

# Vayeitzeh

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## A forefather's vision; an eternal message.

This week's parsha is Vayeitzeh. As with all Parshas in the Torah, one cannot have pure clarity on the posukim without mipharshim, especially Rashi.

וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּעֵר שָׁבַע וַיֵּלֶךְ חֲרָנָה:  
וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם וַיֵּלֶן שָׁם כִּי־בָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וַיִּשָּׂא מֵאֲבְנֵי הַמָּקוֹם  
וַיִּשֶׂם מִרְאשֵׁיתוֹ וַיִּשְׁכַּב בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא:

Rashi explains on the first posukim that the Torah is repeating that Ya'akov went out to remind us where we left off last parsha where Yitzchak insisted that his sons don't marry women from Canaan. The second posuk בַּמָּקוֹם וַיִּפְגַּע which means and "he encountered in that place" Rashi explains that the Torah doesn't explicitly tell us where this place is, rather Rashi says its Har Moriah, and he learns this from a gemara in Pesachim, based on a connection to the word "Makom" which means place. In Bereishis 22:4 when Avraham goes to Har Moriah to offer Yitzchak as a sacrifice, it says, and he saw the place from a distance.

Rashi points out that the word וַיִּפְגַּע in its simple translation means "encountered" (and Rashi provides proof). But if we look up the root of the word (as Rashi shows) פָּגַע this also means a language of tefilla, meaning Ya'akov prayed, and this is a source of where we know that Ya'akov established the evening prayer (Maariv) (Berachos 26b).

Something important to point out from Rashi, was that the Torah doesn't say Ya'akov prayed explicitly, because in fact, as stated in the Gemara in Chullin, the Earth contracted for Ya'akov as he passed the mountain (Moriah) and hadn't stopped to pray. Before we delve into the importance of this, פָּגַע also means that "he chanced" or that he caused light upon. This is important allusion to the fact that Hashem

made Ya'akov stop/arrive back in this space for his vision of the ladder. Either way the Onkelos translation of "encountering" means that Ya'akov experienced something supernatural.

Also, Ya'akov may have been shocked that he had moved from one place to quickly arrive at another as Rashi pointed out, that the Earth contracted for him in order that Ya'akov be in precisely the location he needed to be at-Har Moriah.

Similarly, the wording is also how we know about the idea of "k'fitzas haderech" that for a mitzva the "way is made short" for the traveler.

Next the posuk says; וַיֵּלֶן שָׁם כִּי־בָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ, "he rested there, because the sun had set" Rashi explains on "the sun had set" that the sun had set suddenly and not in the normal time, so that he should spend the night there- Rashi explains this based on the Gemara in Chullin, that had the sun not set, Ya'akov may have continued his journey.

But this begs the question, why would Ya'akov leave if he seemingly experienced the miracle of "kfitzas haderech, and the time seemed to contract" why would he be in a rush to leave. The answer may be, the reason why the posuk uses the word וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם, meaning that Ya'akov was shocked to be in the place, that is he now was made to realize he had a purpose, and he recognized the place as being special.

The posuk subsequently uses the word בַּמָּקוֹם three times referencing (As I heard in a shiur, I don't remember the source) referencing the fact that this location will be the future spot of the Beis Hamikdash, and people will come up on the holidays 3 times a year. The use of the non-descript "place" is a reference to Hashem (Bereishis Rabba 68:9), the Aaron Hakodesh, and the Beis Hamikdash.

Then Ya'akov in the place of miracles (again time and place were contracted for him) take from the stones of the place, according to Chizkuni, he gathered stones that were from the

stones of the Alter that Yitzchak was brought on for the Akeida. Rashi explains famously that he gathered stones in order to protect himself from wild animals, but the stones all argued with one another in order to be the stone that supports the head of a Tzadik, so Hashem made them into one stone, which is why in posuk 12 it says he took stones (plurally) and later when he erected a monument (posuk 18) it says he took a stone.

In Zohar and Bereishis Rabba (68:11) it explains that Ya'akov actually gathered 12 stones, (which is reference to the 12 tribes that will be borne from Ya'akov, as well he formed them in such a way that it was 4 groups of 3 stones, which references how the tribes surrounded the Mishkan later in in the Jews travels out of the Egypt and in the desert.) A few other interesting points, perhaps, with the Zohar's explanation of 12 stones, this is why they fought, that no single tribe had more or less responsibility when building the Mishkan and Beis Hamikdash, that is everyone had to contribute equally to the project, and in that way, they form a solid rock and or foundation, this can also be seen (as stated by Tzvika Aviv who gave the shiur on Zohar and the parsha) that the word **מֵאֲבָנֵי** also means "Av" and "Ben" that fathers and sons i.e. Ya'akov and his future 12 tribes will build the Beis Hamikdash.

Furthermore, in a note on Chizkuni, the stones represent a complete "bed" which was a worry for Ya'akov who said to himself, Avraham had 2 wives one bore him Yitzchak the other Yishmael, similarly his father had 1 wife who bore Ya'akov and Eisav, therefore Ya'akov feared that from his offspring he may have wickedness, but this is clarified, in that the

stones represents him having a "complete bed" (and 4 wives) who would bear him righteous offspring.

I conjecture that Ya'akov knew exactly why he was stopping, setting up the rocks, and sitting down, and that was to prophecy on what will be for his future. Bereishis Rabba explains that Hashem set the sun, so as to speak to his beloved modestly. Finally, **וַיִּשְׁכַּב בְּמִקְוֵם הַהוּא** one can also read, that although Ya'akov actually went to sleep, we can also posit that he rested knowing that he was in the right place and was ready (based on his set up of the stones and other miracles) that he was able to rest from his encounter. (The literal sleep Rashi explains is the fact that he had not rested while learning at the Yeshiva of Ever for 14 years- based on Posuk 9 at the end of the Toldos)

Then Ya'akov vision takes place. **וַיַּחְלֵם וְהִנֵּה סֹלֶם מַצֵּב אֶרֶצָה וְרֹאשׁוֹ מֵגִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וְהִנֵּה מַלְאָכֵי אֱלֹהִים עֹלִים וְיֹרְדִים בּוֹ:**

And he dreamed, behold there was a ladder who was planted in the ground and the top was in the heavens. And the angels of Hashem were traversing up and down. Rashi explains that they were ascending first and descending second. The Angels that escorted Ya'akov out of Israel were being replaced by angels to escort him out of the land, (as the angels of Israel do not go out of Israel). According to Radak and Ibn Ezra the "ladder" is a reference to the later Sinai, upon which the Torah will be given (the numerical value of Sinai and Ladder are the same i.e. 130)<sup>1</sup>.

Once this first episode takes place the prophecy begins: **וְהִנֵּה יְהוָה נֹצֵב עָלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ**

<sup>1</sup> According to Ibn Ezra the reason a ladder is used (sans the spelling using a vov סולם vs. סלם) is because Ya'akov's prayers were answered on high and his salvation came from the heavens. The fact that the ladder represents Ya'akov's prayers and the number 130 could be a reason why David Hamelech in tehillim chose psalm 130 to be a cry from the depths (Shir Ha'malos Mimakim K'rasich Hashem) of our heart and soul. Which much like a ladder helps a person trapped in a pit come out, so

too Ya'akov's prayers were heard on high. Ramban explains this that Hashem Himself in His glory will give a great promise and assurance to Ya'akov, and it won't be by the hand of an Angel, which is probably why the posuk in Shemos when the Jews exited Egypt in the 10<sup>th</sup> plague it says there that the salvation did not come from the hand of an angel, rather from Hashem Himself. There is continuity in all the prophecies about the Jews salvation, and redemption.

אברהם אביך ואלהי יצחק הארץ אשר אתה שכב עליה לך  
אתננה ולרעה:

And behold, Hashem was standing over him, and Hashem said, I am Hashem the God of Avraham your father, and the God of Yitzchak. The land on which you rest, I will give to you and your offspring. The reason why Avraham is called “your father” to tell us that grandchildren are like children (Chizkuni), Avraham had already passed away, while Yitzchak was still alive (and therefore still Ya’akov’s father). As well, Yitzchak is exalted here (even though he is still alive because his vision was gone Rashi says, therefore it was as if he was no longer alive) because his evil inclination had left him, i.e., Yitzchak was a full-fledged Tzadik.

יצחק הארץ אשר אתה שכב עליה לך אתננה ולרעה in this part of the prophecy Hashem tells Ya’akov that the land, and not just the part Ya’akov was sleeping on would be conquered by his offspring. There is a halachik allusion from the word Makom, which is that the land will be conquered like 4 amos of a person- because 4 amos is a person’s place (mekomo)- as learned in Eruvin.

Then Hashem promises that Ya’akov’s offspring will burst forth. והיה זרעך כעפר הארץ. ופרצת גמה וקדמה וצפנה וגגבה ונברכו בך כל משפחות האדמה ויברך:

Then Hashem offers reassurance to Ya’akov for his protection: והנה אנכי עמך ושמרתיך בכל אשר תלך והשבתיך אל האדמה הנאת בי לא אעזבך עד אשר אם-עשיתי את אשר-דברתי לך:

Rashi over the next few verses explains us that verses relating to this prophecy are similar to Avraham’s, and the punctuation chosen shows this.

ויקח יעקב משנתו ויאמר אכלי יש יהיה במקום הזה ואנכי לא ידעתי:

Ya’akov’s sudden shock, and arousal from his sleep can also be explained by Rashi, in that Ya’akov’s place was not 100% certain (he may have fallen asleep in a different location, and his vision showed him a compression of the land of Israel i.e. ואנכי לא ידעתי). Furthermore,

Rashi elucidates that the ladder’s base and head were in two different spots, and the centre point was at Har Moriah (where Ya’akov presumably was based on the explanation that the stones he used were from Avraham and Yitzchak’s alter). Also, his sudden arousal was a realization that he had prophesied, as the next posuk tells us, at this point Ya’akov now woke up.

וישכם יעקב בבקר ויקח את-האבן אשר-שם מראש-הי וישם אתה מצבה ויצק שמן על-ראשה:

Using the “stone” that was under his head, (because they had formed into one).

Now the interesting conclusion: ויזר יעקב גדר

לאמר אם-יהיה אלהים עמדי ושמרני בדרך הזה אשר אנכי הולך ונתת לי לחם לאכל ובגד ללבוש:

Ya’akov was just told of his vision, then he swore conditionally, that if Hashem will be with him, then Ya’akov will return etc. There are two (among other) ways of interpreting this. The first way is that Ya’akov is accepting what is to be of him, which is that the burden of the fulfillment of the promise is on Ya’akov. The second interpretation is that Ya’akov beseeches Hashem to keep “His end of the deal”. Meaning much like Rivka in the last parsha realized that if she hadn’t taken control of the prophecy of the young will rule the old, by pushing Ya’akov to take the blessings from Yitzchak first, then it is possible an alternative history would have played out. Therefore, Ya’akov says, אם-יהיה אלהים עמדי, and Rashi explains, that Hashem will keep the promises to be with me, that is to ensure that the line of Ya’akov triumphs.

This isn’t necessarily a lack of confidence or belief by Ya’akov, rather it is a father’s reassurance, that his children and future, long after he is gone, is still on the right path. Ya’akov would do his part to fulfill his “end” of the bargain, but what of his children?

Therefore, Hashem tells Ya’akov and reassures him of this, that the line will not be broken, and the promises of the building of the Beis Hamikdash, and beyond that the ultimate redemption will take place.

Good Shabbos!