

Parshat Vayetze Running from Confrontation

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In last week's Parsha, Rivka has the daunting task of facilitating her son Yaakov receiving the Beracha that Yitzchak intends to bestow upon Eisav. From the Torah's description, it is unclear as to what her motives are. Whether it is because she believes that Yaakov is the rightful heir to the blessing¹ or that he is the more appropriate recipient of the Beracha or whether it is simply because she loves Yaakov.² It could be for any one of those reasons, a combination of them or all of them in the aggregate. The one thing that is clear from the narrative is the method by which Rivka accomplishes that goal. Rather than confronting Yitzchak with her beliefs and preferences, she instead resorts to an intricate ruse of deception by which to secure the blessing for Yaakov. Again here, the impetus for her choosing this methodology is not disclosed, but the details of its execution are recounted.

Yaakov is circumspect about his mother's plan because he has smooth skin whereas his brother Eisav is hairy.³ This difference could easily be discerned by his father's heightened sense of touch (see Parshat Toldot – A Heightened Sense of Blessing) and that would cause the whole scheme to be uncovered.⁴ Rivka reassures Yaakov to trust her because, as is related shortly afterwards, she has already thought through this possibility and come up with a solution.⁵ The Torah tells us of her ingenious plan whereby she covers Yaakov's arms and neck with the hides of the goat used to prepare the delicacies that Yitzchak had requested from Eisav in order to bless him. This would simulate the effect of Yaakov being hairy and outwit Yitzchak's attempt to properly identify the individual presenting before him as Eisav. The ploy is successful and Yaakov receives the blessing intended for his brother Eisav.

What is so incredible about the story is the speed by which Yaakov inculcates the lesson being taught by his mother. When Yaakov describes his hesitancy with his mother's plan, he confides to his mother that he is afraid of being discovered by his

father as a deceiver which will result in his father cursing him rather than blessing him (וְהִיְתִי בְעֵינָיו) (כְּמִתְעַתֶּעַ וְהִבְאִתִּי עָלַי קִלְלָה וְלֹא בִרְכָה Rivka assuages Yaakov's fears by telling him "that the curse is upon her (עָלַי קִלְלָתְךָ בְּנִי)". This reassurance suffices to entice Yaakov into implementing Rivka's plan. It is interesting to note that Yaakov's nervousness with regards to his mother's strategy revolves around his being caught rather than with the methodology being employed. He intuitively feels that taking the "high" road in order to avoid conflict and confrontation from direct communication will result in better outcomes with less unpleasantness. This less aggressive and contentious approach resonates with Yaakov's unsophisticated and parochial personality (וַיַּעֲקֹב אִישׁ תָּם יוֹשֵׁב אַהֲלִים). It is this unspoken schooling of his mother that will be influential in Yaakov's approach to dealing with adversity.

While it is clear that Rivka has an outsized influence on Yaakov, the seeds of this type of behavior might have already been subtly planted by his father Yitzchak. When Yitzchak and his family are expelled from G'rar by Avimelech, Yitzchak does not protest or even engage in a negotiation with Avimelech.⁶ This silence is even more pronounced by the fact that when Avimelech and his entourage come seeking Yitzchak's partnership, he mildly confronts them with regards to their motivations given their previous animosity and then immediately agrees to a treaty with them.⁷ In addition, after his expulsion, Yitzchak's workers successfully dig three flowing fresh water wells.⁸ The shepherds of G'rar contest the proprietorship of the first two wells. It is not clear how those first two altercations were resolved, but given the preface to the third well excavation, one could surmise the outcome of the previous two confrontations. "He moved on from there and dug another well and they did not quarrel over it... (וַיַּעֲתֵק מִשָּׁם וַיַּחְפֹּר בְּאֵר אַחֲרָת וְלֹא רָבוּ עָלֶיהָ)". When faced with adversity, Yitzchak moves on to look for better pastures. In that sense, when the Torah describes that the shepherds of G'rar "quarreled (וַיִּרְיבוּ)" with the shepherds of Yitzchak, it more likely means that they "challenged" Yitzchak's rights to the well (לְנוּ הַמַּיִם) rather than describing

¹ וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב לֵה שְׁנֵי גוֹיִם בְּבִטְנֹךָ וְשְׁנֵי לְאֻמִּים מִמֶּעֶיךָ: יִפְרְדוּ וְלֹאֵם מִלְאָם יֵאָמֵץ וְרַב יַעֲבֹד צִעִיר: (בראשית כה, כג)

² וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶת עֵשָׂו כִּי צִיד בְּפִיו וְרִבְקָה אֶהְבֵּת אֶת יַעֲקֹב: (בראשית כה, כח)

³ וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל רִבְקָה אִמּוֹ הֲנִי עֹשֶׂה אִישׁ שָׂעֵר וְאֹנְכִי אִישׁ חֶלֶק: (בראשית כז, יא)

⁴ אוֹלֵי יְמֵשֵׁנֵי אָבִי וְהִיְתִי בְעֵינָיו כְּמִתְעַתֶּעַ וְהִבְאִתִּי עָלַי קִלְלָה וְלֹא בִרְכָה: (כז, יב)

⁵ וְתֹאמְרוּ לוֹ אִמּוֹ עָלַי קִלְלָתְךָ בְּנִי אֶךָ שָׁמַע בְּקוֹלִי וְלֹךְ קָח לִי: וַיִּלֶךְ וַיָּבֵא לְאִמּוֹ וַתַּעַשׂ אִמּוֹ מִטְעָמִים כַּאֲשֶׁר אֶהְבֵּ אָבִיו: וַתִּקַּח רִבְקָה אֶת בְּגָדֵי עֵשָׂו בְּנֵה הַגִּדְלִים הַחֲמֹדִת אֲשֶׁר אָתָּה בּוֹבִית וַתַּלְבִּשׁ אֶת יַעֲקֹב בְּנֵה הַקֶּטָן: וְאֵת עֹרֹת גְּדֵי הָעִזִּים הַלְבִּישָׁה עָלָיו וְעַל חֻלְקֵת צֹאנֵיו: (בראשית כה, יג-טז)

⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִימֶלֶךְ אֶל-יַעֲקֹב לָךְ מַעֲמֹנִי כִּי-עֲצַמְתִּי מִמֶּנּוּ מֵאֵד: וַיִּלֶךְ מִשָּׁם יַעֲקֹב וַיִּחַן בְּנוֹחַל-גָּרַר וַיֹּשֶׁב שָׁם: (בראשית כו, טז-יז)

⁷ וַאֲבִימֶלֶךְ הִלַּךְ אֵלָיו מִגָּרַר וַאֲחֲזֵל מִרְעוּהוּ וּפִכִּיל שֶׁר-צָבָאוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם יַעֲקֹב מִדְּעוּ בְּאֵתֶם אֵלַי וְאַתֶּם שְׂנֵאתֶם אֹתִי וַתִּשְׁלַחְנִי מֵאֶתְכֶם: וַיֹּאמְרוּ רָאוּ רְאִינוּ כִּי-יְהִי יַעֲקֹב עִמָּךְ וְלֹאֵם תְּהִי גַם אֵלֵהּ בִּינֹתֵינוּ בְּיַמֵּינוּ וּבִיגְרֵךְ וְנִכְרַתְהָ בְּרִית עִמָּךְ: אִם-תַּעֲשֶׂה עִמָּנוּ רְעוּהָ כַּאֲשֶׁר לֹא נִגְעֵנֶךָ וְכַאֲשֶׁר יִשְׁעֵנוּ עִמָּךְ רַק-טוֹב וְנִשְׁלַחְךָ בְּשָׁלוֹם אֶתָּה עִתָּה בְּרוּךְ יַעֲקֹב: וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם מִשְׁתֵּה וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ: וַיִּשְׂכַּמוּ בְּבֹקֶר וַיִּשְׁבְּעוּ אִישׁ לְאָחִיו וַיִּשְׁלַחֵם יַעֲקֹב וַיֵּלְכוּ מֵאֵתוֹ בְּשָׁלוֹם: (בראשית כו, כז-לא)

⁸ וַיַּחְפְּרוּ עֲבָדֵי-יַעֲקֹב בְּנוֹחַל וַיִּמְצְאוּ-שָׁם בְּאֵר מַיִם חַיִּים: וַיְרִיבוּ רַעֲיֵי גָרַר עִם-רַעֲיֵי יַעֲקֹב לְאִמּוֹר לְנוּ הַמַּיִם וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם הַבְּאֵר עֵשָׂו כִּי הִתְעַשְׂקוּ עִמּוֹ: וַיַּחְפְּרוּ בְּאֵר אַחֲרָת וַיִּרְיבוּ גַם-עָלֶיהָ לְנוּ הַמַּיִם וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם הַבְּאֵר עֵשָׂו וַיַּחְפְּרוּ בְּאֵר אַחֲרָת וְלֹא רָבוּ עָלֶיהָ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמָהּ רְחוֹבוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי-עָתָה הִרְחִיב יַעֲקֹב לְנוּ וּפְרִינוּ בְּאֶרֶץ: (בראשית כו, טז-כב)

an active debate or spat over the well.⁹ The reaction of Yitzchak in each instance of opposition or conflict is to back down and search for uncontested ground. It could be that Yitzchak was fearful of the local response if he stood ground on his rights to the well, but the subsequent visit by Avimelech and his minister of defense, Pichol, seem to indicate that Yitzchak held the upper hand, or at least was on par, in the situation. Witnessing these events in his upbringing¹⁰ provided fertile ground for the lessons Yaakov was to intuit from his mother Rivka.

In the end, Yaakov successfully wrests his father's blessing from Eisav, but his actions so enrage his twin brother that he is faced with a sibling who is looking to avenge this "miscarriage" of justice with the death of his brother.¹¹ Yaakov is spared that immediate consequence out of Eisav's respect for their father. Rivka gets wind of this planned fratricide and once again goes into action for the benefit of her son Yaakov. At his mother's behest, Yaakov plans and eventually does run away to the house of Lavan in order to avoid the wrath of his brother.¹² As a cover for this flight of refuge, Rivka encourages Yitzchak to send Yaakov to her brother's house in Charan in order to secure a wife that was not from amongst the local populace.¹³ This incident only serves to reinforce for Yaakov that the best and proper way to deal with hardship and difficulty is to run, avoid and wait it out. This becomes Yaakov's modus operandi – avoid confrontation at all cost.

Yaakov departs from his family in Be'er Sheva and heads to the house of Lavan in Charan. His first exposure to his uncle's family is in a chance meeting at the well with his first-cousin Rachel as he approaches Charan. This love at first sight has Yaakov declaring to Rachel that he is her father's brother (כִּי אָחִי אַבְיָהָ הוּא), but also the son of Rivka

(her father's nephew).¹⁴ The first statement of brotherhood either indicates a familial relationship¹⁵ or possibly suggests Yaakov's sense that he has a peer relationship with Lavan.¹⁶ This latter understanding likely spawned the Midrash Chazal quoted by Rashi "that I am his equal in conniving (אחיו אני ברמאות)."¹⁷ Yaakov, armed with his mother's guile¹⁸ and maybe with the confidence that God had promised to protect him,¹⁹ negotiates his marriage to Rachel with her father Lavan. Unfortunately, Yaakov proves no match for the well-seasoned Lavan and he is swindled into marrying Leah. In attempting to confront Lavan over the deception, Yaakov is quickly turned away by Lavan's moral argument.²⁰ Then, painted into a corner, Yaakov buckles under and silently acquiesces to Lavan's offer of working an additional seven years for his beloved Rachel.²¹

After completing his fourteen years of work for his two wives, Yaakov is ready to travel back home with his nascent family.²² With the birth of Yosef, he tells Lavan of his plans and seeks his permission to take leave. Lavan, ever the opportunist, convinces Yaakov that he should stay longer and continue working for his father-in-law. Lavan suggests that Yaakov should simply name his price because he divines that God had blessed his household on the heels of Yaakov's presence.²³ Yaakov agrees that he, with the blessing of God, is the reason for Lavan's success and he comes up with a convoluted scheme of compensation which is acceptable to Lavan. Once again, in Yaakov's own words, Lavan outmaneuvers him in order to gain the upper hand in their relationship. Time and again, Lavan changes the terms of their agreement (וַהֲחֵלֵף אֶת-) in order to favor his economic gain from their relationship.²⁴ Were it not for God's intervention, Yaakov would have left empty-

⁹ עשק - ערער: (רש"י, כו, כ) ׁ לאמר לנו המים לפי שהיו זוחלין מן הנחל שהיה שלהן וגם על השניה רבו אבל כשהרחיק משם לא רבו כענין שנאמר ויעתק משם ויחפור באר אחרת ולא רבו. (חזקוני, כו, כ) ׁ התעשקו עמו. השתדלו עם יצחק שיעזוב הבאר: (ספורנו, כו, כ) ׁ וכנגדם: ויקרא שם הבאר. אין אדם נותן שם לדבר שאינו שלו, ומזה ראי' שעם היות שרבו על הבארות נשאר ליצחק, והיה מתקיים בו לא הניח לאיש לעשקם... (הכתוב והקבלה בראשית, כו, כ)
¹⁰ ויאמר אחותי היא - ועל הבנים לא שאלוהו, כי יאמר בני אשה אחרת הם לו: (רמב"ן בראשית כו, ז) ׁ כי טובת מראה היא ולא כתיב מאד לפי שילדה אבל קודם שילדה בפרשת חיי כתיב בה מאד. (חזקוני בראשית כו, ז)
¹¹ וישטם עשו את יעקב על הברכה אשר ברכו אביו ויאמר עשו בלבו יקרו: ימי אבך אבי ואהרנה את יעקב אחי: (בראשית כד, מא)
¹² ועתה בני שמע בקולי וקום ברח לך אל לבן אחי תרנה: וישבת עמו ימים אחדים עד אשר תשוב חמת אחיך: עד שוב אף אחיך ממך ושכח את אשר עשית לו ושלחתי וילקחתיך משם למה אשכחם גם שניכם יום אחד: (בראשית כד, מג-מה)
¹³ ויתאמר רבקה אל יצחק קצתי בחיי מפני בנות חת אם לקח יעקב אשה מבנות חת כאלה מבנות הארץ למה לי חיים: (בראשית כד, מז)
¹⁴ ויגד יעקב לרחל כי אחי אביה הוא וכי בן רבקה הוא ויתרץ וינגד לאביה: (בראשית כט, יב)
¹⁵ ויאמר אברהם אל-לוט אל-נא תהי מריבה ביני ובינך ובין רעי ובין רעיך כי-אנשים אחים אנחנו: (בראשית יג, ח) ׁ וישמע אברהם כי נשבה אחיו וירק את-חניכיו ולידי ביתו שמנה עשר ושלש מאות וירדף עד-דן: ׁ כי אחי אביה הוא - קרוב לאביה, כמו (לעיל יג ח) אנשים אחים אנחנו... (רש"י בראשית כט, יב)
¹⁶ וישקימו בבקר וישבעו איש לאחיו וישלחם יצחק וילכו מאתו בשלום: (בראשית כו, לא) ׁ ויאמר להם יעקב אחי מאין אתם ויאמרו מתרן אנחנו: (בראשית כט, ד)

¹⁷ ...ומאי צניעות היתה בה ברחל? דכתיב: ויגד יעקב לרחל כי אחי אביה הוא וכי בן רבקה הוא, והלא בן אחות אביה הוא! אלא, אמר לה: מינסבת לי? אמרה ליה: אין, מיהו אבא רמאה הוא ולא יכלת ליה. אמר לה: מאי רמאותיה? אמרה ליה: אית לי אחתא דקשישא מינאי, ולא מנסבא לי מקמה. אמר לה: אחיו אני ברמאות. [א"ל:] ומי שרי להו לצדיקי לסגוי ברמאות? אין, עם נבר תתבר ועם עקש תתפל... (בבא בתרא קכג.) ׁ ו...ומדרשו את לרמאות הוא בא גם אני אחיו ברמאות, ואם אדם כשר הוא, גם אני בן רבקה אחותו הכשרה: (רש"י בראשית כט, יב)
¹⁸ ויהי יצחק בן-ארבעים שנה בקחתו את-רבקה בת-בואל הארמי מפדן אגרם אחות לבן הארמי לו לאשה: (בראשית כה, כ)
¹⁹ והנה אנכי עמך ושמרתיך בכל אשר-תלך והשבתיך אל-האדמה הזאת כי לא אעזבך עד אשר אם-עשיתי את אשר-דברתי לך: (בראשית כח, טו)
²⁰ ויאמר לבן לא: יעשה כן במקומנו לתת הצעירה לפני הבכירה: (בראשית כט, כו)
²¹ מלא שבע זאת ונתנה לך גם-את-זאת בעבדה אשר תעבד עמדי עוד שבע-שנים אחרות: ויעש יעקב כן וימלא שבע זאת ויתן-לו את-רחל בתו לו לאשה: (בראשית כט, כז-כח)
²² ויהי כאשר ילדה רחל את-יוסף ויאמר יעקב אל-לבן שלחני ואלכה אל-מקומי ולא-רצו: תנה את-נשי ואת-ילדי אשר עבדתי אתך בהן ואלכה כי אתה ידעת את-עבדתי אשר עבדתיך: (בראשית ל, כה-כו)
²³ ויאמר אליו לבן אם-נא מצאתי חן בעיניך נחשתי ויברכני יקח בגלגל: ויאמר נקבה שכרה עלי ואנתה: (בראשית ל, כז-כח)
²⁴ ואתנה ידעונו כי בכל-חיי עבדתי את-אביך: ואביך התל בִּי והחלף את-משפחתי עשרת נמים ולא נתנו אלהים להרע עמדי: אם-פה יאמר נקדים יהיה שכרך וילדו כל-הצאן נקדים ואם-פה יאמר עקדים יהיה שכרך וילדו כל-הצאן עקדים: ויצל אלהים את-מקנה אביכם ויתן-לי: (בראשית לו, א-ט)

handed. It also seems that true to his personality, Yaakov never confronts Lavan over this continuing deceit, preferring to win by hard work and God's intervention. Instead, he utilizes his shrewdness to ensure his success.²⁵

With these two experiences under his belt, Yaakov is never more convinced that direct interactions are a mistake. His two face-to-face negotiations with Lavan were an abject failure and his attempt to leave Charan was thwarted. With his mother's lessons in hand, Yaakov once again believes that running away from difficulty and a little craftiness are the elixir of success and the best way to live a life of tranquility and serenity.

As Yaakov senses the distance growing between Lavan and him²⁶ and with God's encouragement to return home,²⁷ he gathers his wives, Rachel and Leah, to discuss his plan of departure with them.²⁸ He then launches into a monologue detailing for them all the reasons that he thinks they should take leave of Lavan²⁹ and they agree with his conclusions.³⁰ It is a speech that should really have been given to Lavan as an explanation for why Yaakov has had enough and is departing to return home, but now more than ever that is not Yaakov's style. While God did tell Yaakov that he should take leave of this land and return to the land of his birthplace,³¹ God never opines on how Yaakov should go about accomplishing this task. Yaakov, true to his character, once again chooses the path of least resistance and decides to depart Charan by sneaking out without informing Lavan.³² He gathers his family and all of his possessions and sets course for Har HaGilad hoping to make it back to his father Yitzchak in Eretz Cana'an without having to ever face Lavan or see him again.

While the Torah obscures her motivations, Rachel, with her father out of the house shearing his sheep, steals away with her father's idols (הַתְּרָפִים) upon their departure from Charan. The

commentaries are split as to why Rachel did this. There are those, following in the footsteps of Chazal,³³ who suggest she was trying to wean her father off of idol worship.³⁴ Others propose that she was trying to interfere with her father's ability to divine with them and discover the whereabouts of Yaakov and his family.³⁵ Either way, Rachel's positive motives are deemed as "theft (וַתִּגְנוֹב)," the same term that is used to describe Yaakov's departure from Lavan (וַיִּגְנוֹב). So while Yaakov is not aware of Rachel's actions, the Torah nevertheless indicates that her behavior is very similar to that of Yaakov (which also might have been the basis of their kinship).

As noted above, this mode of conduct practiced by Yaakov is much more befitting his personality and Yaakov (and his mother) have seen success with this methodology. On the surface, it might seem like this approach is the easier and preferable route since it avoids confrontation and also has a virtuous side in that it upholds the dictum of Chazal that "whoever forgoes reckonings with others for injustices perpetrated against them, God will forgo punishing them for their sins."³⁶ Nevertheless, there are a number of deficits with this approach which in the long run might prove to make it a more costly option. Firstly, the avoidance of confrontation does not necessarily solve the problem. For instance, Yaakov's success in receiving the blessing gives rise to another problem of Eisav desiring to kill him that once again requires Rivka to confront Yitzchak or find a way to once again deceive him. In addition, Rivka's ploy to send Yaakov away under the guise of searching for a wife and her lack of disclosure with regards to Eisav's plan to kill Yaakov might have been a shrewd way to help Yaakov escape his brother's wrath, but, in the end, it is possible that this resulted in Rivka never again being reunited with her son Yaakov and her grandchildren. Something that a more direct and straight forward approach might have avoided.

²⁵ וַיִּקְחֵהוּ לָלוּ יַעֲקֹב מִקֶּלֶב לִבְנֵהוּ לַח וְלוּז וְעֵרְמוֹן וַיִּפְצֵל בְּהֵן פְּצִלוֹת לְבָנוֹת מִחֹשֶׁף הַלְבָן אֲשֶׁר עַל-הַמִּקְלוֹת: וַיֵּצֵא אֶת-הַמִּקְלוֹת אֲשֶׁר פָּצַל בְּרֹהֲטִים בְּשִׁקְתוֹת הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר תָּבֵאן, הַצֵּאן לְשִׂתוֹת לִנְחֹחַ הַצֵּאן וַיַּחְמֵנָה בַּבָּאָן לְשִׂתוֹת: וַיַּחְמֵן הַצֵּאן אֶל-הַמִּקְלוֹת וַתִּלְחֹדן הַצֵּאן עֲקֵדִים נֶקֶדִים וְטֹלְאִים: וְהַקְּשִׁיבִים הַפְּרִידִי יַעֲקֹב וַיִּתֵּן פִּי הַצֵּאן אֶל-עֵקֶד וְכָל-חֹסֶם בָּצֵאן לְבָן וַיִּשְׁתֵּן לוֹ עֲדָרִים לְבָדוֹ וְלֹא שָׁתֵם עַל-צֵאן לָבָן: וְהִיא בְּכָל-יְחֹסֶם הַצֵּאן הַמִּקְשָׁרוֹת וְשֵׁם יַעֲקֹב אֶת-הַמִּקְלוֹת לְעֵינֵי הַצֵּאן בְּרֹהֲטִים לְחִסְמָנָה בַּמִּקְלוֹת: וּבַהֲעֵטִיף הַצֵּאן לֹא יִשִּׂים וְהִיא הַעֲטִפִים לְלָבָן וְהַקְּשִׁרִים לְעֵקֶב: וַיִּפְרֹץ הָאִישׁ מֵאֵד מֵאֵד וַיִּהְיֶה לִּילוֹ צֵאן רַבּוֹת וַיִּשְׁפּוֹחַ וַיַּעֲבִדִים וַיִּגְמְלִים וַיַּחְמְרִים: (בראשית לז-מג)

²⁶ וַיִּשְׁמַע אֶת-דְּבַר־בְּנֵי לָבָן לֹא-מֹר לִקַּח יַעֲקֹב אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר לְאִבֵּינוּ וַיִּמְאַשֶׁר לְאִבֵּינוּ עֵשָׂה אֶת כָּל-הַכֶּבֶד הַזֶּה: וַיֵּרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶת-פְּנֵי לָבָן וְהִגִּיד אֵינֶנּוּ עִמּוֹ פְתוּמוֹל שְׁלֹשׁוֹם: (שם לא, א-ב)

²⁷ וַיֹּאמֶר יַקֹּן אֶל-יַעֲקֹב שׁוּב אֶל-אֶרֶץ אַבְוֹתֶיךָ וְלִמְוֹלְדֶיךָ וְאֵהִי עִמָּךְ: (בראשית לא, ג)

²⁸ וַיִּשְׁלַח יַעֲקֹב וַיִּקְרָא לְרַחֵל וְלֵיִלָּהּ הַשְּׂדֵה אֶל-צֵאָנוּ: (בראשית לא, ד)

²⁹ בְּרֹאשִׁית לֹא, הִי-ג

³⁰ וַתַּעַן רַחֵל וְלֵיאָה וַתֹּאמְרֵנָה לוֹ הַעוֹד לָנוּ חֶזֶק וְנִחַל בְּבֵית אִבֵּינוּ: הֲלוֹא נִכְרִיתִי נְחֻשְׁבֵנוּ לוֹ כִּי מִקְרָנוּ וְנֵאֱכָל גַּם-אֲכֹל אֶת-כֶּסֶפֵנוּ: כִּי כָל-הָעֹשֶׂר אֲשֶׁר הֵצִיל אֲלֵינוּ הָאֱלֹקִים מֵאִבֵּינוּ לָנוּ הוּא וְלִבְנֵינוּ וְעֵתָה כָּל-אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֲלֵינוּ עֲשֵׂה: (בראשית לא, יד-טז)

³¹ אֲנִי הִקֵּל בֵּית-אֵל אֲשֶׁר מִשְׁחַת שֵׁם מִצְבֵּה אֲשֶׁר נִבְרַת לִי שֵׁם בְּדָר עֵתָה קוּם צֵא מִן-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת וּשׁוּב אֶל-אֶרֶץ מוֹלְדֶיךָ: (בראשית לא, יג)

³² וַיִּקֶם יַעֲקֹב וַיִּשָּׂא אֶת בְּנָיו וְאֶת נְשָׁיו עַל הַגְּמָלוֹם: וַיִּנְהַג אֶת כָּל מִקְנֵהוּ וְאֶת כָּל רֶכְשׁוֹ אֲשֶׁר רָכַשׁ מִקְנֵהוּ קִנְיָנוּ אֲשֶׁר רָכַשׁ בַּפְּדִן אֲרָם לְבֹאֵ אֵל יִצְחָק אֲבִיו אֶרְצָה כְּנָעַן: וְלָבָן הִלֵךְ לְגִזְז

אֶת צֵאָנוּ וַתִּגְנוֹב רַחֵל אֶת הַתְּרָפִים אֲשֶׁר לְאִבֵּיהָ: וַיִּגְנוֹב יַעֲקֹב אֶת לֵב לָבָן הָאֲרָמִי עַל כֵּלֵי הַגִּיד לוֹ כִּי בָרַח הוּא: וַיִּבְרַח הוּא וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ וַיִּקֶם וַיַּעֲבֵר אֶת הַנְּהָר וַיִּשֵׂם אֶת פְּנָיו הַר הַגְּלָד: (בראשית לא, ז-כא)

³³ וַתִּגְנוֹב רַחֵל אֶת הַתְּרָפִים אֲשֶׁר לְאִבֵּיהָ, וְהִיא לֹא נִתְפָּנָה אֶלָּא לְשֵׁם שְׁמַיִם, אֲמָרָה מַה אָנָּה מְזִיל לִי וַיִּשְׁבּוּק הַדִּין סָבֵא בְּקִלְקוּלֵיהָ, לְפִיכָּה הִצְרָךְ הַכְּתוּב לֹמוֹר: וַתִּגְנוֹב רַחֵל אֶת הַתְּרָפִים אֲשֶׁר לְאִבֵּיהָ. (בראשית רבה עד, ה)

³⁴ וַתִּגְנוֹב רַחֵל אֶת הַתְּרָפִים אֲשֶׁר לְאִבֵּיהָ – גִּבְנָה אוֹתָם כְּדִי שִׁיחֲזוֹר בּוּ וַיִּשְׁאֵמַר אֱלוֹהִים הַגִּנוֹב אִין בּוּ מִמֶּשׁ. כְּדִבְרֵי יוֹאֵשׁ שֹׁאֵמַר (שׁוֹפְטִים ו') אִם אֱלֹהִים הוּא יִרְבֵּ לּוֹ כִּי נִתֵּן אֶת מִזְבְּחוֹ. וְכִמוֹ שֹׁאֵמַר הַכְּתוּב (יִחְזָקָאֵל כ"ח) הָאִמּוֹר תֹּאמַר אֱלֹהִים אֲנִי לְפָנֵי הוֹרִיגֶךָ וְאִתָּה אָדָם וְלֹא קֵל בִּיד מִחַלְלֶיךָ. (רַבִּינוּ חֲנַנְאֵל בְּרֵאשִׁית לֹא, יט) \\\ וַתִּגְנוֹב – לְהַפְרִישׁ אֶת אֲבִיהָ מִעֲבוּדָה זָרָה נִתְכַּוְּנָה. (רַש"י "בְּרֵאשִׁית לֹא, יט) \\\ הָאֵבֶן עֲזָרָא שֵׁם שׁוֹלֵל אֶת פִּירוֹשׁ זֶה: ..וַיִּשׁ אֹמְרִים: שֶׁרַחֵל גִּבְנָתָם לְבַטֵּל עֲבוּדָה זָרָה מִבֵּית אֲבִיהָ. וְאִילוּ הִיָּה כּוֹן, לְמַה הוֹלִיכָה אוֹתָם עִמָּה, וְלֹא שִׁמְנָתָם בְּדָרְךָ...

³⁵ וַתִּגְנוֹב רַחֵל אֶת הַתְּרָפִים – שֶׁלֹּא יִגִּידוּ וַיִּוִּדְעוּ לְלָבָן כִּי רֹצֵחַ יַעֲקֹב לְבָרוּחַ, כְּעִנְיֵין שִׁנְאֵמַר: אִין אִפּוֹד וְתִרְפִים (הוֹשַׁע ג'ד'), כִּי הַתְּרָפִים דְּבָרוּ אוֹן (זְכַרְיָה יב), רַגִּילִים הִיוּ לְקִסּוּם בָּהֶם. (רַש"י בְּרֵאשִׁית לֹא, יט) \\\ וְכַעֲנֵן זֶה בָּאֵן עֲזָרָא, בְּרַד"ק, בַּחֲזוֹקוֹ, בְּרַמְב"ם, בְּמַלְבִּי"ם וּבְנַצִּי"ב

³⁶ אִמַר רַבָּא כָּל הַמַּעֲבִיר עַל מְדוּתוֹ מַעֲבִירִין לוֹ עַל כֵּל פִּשְׁעֵיו, שִׁנְאֵמַר נִשָּׂא עוֹן וְעָבַר עַל פִּשְׁעוֹ, לְמִי נוֹשָׂא עוֹן – לְמִי שְׁעוֹבֵר עַל פִּשְׁעוֹ. (רַאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה יז, יוֹמָא כג, וּפְז, מְגִילָה כח.)

This type of behavior also generates a more general mindset of the ends justifying the means. In order to obtain the desired outcome without ruffling anyone's feathers, the person has to resort to questionable ethical and moral means, especially in the area of deceit. It produces a situation in which there are no longer any clear boundaries between right and wrong and it will tend to deteriorate to the point where it becomes detrimental to the persona of the individual. It also results in a situation where individuals do not face or suffer the consequences of their actions. This is true for the party that requires guidance or feedback which could serve to constructively improve their future decisions and interactions. More importantly, it affects the one perpetrating the deceit since it many times requires the individual to compromise their principles in order to succeed without them fully realizing the hurt caused to others by their decision to utilize questionable means.

In the end, God has a different plan than Yaakov had envisioned and therefore Lavan gives chase to the escaping Yaakov and catches up with him at Har HaGilad.³⁷ When Lavan finally reaches Yaakov, God preempts their showdown by warning Lavan from interacting with Yaakov.³⁸ This little communication between God and Lavan will finally give Yaakov the gumption to face Lavan. In front of their respective families, Lavan goes on the offensive and justly accuses Yaakov of leaving in an inappropriate manner. Lavan indicts Yaakov with stealing his heart, carrying off his daughters like captives and not allowing Lavan to properly kiss his children and grandchildren goodbye.³⁹ Had Yaakov not acted so foolishly, Lavan would have thrown them a spectacular goodbye party. Lastly, he suggests that even if all of this could be justified by your longing to go home, why did you then steal my gods?⁴⁰ He levels a strong dossier against Yaakov.

Seemingly empowered by Lavan's disclosure that God had appeared to him on Yaakov's behalf, Yaakov finally summons the courage to respond to Lavan. He blurts out the truth to Lavan "that I was afraid that you would steal your daughters from me." After that, Yaakov makes a definitive statement that he did not steal his idols and

whoever is responsible for that misdeed should be prosecuted. In addition, Yaakov is so certain of his moral standing, that he invites Lavan and his compatriots to search Yaakov's camp and identify anything that belongs to them. Lavan takes up the challenge and thoroughly searches the entire camp.

This indignity of Lavan's distrust and his rummaging through all of Yaakov's possessions is too much for Yaakov to bear. It triggers a reaction from Yaakov that finally indicates that there is a transformation overcoming him. "Yaakov becomes incensed and took up his grievance with Lavan... (ויחר ליעקב ויגרב בלבן...)." ⁴¹ Yaakov demands that Lavan demonstrate what he has found to implicate him and justify his behavior. More importantly, Yaakov realizes that his twenty years of non-confrontation have added up to nothing in the eyes of Lavan and it is time to level with him. He then launches into the speech he gave to his wives to justify his leaving their father's house, only this time, it is directed at the proper recipient, Lavan.⁴² Yaakov describes his incredible work ethic and honesty as opposed to Lavan's conniving and deception. He concludes with, had it not been for the help of God, who proved my position when He appeared to you yesterday, you would have had no compunction sending me away empty-handed. Lavan is clearly taken aback by Yaakov's strong and unexpected response, but Lavan's Teflon personality allows him to shake off the accusations. He declares that all of Yaakov's children and possessions really belong to him (Lavan). Nevertheless, his ensuing suit for peace (asking to enter a covenant between them) indicates that he is trying to salvage the situation without admitting his guilt.

This is the beginning of a journey for Yaakov. Yaakov is caught in somewhat of a bind since the receipt of Eisav's blessing requires him to be more aggressive and demonstrate more leadership qualities, but in the end he is still the more demure Yaakov. He is slowly being forced to change his personality and undergo a transformation. It has taken years of life schooling for Yaakov to even reach this point, but it is a voyage that will continue in next week's Parsha. Stay tuned!

Shabbat Shalom

³⁷ ויחַר אֶת־אֶחָיו עִמּוֹ וַיִּרְדֹּף אַחֲרָיו דֶּרֶךְ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים וַיִּדְבֹּק אֹתוֹ בְּהַר הַגִּילָעָד: (בראשית לא, כב)

³⁸ וַיָּבֹא אֱלֹקִים אֶל־לָבָן הָאֲרָמִי בַחֲלֹם הַלַּיְלָה וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הַשֹּׁמֵר לֶךְ פֶּן־יַדְבִּיר עִם־יַעֲקֹב מֵטוֹב עַד־רָע: (בראשית לא, כד)

³⁹ וַיֹּאמֶר לָבָן לְיַעֲקֹב מִה עָשִׂיתָ וַתִּגְנֹב אֶת־לִבִּי וַתִּנְהַל אֶת־בְּנֹתַי כְּשִׁבְיֹת חָרָב: לָמָּה נִחְבַּאתָ לְבָרִחַ וַתִּגְנֹב אֹתִי וְלֹא־הַגַּדְתָּ לִּי וְאַשְׁלַחְךָ בְּשִׁמְחָה וּבְשָׂרִים בְּתֹרֶם וּבְכִנּוּר: וְלֹא נִטְשָׁתִי לְנֶשֶׁק לְבָנִי וּלְבִנְתֵי עֵתָה הַסּוֹכְלֹת עִשׂוּ: שִׁשְׁלֹקֶל יָדֵי לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּכֶם רַע וְאַלְקֵי אֲבִיכֶם אָמְשׁוּ אָמַר אֵלַי לֹאֲמַר הַשֹּׁמֵר לֶךְ מִדְּבַר עִם־יַעֲקֹב מֵטוֹב עַד־רָע: (בראשית לא, כו-כט)

⁴⁰ וַעֲתֵרָה הַלֵּךְ הַלֵּכְתָּ כִּי־נִכְסֹף נִכְסַפְתָּה לְבֵית אֲבִיךָ לָמָּה נִגְנַבְתָּ אֶת־אֱלֹהֵי: (בראשית לא, ל)

⁴¹ וַיִּחַר לְיַעֲקֹב וַיִּגְרַב בְּלָבָן וַיַּעַן יַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר לָבָן מִה פִּשְׁעִי מִה חֲטָאתִי כִּי דִלַקְתָּ אֶחְרָי: כִּי מִשְׁשַׁת אֶת כָּל כְּלִי מִה מִצְאָתָּ מִכָּל כְּלִי בֵּיתְךָ שִׁים כֹּה נָגַד אֲחִי וְאַחִיר וַיִּוְכַיְחוּ בֵּין שְׁנֵינוּ: (בראשית לא, לו-לז)

⁴² זֶה עֲשָׂרִים שָׁנָה אָנֹכִי עֹמֵר רְחֹלֶיךָ וְעִזֶיךָ לֹא שָׁכְלוּ וְאֵילֵי צֹאנְךָ לֹא אָקְלַתִּי: טָרְפָה לֹא הִבֵּאתִי אֵלֶיךָ אָנֹכִי אַחְסֹנָה מִיַּד־תִּבְקָשׁוּנָה גִּבְבֹתִי יוֹם וָלַיְלָה: הֵייתִי בַיּוֹם אֶקְלִנִי חָרָב וְקָרַח בְּלֵילָה וַתִּדַּד שְׁנֵתִי מֵעֵינַי: זֶה לִי עֲשָׂרִים שָׁנָה בְּבֵיתְךָ עֲבַדְתִּיךָ אַרְבַּע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה בְּשִׂפְתֵי בְנֹתֶיךָ וְשֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים בְּצֹאנְךָ וַתַּחֲלֹף אֶת מִשְׁכַּרְתִּי עֲשָׂרֶת מִנִּים: לֹולִי אֱלֹקֵי אָבִי אֱלֹקֵי אֲבֹרָהֶם וַפְחַד יִצְחָק הֵי־לִי כִּי עֵתָה רִיקָם שְׁלַחְתֵּנִי אֶת עֵנִי וְאֵת יָגִיעַ כְּפִי רָאָה אֱלֹקִים וַיִּוְכַח אֲמָשׁ: (בראשית לא, לח-לב)