

Parashat Vayetzei / פרשת ויצא

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In the midst of blessing we still have trials!

This Weeks Reading List:

Torah: Genesis 28:10-32:3

Haftarah: Hosea 12:13-14:10

B'rit HaChadashah: John 1:19-51

In Parashat Vayetzei we find God giving Ya'akov His hitgalut (revelation) at Beit-El (House of God). What I find interesting is if we think about it, when God makes a promise we can expect and be assured that He will keep His promise. However, when Ya'akov receives the promise of (i) blessing upon Ya'akov and the works of his hand, (ii) on his offspring, and (iii) that God will never leave nor forsake him, why does Ya'akov vow to worship God only "IF" and "WHEN" God fulfills His promise to return him to the Promised Land? (*Genesis 28:20-22*)

Genesis 28:10-21

28:10 And Ya'akov went out from Beer-Sheva, and went toward Charan. 28:11 And he reached a certain place, and tarried there, because the shemesh was set; and he took of the avanim of that place, and put them for his pillow, and lay down in that place to sleep. 28:12 And he had a chalom, and hinei a sullam (ladder, stairway) set up on the ground, and the top of it reached to Shomayim: and hinei the malachim of Elohim ascending and descending on it. 28:13 And, hinei, Hashem stood above it, and said, I am Hashem Elohei Avraham thy av, and Elohei Yitzchak; ha'aretz whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy zera; 28:14 And thy zera shall be as the dust of ha'aretz, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in thee and in thy zera shall kol hamishpochot haadamah be blessed. 28:15 And, hinei, I am with thee, and will be shomer over thee in all places where thou goest, and will bring thee back into haadamah hazot; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have promised thee. 28:16 And Ya'akov awoke out of his sleep, and he said, Surely Hashem is in this place! And I had no da'as of it. 28:17 And he was afraid, and said, How nora (awesome) is this place! This is none other than the Beis Elohim, and this is the Sha'ar HaShomayim. 28:18 And Ya'akov rose up early in the boker, and took haeven (the stone) that he had put for his pillow, and set it up for a matzevah (pillar), and poured shemen upon the top of it. 28:19 And he called the shem of that place Beit-El; but the shem of that ir was called Luz at the first. 28:20 And Ya'akov vowed a neder (vow), saying, If Elohim will be with me, and will be shomer over me in this derech (way, journey) that I go, and will

give me lechem to eat, and beged (clothes) to put on, 28:21 So that I return to bais avi in shalom; then shall Hashem be for me Elohim (my G-d). (OJB)

At the beginning of this week's parsha, it appears this is the very first time God has appeared to Ya'akov giving him a promise that is very similar to what God promised to his father Yitzchak and grandfather Avraham. Ya'akov's reaction to the promise however is quite different than his father and grandfather's response. In the previous parsha, Parashat Toldot, Ya'akov may have a reason for doubting the promise and for making the conditional vow.

Reasons for doubting

1. The day before his leaving, Yitzchak had planned to give the primary blessing to his older brother Esav. (*Genesis 27:1-4*)
2. Ya'akov's parents had just sent him away from Eretz Canaan to flee from Esav and to look for a wife (*Genesis 27:43-28:2*)
3. Ya'akov's life of deceit and trickery.
4. If Ya'akov is truly the son of choice, why would he not be forbidden by God to leave Eretz Canaan just like his father Yitzchak was stopped from leaving.
5. When Yishmael and the children of Ketura were rejected by God from the blessing process, they were sent away (*Genesis 25:6*). Now, Ya'akov is being sent away (*Genesis 29:1*) while Esav his brother remains in Eretz Canaan.

Ultimately Ya'akov realizes that God is the one to make the final decision upon the blessing that He has for him. After waking from his dream, Ya'akov realizes the place as the Beit-El (the House of God) and says this is the gate of heaven (*Genesis 28:16-17*). Ya'akov then proceeds to build a matzeyva (pillar) and pour oil on top of the pillar to commemorate the significance of the location. The question is however, why did Ya'akov build a pillar? Ya'akov is acting differently than his father, and grandfather who when they received the blessing from God erected a mizbeyach (altar) (*see Genesis 12:7, 26:24-25*) instead of a matzeyva (pillar). The reason is because of the statement he makes in *Genesis 28:20-22*, saying "then this stone which I have set up as a matzeyva will be a Beit-Elohim (a house of God) and from all that you give me I will set aside one-tenth." First of all, since Ya'akov was fleeing his brother Esav, he had nothing with which to make a sacrifice with upon an altar. Second, the pillar is simply what he had used in his vow. Note also how Ya'akov is predicting the nature of the future significance of the site where the Beit-El (house of God) will be located.

Having been blessed by God, and receiving God's hitgalut (revelation) Ya'akov proceeds to his grandfather's land (Rivka's dad Lavan) penniless. In the rest of the parsha, we find how God blesses Ya'akov, the birth of 11 children and God increasing Ya'akov's material wealth. Eventually, Lavan begins to resent the increasing material wealth of Ya'akov. It is at this time while Ya'akov is on his derech (way, route, path, road) the angels of God meet Ya'akov and I believe this is God's way of assuring Ya'akov that it is time for him to return to Eretz Yisrael.

Genesis 32:1-2

32:1 And Ya'akov went on his derech, and the malachim of Elohim met him. 32:2 And when Ya'akov saw them, he said, This is Mahaneh Elohim; and he called the shem of that makom (place) Machanayim. (OJB)

בראשית 32:1-3

וַיִּשָׁם לָבֶן בַּבֶּקֶר וַיִּנְשָׁק לְבָנָיו וּלְכַנּוֹתָיו וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָהֶם וַיֵּלֶךְ לִב
וַיָּשָׁב לָבֶן לְמַקְמוֹ: וַיַּעֲקֹב הַלֵּךְ לְדַרְכּוֹ וַיִּפְגְּעוּ בוֹ מַלְאֲכֵי
אֱלֹהִים: וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב בְּאִשְׁרָאֵל מַחֲנֵה אֱלֹהִים זֶה וַיִּקְרָא
שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא מַחֲנֵיִם:

Here God has shown Ya'akov his angelic camp, host, or army. Rashi comments that these messengers/angels of God are here to escort Ya'akov to Eretz Yisrael. I believe that this was a way to (i) show Ya'akov that it is time to return to Eretz, and (ii) that He (God) is with him along with his angelic host.

Rashi's Commentary

ויפדעו בו מלאכי אלהים מלאכים של ארץ ישראל באו לקראתו ללוותו לארץ

And angels of God encountered him, angels of the land of Israel came toward him to escort him to the land. (Tanchuma, Vayishlach 3)

What can we take away from this week's parsha?

In conclusion, Ya'akov was aware of God's existence as well as the various other promises He had made to his father and grandfather. God appeared to Ya'akov, identified Himself in a manner that was both meaningful and assuring that He is with him informing Ya'akov that he is the chosen son. In the midst of such great revelation, Ya'akov still doubts. There is something to notice however, in the midst of these great blessings, Ya'akov still had difficulty in life which raises a few questions. Does God want only the best for us and our lives? The answer to that question is a resounding "YES" however, if God wants only the best for our lives, why do we have so many problems? I mean, if God wants only the best for me or for you, why can't our lives be perfect? Looking at the great blessing God gave to Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov, we still find their lives were something less than perfect.

I believe the answer to this question can be found elsewhere in the Torah. I would like to look at a few verses from the Torah, specifically, Deuteronomy chapter 8.

דברים 8:2

2 לְאַבְתֵיכֶם: וְזָכַרְתָּ אֶת־כָּל־הַדְּרֹךְ אֲשֶׁר הִלִּיכְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
וְהָ אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בַּמִּדְבָּר לְמַעַן עֲנֹתְךָ לְנַסְתֶּךָ לְדַעַת אֶת־אֲשֶׁר
3 בְּלִבְּךָ הִתְשַׁמֵּר מִצְוֹתוֹ אִם־לֹא: וַיַּעֲנֵךְ וַיִּרְעַבְךָ וַיֹּאכַלְךָ

Deuteronomy 8:2 You are to remember everything of the way in which ADONAI led you these forty years in the desert, humbling and testing you in order to know what was in your heart - whether you would obey his mitzvot or not. (CJB)

דברים 8:10

10 אֲשֶׁר אֲכַנֶּיָּה בְּרִזָּל וּמִהֲרַרְיָה תִּחְצַב נְחֹשֶׁת: וְאָכַלְתָּ וּשְׂבַעְתָּ
וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל־הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ:

Deuteronomy 8:10 So you will eat and be satisfied, and you will bless ADONAI your God for the good land he has given you. (CJB)

דברים 8:14

14 יִרְבֶּה־לְךָ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר־לְךָ יִרְבֶּה: וְרָם לִבְּךָ וּשְׁכַחְתָּ אֶת־יְהוָה
15 אֱלֹהֶיךָ הַמּוֹצִיאֲךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים: הַמּוֹלִיכְךָ

Deuteronomy 8:14 you will become proud-hearted. Forgetting ADONAI your God - who brought you out of the land of Egypt, where you lived as slaves; (CJB)

According to Deuteronomy chapter 8, God is looking at the motives of our heart. Therefore, it is the heart where God is ultimately working. Here the Lord is showing us that when we are blessed, eat, and are satisfied, that we will bless the Lord for all that he has done for us. However, watch out because after a while, the heart will rise up and become proud, forgetting the Lord and all he has done. Don't forget to remember what God is/has done in your heart.

In our lives doubt is a serious problem we all face and have to deal with on a daily basis. Though we may not have such dramatic encounters with God for certainty God is working in all of our lives to draw us nearer to Him. It is sometimes difficult to understand why God does not instantly give us perfect lives. It is also true that God allows us to go through some horrible things. As a matter of fact, God allows some of these issues in our lives in order to strengthen our faith and dependence upon God. I

believe this is what is being taught in Deuteronomy chapter 8. God is perfecting us just like he was perfecting Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov. The trials we go through can be used to teach us more about God's character as we continue to surrender our lives to Him. Just as God has said to Ya'akov "I will always be with you" be assured God will never leave you nor forsake you (*Hebrews 13:5*) and He will never allow something to pass through your life that you and He cannot handle together.

Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:

Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
"Yeshua" King Messiah for ever and ever