

# NO ROOM TO RATIONALIZE WHEN THE EVALUATION IS JUSTICE



## YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Vayeitzei

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

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**Why Like the Dust of the Earth?**

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### Vaporizing the Untenable to Assure the Perpetuity of Existence

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1. Yaakov leaves Beersheva to go to Charan.
2. Chazal: When a devoutly righteous person leaves a location, its splendor & beauty depart with him.
3. This is extrapolated from the words "Yaakov left Beersheva".
4. Although Yitzchok and Rivka remained, his absence made its mark.
5. He fathered the twelve tribes; his absence was more greatly felt.
6. Was it that the 12 tribes were only a consequence of Yaakov's dimension?
7. Yaakov: "Man of The Tent (of Torah)"; was a personification of the Torah.
8. Midrash: Avraham was thrown into the fiery kiln: the heavenly angels objected to G-d's saving him.
9. "A man whose descendants are going to be evil how do you save him?"
10. G-d: He will have a grandson Yaakov in whose merit he will be saved.
11. Prophets: The house of Yaakov redeemed Avraham.
12. Gemara: "I've created an evil inclination; I've created Torah as its antidote."
13. Midrash: As long as the voice is the voice of Yaakov, the hands can not be the hands of Esav.
14. The counterbalance to Esav is Yaakov.
15. Yaakov will counter all of Avraham's evil descendants (Yishmael, Edom).
16. His absence was felt there because only he could counter the evil of Esav.

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**NO ROOM  
TO RATIONALIZE  
WHEN THE  
EVALUATION  
IS JUSTICE**



### **Yaakov's Objective as a Patriarch**

*Torah:* When Yaakov our Patriarch saw Rachel, "Then Yaakov kissed Rachel; and he raised his voice and wept."

*Rashi citing Chazal:* The reason Yaakov wept was because he saw through his Divine Vision that Rachel would not be buried with him (in the Tomb of Machpelah). Another explanation cited by Rashi is that Yaakov wept because he came to Rachel, empty-handed - without any gifts.

*Midrash:* "Yaakov had said, 'Eliezer the servant of my grandfather (Avraham) came with a nose ring, bracelets, and delicacies in his hand as gifts for Rivka and I did not.' It is because Yaakov was pursued by Elifaz (the son of Esav), who wished to kill him in order to fulfill the dictate of his father, that he had to relinquish all of his wealth." Why did Yaakov weep regarding his inability to give gifts to Rachel, our Matriarch?

Regarding the nose ring and bracelets that were given by Eliezer to Rivka, our Matriarch, the *Torah* identifies

the weight of each of the pieces of jewelry. The *Torah* identifies the weight of the nose ring as "Bekka."

*Rashi citing Chazal:* The weight of the nose ring "Bekka" is an allusion to the half-silver coin (*machtzis haShekel*) which would be given in the future by the Jewish people for the sake of purchasing of communal offerings. (The communal offerings atoned for the Jewish people). The two bracelets are identified by the *Torah* as "two bracelets, their weight ten in gold." This alludes to the Ten Commandments that were inscribed on Two Tablets that were attached and of identical dimension. The act of putting these ornaments upon Rivka, our Matriarch, established and secured these two elements on behalf of the future spirituality of the Jewish people.

Yaakov, our Patriarch, who fathered the twelve tribes understood that he must establish and secure a foundation that would guarantee the greatest potential for the spiritual advancement of the Jewish people.

Thus, when he came upon *Rachel*, who was destined to be his primary Matriarch, he understood because of his loss of wealth that he was not able to establish and reinforce what *Eliezer* had set into motion through the gifts of jewelry that were given to *Rivka*, our Matriarch. *Yaakov* wept because he had understood that the spiritual future of the Jewish people was compromised because he was not able to infuse *Rachel* with these necessary elements. *Yaakov* wept when he saw that *Rachel* would not be buried with him.

*Torah*: *Rachel* had given her conjugal night with *Yaakov* to her sister *Leah* in return for the mandrakes that *Leah's* son had brought.

*Chazal*: Because *Rachel* did not sufficiently value being with *Yaakov* that night, she forfeited her right to be buried with him. Thus, *Yaakov* wept when he saw that *Rachel* would not be buried with him because he understood that she did not merit to be with him in death because she possessed a spiritual deficiency. *Yaakov's* pain emanated from the fact that he had understood that if the Matriarch would not be sufficiently secure in her spirituality, it would manifest itself as a deficiency in the Jewish people. *Yaakov's* focus and objective was to create for the Jewish people the most secure foundation to allow them to have the greatest potential for spiritual growth.

*Torah*: *Leah* sensed in her husband *Yaakov* that he despised her. How is it possible that *Yaakov*, the most special of the Patriarchs should see in *Leah* a level of negativity that would cause her to be despised? Regardless of *Yaakov's* understanding that his marriage to *Leah* was preordained by G-d, he nevertheless was displeased with her because she was agreeable to participate in the deceit of her father.

*Lavan* is quantified by the *Torah* as the master of deception. *Yaakov* is identified by the *Torah* as, "The man who dwells in the tent (of *Torah*)." Because *Yaakov* was synonymous with the *Torah*, which embodies Truth, he could not tolerate anything that was contrary to his essence. This was especially true when it had relevance to the future spiritual development of the Jewish people.

Verse: "Give truth to *Yaakov* (*Teetain emmes L'Yaakov*)". If the Matriarch, who would be the mother of the tribes of Israel, would be deficient in the characteristic of Truth, it would be detrimental to the Jewish people. Since *Leah* entered into the marriage under false pretenses, *Yaakov* saw her in a negative light. In truth,

*Leah* was coerced by her father *Lavan* to participate in the deception. However, *Yaakov* initially did not fully understand her predicament. G-d wanted to dispel from *Yaakov* this negative understanding of *Leah*. He therefore caused her to conceive despite her initial difficulty. She merited to be the mother of six of the twelve tribes of Israel. This confirmed her as being a truly worthy Matriarch.

## **Yaakov, the Most Special of the Patriarchs**

*Torah*: "Yaakov departed *Beersheva* and went toward *Charan*. He encountered the place (Mt. Moria) and spent the night there...he took from the stones of the place which he arranged around his head, and lay down in that place... and he dreamt...*Yaakov* arose early in the morning and took the stone that he had placed around his head..."

*Rashi* citing the *Gemara* in Tractate *Chulin*: The stones that *Yaakov* had placed under his head began to quarrel amongst themselves- each one saying "allow the *tzaddik* to place his head upon me." Because of *Yaakov's* unique spiritual dimension, existence, that was created for the sake of G-d's Glory, the stones wanted to fulfill their purpose by accommodating the "devoutly righteous" who facilitate the purpose of existence. In order to accommodate each stone's willingness to be associated with the *tzaddik*, G-d melded them into one stone.

*Midrash (Yalkut)*: *Yaakov* had initially taken twelve stones in order to determine whether he was going to be the Patriarch who would father the twelve tribes of Israel. There was a tradition among the Patriarchs that the one who would be qualified to father the tribes of Israel would have twelve sons. *Yaakov* understood that if the stones were to be fused together into one stone, it would indicate that he was sufficiently pure to establish the twelve tribes. The symbolism of the twelve stones being fused into one is to confirm that although each of the twelve tribes had its own unique characteristic, together they comprise the Jewish people.

*Midrash (Tanchuma)* citing the opinion of *Raish Lakish* regarding the incident of the stones: "The *Torah* states, 'G-d stood above him (*Yaakov*)...' *Yaakov* had seen a ladder in his prophetic dream that extended up into the heavens. He had seen angels ascending and descending with G-d being above the ladder.

When the stones had sensed the Divine Presence at the location where *Yaakov* was lying, they melted and became one stone.” Every one of the Patriarchs was a prophet who received a communication from G-d based on his own dimension of spirituality.

*Rambam*: The communication that is received by the prophet is transmitted to him through an angel. These angels are referred to as “*ishim* (men).” Although they are spiritual beings, because they are the ones who bring the communication to the human being, who is classified as “*ishe* (man)” they are therefore referred to as “*ishim*.” However, because of *Yaakov*’s unique level of spirituality, he did not receive the communication through an angel, but rather, it was the Divine Presence Itself.

When the stones were exposed to the awesome Presence of G-d, they melted into one. This consequence was an indication of *Yaakov*’s advanced level as a Patriarch. The Presence of G-d upon *Yaakov* was similar to that of the Divine Presence at Sinai. When *Yaakov* had seen the stones fused together, it allowed him to understand the value of his own *Torah* study. The intensity of the experience was similar to that which would take place at Sinai. Thus, it was a confirmation that he will be the father of the tribes of Israel.

*Gemara*: The Ark in the Temple was located in the portion of *Binyamin*.

*Gemara* in Tractate *Megillah*: *Binyamin* merited to be the host of the Divine Presence because it was something that he had desired more than his brothers.

*Midrash (Yalkut)*: It was because when *Yaakov* was aged, he would lean on the shoulder of *Binyamin* when he would walk. In the merit of this accommodation to his father, he merited to be the host of the Divine Presence/Holy Ark. Because of *Yaakov*’s dimension of being, G-d’s Presence was continuously upon him. Consequently, when *Binyamin* supported his father and attended to his needs, it was the equivalent of accommodating the Divine Presence. Thus, he merited being the host of the Holy Ark.

## Setting the Destiny of the Jewish People in Motion

*Torah*: *Yaakov* went toward *Charan* and he had encountered “the place.”

*Chazal*: This was the location of the Temple Mount/ Mt. Moriah. There he fell asleep and experienced a prophecy. As the verse states, “(he) spent the night there because the sun had set...”

*Midrash*: “Our Rabbis of blessed memory tell us that the sun set suddenly because G-d had extinguished it. He caused that the sun should set prematurely so that He could communicate with *Yaakov* in a concealed/private setting. This is analogous to an intimate friend of the king who comes on occasion to visit him. When the intimate friend arrives at the palace, the king gives an order to extinguish all of the lamps so that he could converse with his special friend in a private and concealed manner.

“G-d wanted to create a similar setting when he communicated with *Yaakov* on the Temple Mount.” Why did G-d need to cause the sun to set prematurely in order for *Yaakov* to receive his prophetic communication? A prophet can receive a communication from G-d at any time of the day or night.

*Gemara* in Tractate *Zevachim*: When G-d was giving the *Torah* at Sinai to the Jewish people, the earth quaked so violently that the nations of the world believed that the world was coming to an end. They came to *Bilaam*, their prophet, with their concern. They said to him, “The world is coming to an end.” *Bilaam* responded, “Do you not realize that the world is not being destroyed. After the Great Flood G-d had made a covenant with existence that He would not destroy it.” They replied, “G-d only promised not to destroy the world with water. Perhaps it is being destroyed by fire.”

*Bilaam* said to them, “You fools! Do you not realize that G-d is giving His strength/power to the Jewish people (which is the *Torah*). It is because of this monumental moment that the world is quaking.” To this the nations of the world responded, “G-d should bless His people with *Shalom*” and returned to their evil ways. We see from this dialogue that when G-d gave the *Torah* to the Jewish people at Sinai, it was an event that was not concealed from the world. Although G-d had communicated openly with the Jewish people at Sinai, they nevertheless succumbed to the sin of the Golden Calf.

*Midrash*: The reason the Jewish people were vulnerable to idolatry was from the evil eye that they had received from the nations of the world. If the *Torah* would have

been given in a private setting, this would have not come about. Thus, the public aspect of the Sinai event resulted in tragedy. However, after Sinai, G-d's intimate relationship with the Jewish people was limited to a concealed setting. As G-d had requested of the Jewish people after the sin of the Golden Calf, "Make for Me a dwelling place so that I may dwell amongst you..." The Divine Presence would be present in the Holy of Holies.

*Gemara* in Tractate *Shabbos*: At Sinai, the Jewish people were compelled to accept the *Torah*. G-d held the mountain over them, giving them an ultimatum, "either you accept the *Torah* or you will be buried under the mountain." The acceptance of *Torah* at Sinai was not considered of qualitative nature because it came about under duress. It was not until *Purim* that the Jewish people reaffirmed and accepted upon themselves the *Torah* out of love. This was considered to be the ultimate level of acceptance.

It is interesting to note that the Hand of G-d that brought about the miracle of *Purim* was cloaked and concealed within nature. It was something that was hidden from the eyes of the world. It was only when the Jewish people realized G-d's special love for them-causing events to change at the last moment, not allowing them to be annihilated, that they accepted and reaffirmed their commitment to G-d and His *Torah*. *Yaakov*, was the most special of the Patriarchs, who embodied and personified the *Torah*. As the verse refers to him as "the perfect man who dwelt in the tent (of *Torah*)."

*Chazal*: There is a principle – "The actions/experiences of the Patriarchs are a sign for the children." Meaning, the actions of the Patriarchs set in motion and establish future events that the Jewish people will experience. In order to establish the necessary setting and circumstance that would bring about the affirmation of *Torah* on the most advanced level it had to begin with G-d communicating with *Yaakov* in a private/concealed setting. This was similar to the *Purim* event, which was a concealed setting – "the Hand of G-d cloaked in nature."

## The Awesome Protection of Torah

*Torah*: After *Yaakov* received the blessings from his father *Yitzchak*, he was advised by his mother *Rivka* to flee because his brother *Esav* was plotting to kill him.

She had told him to go *Lavan* her brother for a "short stay" so that the anger of *Esav* should dissipate.

*Gemara* in Tractate *Megillah*: Before departing to *Charan*, the community of *Lavan*, *Yaakov* spent fourteen years studying in the *Yeshiva* of *Shem* and *Aiver*. *Yaakov* is quantified by the *Torah* as a man who studied *Torah* his entire life, as it states in the verse "the perfect man who dwelt in the tent (of *Torah*)."

When *Yaakov* had received the blessings from his father, he was sixty-three years old. If had spent another 14 years studying *Torah*, before he departed to *Charan* it would mean that he was 77 years old when he arrived at the home of *Lavan*. Since he had dedicated his life to the study of *Torah* until the age of 63, what was the additional value of studying for another 14 years in the *Yeshiva* of *Shem* and *Aiver*?

*Yaakov*, as his father *Yitzchak* before him, had not left the boundaries of the Land of Israel. The spiritual environment of the Land is equated by the *Midrash* to the holiness of the Sanctuary in the Temple. *Yitzchak*, "the unblemished burnt offering" was not permitted to leave the Land of Israel because it would have been the equivalent of taking a sacrifice outside of the confines of the Holy Sanctuary.

Therefore, despite the famine, G-d had told *Yitzchak* that he must remain in the Land. *Yaakov* had never believed that he would need to leave Canaan. He assumed that all the spiritual encounters that he would need to confront throughout his lifetime would be based on his surroundings, which was the Land of Canaan. All the trials and tribulations that exist outside of the Land of Canaan, because of the lack of G-d's Presence, are not the same.

*Gemara* at the end of Tractate *Kesubos*: "One who lives outside of the Land (of Israel) it is as though he has no G-d." Meaning, G-d's relationship and providence with the Land of Israel is different than any other location in the world. It is more direct and intimate. Therefore, all of the *Torah* that he had studied until this point was to deal with all the spiritual issues and challenges that exist within the Land.

However, when he was confronted with the need to flee to *Charan*, a community that personified evil, *Yaakov* understood that he would have to study other aspects of *Torah* that would enable him to be resilient

to those negative influences. *Aiver* had been mentored by his father *Shem*, the son of *Noach*, who appreciated and understood all levels of evil of existence. *Aiver* had understood how to contend with the depravities of mankind, allowing him to retain his status as a "tzaddik." *Yaakov* understood that he needed that orientation in order to survive the environment of *Lavan's* household and community to remain spiritually intact and unscathed. When *Rivka* told *Yaakov* to flee, she had told him to go for a "short stay." Meaning, that soon after he arrived to *Charan*, he should return home. However, he violated the wishes of his mother and remained away for 36 years.

*Chazal*: *Yosef*, the most beloved son of *Yaakov*, was denied to him for 22 years (he believed that *Yosef* had died), because he had denied his parents 22 years of honoring them. If *Yaakov* was meant to return soon after he had arrived in *Charan*, he should have been punished for the entire period that he denied his parents his presence. Why was he only punished for 22 years – it should have been for 36 years? When *Yaakov* left his parent's home, his father had entrusted him with great wealth. The wealth was necessary to negotiate with *Lavan* for the hand of his daughters in marriage.

*Midrash*: *Yaakov* was impoverished as a result of a confrontation with *Elifaz*, the son of *Esav*. *Elifaz* had come upon *Yaakov* to take his life through the instruction of his father, *Esav*. *Yaakov* had relinquished all of his wealth to *Elifaz* so that he should not be killed. *Yaakov* said to him, "Based on the principle that you had learned from your grandfather, *Yitzchak*, 'one who is impoverished is considered as if he is dead,' by taking my wealth and leaving me destitute you have conformed to your father's wishes." Consequently, *Yaakov's* sole possession was the clothing on his back and his walking staff, as it states, "With this walking staff, I have crossed the Jordan." Because of his state of impoverishment, *Yaakov* needed be away from his parent's home for 22 years.

*Torah*: If one is threatened with his life by an attacker, one is permitted to kill him. *Yaakov* had every right to kill *Elifaz* and not forfeit his wealth. Had he done so, he would have been able to negotiate with *Lavan* for his daughters *Rachel* and *Leah* and not need be delayed for 22 years. However, *Yaakov* chose not to kill *Elifaz* so that he should not diminish his own spiritual standing. He understood that although he was permitted to kill in this circumstance, the consequence of that action

would have impacted negatively on the future of the Jewish people.

Being chosen to be the Patriarch of the twelve tribes of Israel, *Yaakov* understood that whatever level of diminishment of spirituality that would exist within himself would ultimately express itself as a limitation of spirituality of his children. Therefore, he chose to part with his wealth and not kill *Elifaz*. It was because of the decision that *Yaakov* was punished for denying his parents of his presence for 22 years. Although he had remained in the *Yeshiva* of *Shem* and *Aiver* for 14 years, he did not need to be atoned for that period of time.

*Chazal*: It was in the merit of his *Torah* study that he was not punished for denying his parents the *mitzvah* of honoring them. However, the additional 22 years that he was not with his parents, although they were integral to the future spiritual development of the Jewish people, he was punished because those 22 years were unrelated to his *Torah* study.

## **Appreciating the Innate Characteristic of Silence**

*Torah*: *Rachel*, the wife of *Yaakov*, initially was barren. The *Torah* states, "G-d remembered *Rachel*..." and subsequently she was able to conceive.

*Midrash*: "There was no one who was more pleasant and beautiful than *Rachel*. It was because of this unique pleasantness that *Yaakov* wanted to marry her. During their seven-year engagement period, *Yaakov* sent many gifts to *Rachel*; however, *Lavan* her father, gave the gifts to *Leah* her sister. *Rachel* remained silent.

*Reb Shimon Ben Gamliel*: 'All of my days I have developed in the company of great *Torah* sages and I have not found a greater quality than silence.' *Rachel* took hold of this character trait. Because she had done so, her descendants also assumed this characteristic. She had seen the gifts that were meant for her in the hands of her sister *Leah*, but she remained silent.

The stone in the breastplate of the High Priest that represented the Tribe of *Binyamin*, the younger son of *Rachel*, was called 'yishpei.' What is the meaning of 'yishpei?' Although *Binyamin* was aware of the sale of his brother *Yosef* into slavery, he did not share this with his father *Yaakov*. 'Yishpei' is an contraction for 'yesh

*peh'* which means, 'he has a mouth.'" *Binyamin* had the ability to share the information with his father, yet he remained silent.'...Queen *Esther*, who descended from *Rachel* also possessed the characteristic of silence. It was because of her silence that *Rachel* merited to have a son.

*Midrash*: "Why did *Rachel* remain silent? *Rachel* had thought, 'If I should inform *Yaakov* that my father *Lavan* had given the gifts that were meant for me to my sister *Leah*, *Yaakov* would have then entered into a dispute with my father. Consequently he would deny me *Yaakov* as a husband. Although I have a claim, I shall remain silent so that I shall not be distanced from this special *tzaddik*, *Yaakov*.'"

*Rachel*, despite the overwhelming pain and anguish that she was experiencing as a result of the gifts that were denied to her, chose to endure, so that she could ultimately be attached to *Yaakov* the *tzaddik*. *Rachel's* appreciation and understanding of the dimension of *Yaakov's* spirituality, even experiencing the greatest hardship was worthwhile in order to become his wife. One could say that it was simply wise and calculating of *Rachel* to remain silent, understanding the possible negative consequence of her claim.

*Chazal*: Nevertheless, it was only because she possessed the quality of silence that she was able to do so. It was not due to a logical calculation of events, but rather it was based on an attribute, which she possessed within her. Anyone else would not have been able to restrain themselves despite the consequence of speaking.

*Mishna* in *Pirkei Avos* (*Ethics of Our Fathers*) states "Who is the wise person? It is the one who sees the consequences of his actions." The *Mishna* does not state that the wise person is the one who "understands" the consequences of his actions. Rather, it uses the expression "sees." This is because "seeing" is a reality that one

experiences, whereas "understanding" is an intellectual appreciation. The wise person sees and feels the consequences of his actions as a concrete reality.

However, if one's appreciation of a situation is based on his intellectual understanding alone, then the truth could easily become obscured due to a conflict of interest. However, the wise person, because he "sees," is not subject to a conflict of interest. Thus allowing truth not be distorted. *Rachel* could have rationalized, because of her conflict of interest, that it would be wise to share what had happened with *Yaakov*. However, because her characteristic of silence was the equivalent of "seeing", she was able to rise above any conflict of interest and act accordingly. This was the level of clarity that *Rachel* possessed.

*Binyamin*, the son of *Rachel*, although he knew that his brother *Yosef* was sold into slavery, he did not share that information with his father *Yaakov*. If *Yaakov* had been told that his sons had sold *Yosef* into slavery, he would have cursed them. This would have put the future of the Jewish people into jeopardy. Therefore, regardless of his pain, *Binyamin* remained silent.

*Esther* was offered half of the kingdom by her husband, the Persian Emperor, *Achashverosh*. He had said to her "If you reveal your lineage and pedigree to me, I will give you half of my kingdom." Despite the fact that his kingdom encompassed the entire world, *Esther* remained silent. By remaining silent as she was instructed by *Mordechai* (the leader of the Jewish people), the events of *Purim* were able to unfold.

