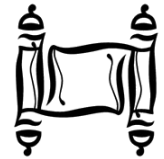




Shabbat Table Talk Page



General Questions:

- What's the *name* of this week's Torah reading? (Vayetzei / וַיֵּצֵא)
- What does the Hebrew name *mean*? ("and he went out," from יָצָא, "go out")
- Which chapters of the Torah are included in the reading? (Gen. 28:1-32:2)
- What are some of the main events? (Jacob flees to Charan; on the way he dreams of the ladder to heaven; he then meets Rachel and her father Lavan; he marries both Leah/Rachel and has children; after 20 years of labor, he flees for his homeland; on the way back, he encounters angels)

Specific Questions:

- Why did Jacob (Yaakov) leave Beersheba? (to escape from the wrath of his brother Esau)
- Why was Yaakov sent to Charan? (because his mother's brother Lavan lived there)
- On the way to Charan, Yaakov stopped "at *the place*" (בְּמָקוֹם). What happened there? (He had a dream (חֲלוֹם) of a ladder (סֻלָּם) to heaven with angels going up and down on it. The LORD stood above it and extended the Abrahamic oath of blessing to him.)
- When Yaakov awoke from the dream, what did he say? (He was filled with awe and called the place "the house of God" and the "Gate of Heaven")
- Where does Jewish tradition say "the place" was? (Mount Moriah, based on Abraham's revelation of "the place" (הַמָּקוֹם) of the sacrifice of Isaac as described in Gen. 22:4)
- What did Yaakov do the following morning? (He made a monument from the rock he used for a pillow, poured oil upon it, made a vow, and named the place Bethel (בֵּית-אֵל).)
- According to midrash, before Yaakov went to Lavan's house, where did he go? (He spent 14 years studying Torah with Shem and Eber in Jerusalem)
- Where did Yaakov meet Rachel, and what did he do there? (By the well near Charan; he lifted the rock that topped the well, watered her flock, and revealed that he was her cousin)
- Lavan was Yaakov's uncle, the brother of his mother Rebecca. He had two daughters. What were their names? (Leah and Rachel) Which was older? (Leah) Which did Yaakov want to marry?
- Who did Yaakov marry first, and why? (Leah, because Lavan tricked Yaakov)
- What excuse did Lavan give for his deception? (the tradition of marrying the eldest first)
- How long did Yaakov work for Lavan in order to marry Rachel and Leah? (7 years for each)
- Why did Leah call her first son Reuven (רְאוּבֵן), "behold a son"? (Because the LORD looked (רָאָה) upon her affliction and Leah thought that Yaakov would then love her)
- Why did Leah call her fourth son Judah (יְהוּדָה)? (Praise for exceeding the expected quota)
- Who were Bilhah and Zilpah? (Maid servants [שִׁפְחוֹת] who became surrogate wives for Rachel and Leah, respectively)
- How many children did Leah have before Rachel gave her handmaid to Yaakov? (4)



- Can you name the twelve *shevatim* (tribes) of Yaakov?
 - *Leah*: Rueben (1), Simeon (2), Levi (3), Judah (4); Issachar (9); Zevulun (10)
 - *Bilhah*: Dan (5); Naphtali (6)
 - *Zilpah*: Gad (7); Asher (8)
 - *Rachel*: Joseph (11); Benjamin (12)
- What happened after Joseph (יוסף) was born? (Jacob knew it was time to return to the Promised Land; see Gen. 30:25).
- How many years total did Yaakov work for Lavan? (20; Gen. 31:34)
- What did God say to Lavan in a dream? (“Be careful what you say to Yaakov – “from good to bad” [מִטוֹב עַד-רָע].
- Who stole Lavan’s idols and what happened as a result? (Rachel. She died before they reached Beersheva because Yaakov swore that whoever took them would die)
- Who met with Yaakov after he departed from Lavan? (The angels of God; Gen. 31:1)

Some Discussion Ideas:

- Why were Leah’s eyes described as “weak”? (They were tender from crying. Midrash states that when Rebekah bore twins, Esau (the eldest) was promised to her brother’s eldest (Leah), and Yaakov was promised to Rachel. Leah’s eyes were puffy and red from her constant crying over the prospect of marrying Esau.
- Jewish tradition regards *Ha-Makom* (“the place”) as a Name for God. Explain the significance of this name and its connection with Moriah and the offering of Isaac.
- Discuss the irony of Yaakov’s deception by Lavan. When Yaakov “despised” Leah for her complicity, she argued that Yaakov had no reason to complain, since he deceived his own father in order to obtain the blessing of the birthright.
- Who did Yaakov regard as his firstborn son? Rueben or Joseph? What is the significance of Judah and Yaakov’s later blessing regarding Shiloh?
- Jacob’s last stop in the Promised Land before going into exile for nearly 20 years was at Bethel. But why does the LORD call Himself the “God of Abraham your father” and then almost parenthetically add “the God of Isaac”? (i.e., אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אָבִיךָ וְאֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק)?
- The idea that “seed” is translated as “descendants” – despite being a masculine singular noun – is valid, since this “seed” would be “like the dust of the earth” (indicating multiplicity). Paul’s use of this verse, then, in Galatians 3:16, is literally correct, but the texts found in Gen. 15:5, 17:7, 22:17, 26:24, and 28:14 should be read in the *plural*, corresponding to the metaphorical use of “stars,” “dust” and “sand” to represent the innumerable descendants of Israel. *Explain.*
- Yaakov’s vow (Gen. 28:20-22) seems *conditional*: “If God is with me... THEN the LORD shall be my God...” Was Jacob trying to “make a bargain” with God?
- Why was Yaakov permitted to marry two women – and two *sisters*, for that matter – when the Torah later forbids this? How does this fit with Jewish tradition that maintains that he (like Abraham before him) “kept the entire Torah before it was given” (Gen. 26:5)?
- How is Laban regarded as a worse enemy of the Jewish people than even Pharaoh?
- Where is Yeshua revealed in this Torah portion?