feels less "belonged" than ever before. The modern world stresses personal identity but devalues collective experience. Political democracy, and personal and economic freedom have all strengthened personal identity at the cost of the identity of belonging. The ideas and groupings to which human beings once belonged have begun to fray. Religious belief has diminished, national narratives have been shattered, and value systems have become muddled. In the past, people had a clearer sense of belonging and possessed a well-defined notion of which culture, religion or nation they were associated with. These associations have weakened and in the absence of

more meaningful belonging, people latch on to superficial groups of belonging such as sports teams or political parties. Without authentic belonging human experience is becoming brittle and identity is becoming less sturdy.

The modern challenges of belonging are severely damaging religious identity. It is difficult to craft successful religious experience solely through personal identity, without belonging to Jewish past and to the overall world of Judaism. In a world of unbelonging, attempts to build religion solely based upon personal experience are faltering. In previous eras multiple generations lived in the same city, providing a geographical anchor for belonging. In today's mobile world, we are constantly migrating to new communities, rarely spending our entire lives in one location. We rarely attend the same schools as our parents, and we rarely pray in the same synagogues. There is less in

our lives for our children to latch on to.

Recently I was asked which subject is most neglected in Jewish education across North America. As a Rabbi I was expected to select an area of Torah study which is overlooked and deserves more attention. Instead, I encouraged greater investment in the study of Jewish history. The current crisis of religious identity is, in part, a product of unbelonging. Studying additional Torah texts will not always create more belonging. Knowing our past and sensing our role in our future just might.

Rabbi Soloveitchik penned a famous religious essay entitled "The Lonely man of Faith" which captures private odyssey of religious experience. Have we become too lonely and is this damaging our faith? Can we be more successful if we don't build religious identity alone?

## Yaakov Avinu and the Mouth of the Well

*Mrs. Michal Horowitz*

**T**his week's parsha, Parshas Vayeitzei, opens with Yaakov running away from Be'er Sheva, headed to Charan, where he will spend the next twenty years at the home of his uncle, Lavan. Fleeing the wrath of his brother Eisav, it is in Lavan's home that Yaakov will marry his wives: Leah and her handmaid, Zilpah, and Rachel, and her handmaid Bilhah. There he will father eleven sons (Binyamin isn't born yet) and Dina, born to Leah.

Prior to his arrival in Charan, where he meets Rachel by the well, Yaakov finds himself alone in Luz (or at Har Ha'Moriah), where he has his famous dream. He sees a ladder reaching to the heavens, with angels ascending and descending the ladder. In the dream/prophecy, G-d reveals Himself to the third patriarch for the first time.

G-d promises him the land of Israel, the gift of children, and Divine protection wherever he may be.

What deeper message is embedded in this prophetic dream, and what lesson does it carry for us, Jews in every generation who find themselves - like Yaakov - sojourning in exile?

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin writes, "Put yourself, for a moment, in Yaakov's place during the moments before his vision.

"Bedding down in the darkness of the night, you are terribly fearful - fearful of the unknown, of your aloneness and of the threat posed by your brother... You harbor,

however, an even deeper fear. You live at a time when gods are considered territorial. If you leave your land, you leave your G-d behind.

"And now, you stand poised, for the first time, to run from the land that your family has not left for over a generation, the land to which your grandfather has been commanded to journey. What will become of your relationship with G-d?

"In response to your fears, G-d grants you a majestic vision of a ladder stretching heavenward upon which angels are ascending and descending. True, the angels who have watched over you until now are leaving; but other angels, other emissaries of your G-d, are descending to accompany you on your journey.

"G-d appears to you in your dream with promises: that the land upon which you lie will be given to you and your children; that your children will be as numerous as the dust of the earth and will spread to the west, to the east, to the north, and to the south; that the nations of the world will be blessed through you and your descendants. But then G-d says something truly astonishing: 'And behold I will be with you and I will guard you wherever you may go' (28:15). Suddenly you realize that your G-d is different - for there is only one G-d, Who is not tied to any land, Who is omnipresent. You are no longer afraid... for now you know that by leaving the land you will not leave your G-d



behind. He will be with you always.

“This realization, however, potentially makes you think: If G-d will be with me wherever I go; if I can be successful anywhere; then, perhaps, I need no longer be tied to a specific land or place. Further, if my task is to spread G-d’s word, won’t that be best accomplished by living in the world? Perhaps my family has developed past the need for a homeland.

“To this, G-d continues, ‘And I will return you to this soil; for I will not leave you until I have done all that I have promised to you’ (ibid). And you realize the fullness of your challenge. For while G-d will be with you wherever you may go; His constant presence does not release you from the obligation to return to your own land. There, and only there, will your relationship with G-d be complete; there and only there can you truly fulfill your destiny.

“Your relationship with your Creator will be defined by a constant tension. You will live under His protection wherever you may be but you will fully relate to Him only within your land. You may succeed in exile but your destiny waits for you in your homeland” (Unlocking the Torah Text, Bereishit, p.160-161).

While it is indeed true that Hashem is with us wherever we are and to whichever lands we will go, the Torah itself is very clear that Eretz Yisrael is where we can fulfill our ultimate destiny as a nation. The Land itself is saturated with holiness that no other place in the entire world can

## The Quiet Tzadik

Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

**M**any commentators raise the question of why the Torah makes this point specifically in this context, in reference to Yaakov’s departure from Be’er Sheva. His grandfather and father, Avraham and Yitzchak, were also outstanding tzadikim, and they, too, moved several times. Why did the Torah never mention *ויצא אברהם* or *ויצא יצחק* to indicate to us that their departure left an impression, taking away the “majesty,” “radiance” and “beauty” of the place from which they left?

Rav Yosef Sorotzkin, in Megeg Yosef, explains that Yaakov, at this stage of his life, was a much different kind of tzadik than his father and grandfather. Avraham, together with Sara, led a major “outreach” movement, inspiring thousands upon thousands of people to recognize Hashem and follow His will. And, Avraham was the paragon of

duplicate. אָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר-ה’ אֱלֹקֶיךָ דֹרֵשׁ אֹתָהּ: תָּמִיד, עֵינֵי ה’ אֱלֹקֶיךָ. בָּה--מֵרֵשִׁית הַשָּׁנָה, וְעַד אַחֲרֵית שָׁנָה - *it is a land that Hashem your G-d seeks out; Hashem’s eyes are continuously upon the land, from the beginning of the year to the end of (the) year* (Devarim 11:12).

It is well known that Rav Avraham Yitzchak ha’Kohen Kook zt’l had a burning love for the land of Israel, as well as for all members of Am Yisrael, religious and secular alike. He especially embraced and encouraged the pioneers who were working and settling the land in the early-mid 1900’s.

On one visit to a number of kibbutzim, the following story occurred: As the rabbis approached one of the kibbutzim in the fields of Merchavyah, a group of youngsters (secular pioneers) called out to them: ‘Don’t waste your efforts and breath on us. We are set in our ways and have no intention or desire to be influenced by outsiders.’

‘On the contrary,’ Rav Kook calmly replied. ‘We have not come to influence you, but to be influenced by you ... We want to be influenced by your great self-sacrifice for the Holy Land. Only people with grand souls can attain such a level of selfless devotion to the land of Israel’ (An Angel Among Men, by Simcha Raz, p.419-420).

May we merit the great day when Hashem will return our captivity to Tzion and we - like Yaakov Avinu - will be like dreamers, as our mouths will be filled with laughter and our tongues with song (cf. Ps.126).

hospitality, who hosted untold numbers of people. Thus, whenever he left, his departure meant the closing of major projects and institutions. Yitzchak, too, built altars and was *קורא בשם ה’*, disseminating the belief in Hashem to the public. It was obvious that when Avraham and Yitzchak departed from a city, their departure was palpably felt, and made an impression.

Yaakov, however, was *איש תם יושב אוהלים* (כה:כז) *אנב*, a simple, private person, who engaged in Torah learning. He was not, at this stage, a public figure who attracted a large following. And thus specifically in the context of his departure from Be’er Sheva the Torah drew our attention to the fact that *יציאת צדיק מן המקום עושה רושם*, that when even a quiet, private tzadik leaves, this makes an impression upon the community. One does not have to be a public figure

to make an impact. Yaakov Avinu's diligence, intensive Torah learning, piety and middos had a profound influence upon his surroundings even without his serving any sort

of public role. A tzadik makes an impression simply by his day-to-day conduct, by the merit of his learning, and the example of spiritual devotion which he sets.

## The Transformation of Jacob

Rabbi Ephraim Buchwald

**T**his week's Torah portion, parashat Vayeitzei, continues the fascinating story of the patriarchal family of Isaac and the saga of the complex relationship between Esau and Jacob that we first learned of in last week's parasha, Toledot.

In parashat Toledot we are told that when Esau discovers that Jacob had deceived their father Isaac by disguising himself as Esau and had taken Esau's blessing, Esau, in the presence of his father, lets out a bitter cry (Genesis 27:36), וַיִּשְׁקַבְנִי יְהוָה פַּעַמַּיִם, "Was he really called Jacob because he has deceived me twice? He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing!" To calm his son, Isaac gives Esau a substitute blessing. But Esau, filled with rage and resentment, threatens to kill Jacob as soon as Isaac dies.

Rebecca, their mother, is traumatized by Esau's threat, and advises Jacob to leave home and flee to her brother Laban, who lives in Charan (Mesopotamia), and to remain there until Esau's anger passes. Rebecca says mournfully (Genesis 27:45), "Why should I be bereaved of you both in a single day?"

Now, who is this, Jacob? And how did he get into such a bind?

Our sages see Jacob in differing ways. Rashi explains Jacob's deceptive actions by claiming that Jacob very much did not wish to deceive his father, but could not refuse the earnest importuning of his mother, Rebecca. Other commentators place a positive spin on Jacob's behavior and character, as well. However, many other commentaries come down hard on Jacob, charging him with inappropriate behavior, saying that both he and the Jewish people paid a heavy price for his deception. If that is the case, how is it that Jacob maintains such an exalted status, and is regarded as one of the three revered Patriarchs, the one after whom the Jewish people are named?

Even before birth, Jacob tried to supplant Esau. The Torah tells us (Genesis 25:22), וַיִּתְרַצְצוּ הַבָּנִים בְּקֶרֶבָהּ, that the not-yet-born twin boys were struggling in Rebecca's belly. The Talmud tells us that the pain that Rebecca

experienced was due to the fact that when Rebecca would pass by a place of Torah learning, Jacob would try to get out of the womb to join the scholars, and when she would pass a place of idol worship, Esau would try to get out. An alternate view offered by the commentaries is that the twins were already struggling with one another over their future material inheritance. Any way you look at it, the struggle does not appear to be simple sibling rivalry, but rather a manifest confrontation that was divinely ordained.

When Rebecca gives birth to twins, Esau comes out first, followed by Jacob. Once again there is a clear indication of the rivalry. Scripture relates that at the time of the delivery (Genesis 25:26), וַיִּדּוּ אֶת־יָדָיו בְּעֵקֶב עֵשָׂו, that literally before Jacob breathes his first breath, he is holding on to Esau's foot, trying to prevent Esau from emerging first.

The Torah then informs the readers (Genesis 25:26), וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ, יַעֲקֹב, He calls his name Jacob. This verse is unclear. Surely the child is called Jacob, but who calls him Jacob? On the surface, it seems obvious that it is Isaac, the child's father, who names the child. But the verse is ambiguous enough to allow our rabbis (see Rashi) to suggest that perhaps it is the Al-mighty Himself who calls the child Jacob. G-d sees the child holding-on forcefully to his brother's foot, and calls the boy Jacob, "the supplanter," "the deceiver."

What, however, is the nature of the struggle with which Jacob seems to be consumed already at birth? Does it stem from jealousy? Is it the result of a competition for honor? Is it for love or for recognition that Jacob is trying to supplant his brother? Surely, it's not simply a faux pas, a misjudgment on the part on Jacob.

In fact, Jacob's behavior is a fulfillment of a Divine prophecy. We know this from the fact that when Rebecca experiences unusual pain in pregnancy, scripture (Genesis 25:22), informs us that she tried to discover the cause of her suffering by consulting with "Eh-lohim," the spiritual powers. לָמָּה זֶה אֲנֹכִי, "Why am I thus?", she asks. Rebecca is then informed through prophecy that there are two great

nations in her womb, and two great peoples in her bowels, (Genesis 25:23) וְלֵאמֹר מְלֵאִים יִאֲמָץ, and that these two people will struggle. Obviously, the struggle is Divinely ordained! Jacob legitimately deserves to lord over Esau because the prophecy clearly predicts (Genesis 25:23) וְרַב יַעֲבֹד צְעִיר, that the younger one will supplant the older, and that the older is destined to be subservient to the younger.

The Torah (Genesis 25:29-34), then describes the devious means that Jacob uses to fulfill the prophecy of lording over Esau. He takes unfair advantage of Esau by giving him lentils when he is starving, in return for his birthright. Jacob then proceeds to deceive his own father (Genesis 27), by dressing up as Esau, and with his mother's help, taking away Esau's blessing. The patriarch Isaac, in fact, actually confirms that this is an act of deception when he says to Esau, (Genesis 27:35) בָּא אָחִיךָ בְּמִרְמָה, "Your brother has come with deception." If Jacob is indeed the deceiver, what does it mean when the Torah previously describes Jacob as an (Genesis 25:27) אִישׁ תָּם, יֹשֵׁב אֹהֲלִים, "an innocent person, dwelling in tents." Perhaps Jacob is playing the role of an innocent, but it appears to really be an act that is part of a great deception.

At this point in the story, however, the multiple deceptions have backfired. Jacob is on the run. Rebecca sends him to her brother, Laban, to Charan.

Now, why does Rebecca send Jacob to, of all people, Laban? Perhaps, what Rebecca in effect is telling her son: "Jacob, if you wish to be a deceiver, if you really want to learn how to be deceptive, I suggest then, that you go to the master deceiver, to my brother, Laban. With Laban at least you'll learn the art of deception from the master—not only how to get away with it, but even how to come out on top." Or, perhaps, Rebecca is telling Jacob: "You think that deceit is the way to solve your problems? Perhaps you will have a change of heart after Laban shows you what it feels like to be on the receiving end of deceit, and you will be deceived of everything—your wife, Rachel, your salary and your property!"

As this week's Torah portion, Vayitzei, opens, Jacob departs Canaan, and on the way, he dreams a dream. He dreams of a ladder reaching to heaven with angels going up and down. Jacob, who is deeply moved by this spiritual vision, erects a monument, and calls the name of the place Bet-El, which means, House of G-d. Jacob, in effect, is saying, "Enough of this deception! I'm in the process of transforming myself into a proper, honorable gentleman. I

must change from being a totally materialistic person and transform myself into a spiritual being." Although Jacob arrives in Charan with a heightened desire to be spiritually transformed and uplifted, he is immediately confronted by reality—life with Laban.

Now, who is Laban? We soon learn from the biblical text that Laban is not very well-liked, at least not by the local shepherds of Charan. In fact, when Jacob asks the shepherds, (Genesis 29:6), "How is Laban?" they say, in effect, "Bug off. Here comes his daughter, ask her."

Laban is really the ultimate swindler, a notorious con man. After Jacob is introduced to Laban and his family, things quickly deteriorate. Jacob is abused by Laban. Laban says to Jacob: (Genesis 29:15), "Just because you're my brother, are you to work for me for nothing?" And, you guessed it, Jacob then basically works for nothing! Jacob spells out the terms of his work contract, making certain to dot every "I" and cross every "t," but Laban quickly changes everything. Even at Jacob's proposed wedding to Rachel, Laban switches the handmaidens and his daughters and deceives Jacob of his beloved bride-to-be, Rachel.

After working for 14 years to pay off his commitment for Rachel, Jacob remains with Laban in Charan and has a houseful of children. When, at last, the barren Rachel gives birth to Joseph, Jacob approaches Laban to take leave of his father-in-law, and sets out on his own. Laban realizes and acknowledges that all his good fortune is due to Jacob's diligent work. He asks Jacob to name his price for remaining. Jacob suggests: "You, Laban, take all the fine white sheep, and I'll keep the spotted, speckled and striped sheep—the inferior sheep." Laban, again, pulls a "fast-one" on Jacob. He removes all the spotted and the speckled sheep from his flocks, and moves them to a location a three day journey away. Poor Jacob now has no chance of ever breeding spotted and speckled sheep, and will soon be left with nothing. Jacob responds by engaging in creative reproductive techniques, using peeled bark sticks, which results in the white sheep bearing spotted and speckled sheep. Jacob becomes enormously wealthy, as Laban's sons are consumed with jealousy, claiming that Jacob has stolen their father's property and wealth.

G-d tells Jacob that it's time to leave Charan and return to Canaan. Jacob summons his wives, Rachel and Leah, to the field, because he doesn't trust Laban—the tents are presumably bugged! At this "family conference," Jacob tells his wives of his most recent dream, of spotted and speckled

sheep mounting each other, and bearing offspring. Jacob has clearly been transformed. After spending 21 years in Laban's house, Jacob's dreams are no longer spiritual—of angels ascending and descending the ladder to heaven—the dreams of a person who wants to outgrow his propensity for deception. Rather, his dreams are the dreams of a mercenary. Jacob dreams about spotted and speckled sheep. He's obsessed with the wealth he's gained—and after 21 years with Laban, Jacob has not really changed.

Once again, Jacob flees stealthfully, while Rachel steals her father's idols. Laban catches Jacob on the run and confronts Jacob. Jacob knows that he is spared from Laban only because G-d has intervened and stopped Laban from attacking him. It's during this meeting that Jacob finally realizes that deception does not work, and that only by confronting and wrestling with evil can he achieve his goals.

In next week's parasha, Vayishlach, scripture reports (Genesis 32:25), that "Jacob remains alone." In effect scripture informs us that Jacob is alone with himself existentially—confronting himself. Finally, (Genesis 32:26,) וַיִּאָבֵק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ, עד עלות השחר a man wrestles with him until the morning rises. The way to deal with evil, Jacob learns at

last, is not through deception, but by struggling—through confrontation! It is at this point that Jacob's name is changed to Yisrael, (Genesis 32:29), כִּי שָׂרִיתָ עִם אֱלֹהִים וְעַם, וַתִּוָּקַל , אֲנָשִׁים, וְתוֹכַל , "because you have wrestled with G-d and with man, and you have prevailed."

This is the lesson that we learn from father Jacob. Whatever our predisposition, be it supplanter, deceiver, or thief, eventually, each person must confront their own personal shortcomings. The proper way to deal with negative character traits and with evil is not by trying to deceive or outsmart evil, not by supplanting evil, but by confronting evil and struggling with it. Even if it means that the confronter comes out limping, as did Jacob, (Genesis 32:32), still the only effective method is to confront evil.

That is why Jacob truly deserves to be regarded as an exalted figure, not only among the patriarchs, but as a paragon and model for all people, to teach humankind how to deal with its own shortcomings. After all, we all need to be transformed, some more, some less. We need to wrestle with ourselves, we need to wrestle with G-d, we need to wrestle with evil. Without wrestling we are incomplete. With wrestling we shall indeed prevail.

## A Prophet Reads the Parshah

Rabbi Adam Friedmann

**T**he twelfth chapter of the book of Hosheia (part of which is included in this week's haftorah) includes several allusions to the story of Yaakov's life. These allusions are constructed to provide lessons from Yaakov's life for Hosheia's contemporaries. They offer a fascinating look into the way a prophet understood these parshiyot.

The chapter begins by offering a criticism of the northern Israelite Kingdom, and to a lesser extent the southern Judean Kingdom, about their deceitful behavior. Specifically noted is the foreign policy practice of sending tributes to both Egypt and their rival Assyria in an attempt to play both sides. Hosheia blasts this duplicitous behavior as "chasing the wind."

This criticism is the context for Hosheia's first allusion to Yaakov's life:

In the womb he tried to supplant (*akav*) his brother and when he became strong he fought (*sara*) with a godly being. He fought (*yasar*) an angel and defeated him. [The latter] cried and begged him. He (God) met him (Yaakov) at Beit El, and there He spoke to us. Hashem, the Lord of

Hosts, "Hashem" is how He is recalled. (Hosheia 12:45)

This allusion refers to three scenes in Yaakov's life: His birth grasping the ankle of his brother Esav, the battle with a mysterious being in the night, and the prophecy he received at Beit El some time after this battle.

There are several things we can note about Hosheia's retelling:

- These scenes are from different parts of Yaakov's life. They are being contrasted in order to deliver a specific message.
- The Torah describes Yaakov as grasping (*ocheiz*) his brother's ankle at birth. Hosheia instead uses the verb *akav*, meaning to supplant through trickery (see Bereishit 27:36).
- There is an emphasis on the roots *akv* and *ysr*. These allude to the two names Yaakov and Yisrael.

Hosheia's message seems to be this: The deceitful practices of the two kingdoms are parallel to Yaakov's own behaviour. He too (following Abarbanel and Malbim's readings) deceived his brother. In fact, this seemed to



be his fate from the womb, either as part of his nature or because of the natural dominance that Esav projected. However, Yaakov transformed himself. He overcame the drive to deceit and gained the confidence to confront and defeat angels. This selfconfidence came from his trust in God and is encapsulated by the prophecy at Beit El. There, God changed Yaakov's name to Yisrael, reflecting his transformation. God also promised Yaakov that his descendants would inherit the land. The land was meant for a people who follow the path of Yisrael. Hosheia emphasizes that God's commitment to this promise hasn't changed. If the Jews are willing to act honestly and forthrightly, God will help them overcome any adversary. [See Rashi to Hosheia 12:6.] Hosheia says to his fellow Jews, "You act deceitfully because you feel weak and afraid. Instead, follow the path of your father Yisrael. Have the courage to be honest, kind, and just and trust that God will support you! This is the kind of country Israel is supposed to be."

Hosheia's second allusion to Yaakov's life serves to drive

home this point. He describes the Israelite Kingdom as proclaiming that the riches and power they have gained through deceit were in some sense legitimate. This is because they gained them through their own efforts, and their deceit was so elaborate as to be undetectable.

In his response to this, Hosheia recalls Yaakov's time with Lavan. "Yaakov fled to the fields of Aram, and Yisrael worked for a wife and for a wife he guarded sheep." (Hosheia 12:13)

According to Abarbanel's reading, Hosheia is trying to depict the consequences of Yaakov's deceitful behavior. The result of tricking Yitzchak to receive Esav's blessing was that Yaakov was forced to flee. Instead of benefiting from his deceit he ended up penniless in a foreign country and was forced to tend sheep for years in order to get married.

With this allusion, Hosheia is responding to deceitful behavior from another angle: crime doesn't pay. Even when you think you've successfully pulled off the ruse, God sees your actions and repays you in kind.