



Carnegie Shul Chatter

December 1, 2022



Shabbat Shalom

Light candles 4:35pm

Shabbat Services 9:30am

Shabbat Services

The Carnegie Shul continues to offer hybrid Shabbat services. Please join us in the sanctuary, providing you have been vaccinated for Covid 19. Masks are optional. To attend virtually, watch for a Zoom link in your email. If you don't receive it, contact Rosalyn Hoffman at rjlynman@yahoo.com. The complete Torah reading, in Hebrew and English, can be found on line at https://www.chabad.org/parshah/torahreading_cdo/aid/2492510/jewish/Vayetze-Torah-Reading.htm

Forgiving

This week's parshah talks about the deceptions of Jacob's uncle Laban including tricking Jacob into marrying Leah instead of Rachel. What a horrible man Laban was!

Sadly, we all encounter horrible people who try to deceive us as we journey through life. There are all sorts of scams that charlatans use to cheat people, and these scams have only gotten worse with the advent of the internet and robo calling.

Who hasn't received spam mail that tries to trick you into a bad investment? Or what about those robo calls that appear to be from someone you know but turn out to be from someone else altogether.

And what makes it even worse is that these calls often prey upon the elderly.

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There are bad people in this world. There is no doubt about it. We are told, however, that all people have a spark of God within them and can find redemption at some point. We are also told to look for the good in people and find it in our heart to forgive.

That is certainly good advice, and a positive attitude is certainly healthier (and holier) than a negative attitude.

But we are humans, not angels, and if I were Jacob, I would have found it very difficult if not impossible to forgive Laban.

Vayetze in a Nutshell

Genesis 28:10–32:3

From Chabad.org

Jacob leaves his hometown of Beersheba and journeys to Charan. On the way, he encounters “the place” and sleeps there, dreaming of a ladder connecting heaven and earth, with angels climbing and descending on it; G-d appears and promises that the land upon which he lies will be given to his descendants. In the morning, Jacob raises the stone on which he laid his head as an altar and monument, pledging that it will be made the house of G-d.

In Charan, Jacob stays with and works for his uncle Laban, tending Laban’s sheep. Laban agrees to give him his younger daughter, Rachel—whom Jacob loves—in marriage, in return for seven years’ labor. But on the wedding night, Laban gives him his elder daughter, Leah, instead—a deception Jacob discovers only in the morning. Jacob marries Rachel, too, a week later, after agreeing to work another seven years for Laban.

Leah gives birth to six sons—Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun—and a daughter, Dinah, while Rachel remains barren. Rachel gives Jacob her handmaid, Bilhah, as a wife to bear children in her stead, and two more sons, Dan and Naphtali, are born. Leah does the same with her handmaid, Zilpah, who gives birth to Gad and Asher. Finally, Rachel’s prayers are answered and she gives birth to Joseph.



Jacob has now been in Charan for 14 years, and wishes to return home. But Laban persuades him to remain, now offering him sheep in return for his labor. Jacob prospers, despite Laban's repeated attempts to swindle him. After six years, Jacob leaves Charan in stealth, fearing that Laban would prevent him from leaving with the family and property for which he labored. Laban pursues Jacob, but is warned by G-d in a dream not to harm him. Laban and Jacob make a pact on Mount Gal-Ed, attested to by a pile of stones, and Jacob proceeds to the Holy Land, where he is met by angels.

Haftorah in a Nutshell

Hosea 11:7-12:14

This week's haftorah mentions Jacob's flight from home to the "field of Aram," an episode that is recounted in this week's Torah reading.

The haftorah begins with the prophet Hosea's rebuke of the Jewish people for forsaking G-d. Nevertheless, Hosea assures the people that G-d will not abandon them: "How can I give you, Ephraim, and deliver you [to the hands of the nations]? . . . I will not act with My fierce anger; I will not return to destroy Ephraim."



The prophet discusses the misdeeds of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and the future degeneration of the Kingdom of Judea. He contrasts their behavior to that of their forefather Jacob who was faithful to G-d and prevailed against enemies, both human and angelic.

The haftorah also makes mention of the ingathering of the exiles which will occur during the Final Redemption: "They shall hasten like a bird from Egypt and like a dove from the land of Assyria; and I will place them in their houses, says the Lord."

Haftorah Commentary

Below is a commentary on this week's Haftarah by Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz writing at Chabad.org. It is an interesting commentary and includes a comment that I have mentioned several times in previous Chatters, "This is a testament to how precious and valuable even the smallest mitzvah we do is to our neshamahs, and by extension, to G d." It also talks about the coming of Moshiach, one of the thirteen principles of faith espoused by Maimonides and included in the Yigdal prayer which we daven at the conclusion of our Shabbos services on alternate weeks. I hope you find it informative.

The Dove Always Finds Its Way Home

By Yitzi Hurwitz

In the haftarah for Vayeitzei, G-d rebukes the ten northern tribes (a.k.a. Ephraim, after the tribe who ruled the other 9 northern tribes) for wavering in returning to G-d. He rebukes them for worshipping idols, for their crooked business dealings, for claiming in arrogance that G-d is unaware of their actions, and for being deceitful. Ultimately, G-d won't let them succeed in their wickedness. This is all alluding to Laban the Aramean, Jacob's uncle (and father-in-law), who in our Parshah swindled him every which way. Yet for all Laban's trickery and cunning, G-d doesn't allow him to succeed.



The haftarah speaks of Jacob's descent to Charan and how he worked to get his wives, who are mentioned in our Parshah.

Sprinkled throughout the haftarah are the exodus from Egypt; allusions to our future redemption; and assurances that if we follow on G-d's path, trusting in Him and keeping the Torah and mitzvos, He will help us succeed. Similarly, in the Parshah, Jacob—with G-d's help—succeeds in Charan, coming out with great wealth and a beautiful family.

What lessons are hidden here for us? What are we meant to take away from the haftarah and the Parshah?

The story of Jacob going down to Charan is the story of the Jewish people going into exile (and the key to the future redemption). It is also the story of the neshamah (soul) coming into the body.

There are two types of exile. The first is an exile of plenty, where we are free and lack nothing. However, because of this abundance, we follow our desires, falling lower and lower. When this happens, our holy energy, which is meant to nourish the good and holy forces in the world, ends up feeding and energizing the negative forces. This is symbolized by the Assyrian exile, in which we enjoyed relative freedom.

Then there is the exile of suffering, in which we feel stuck, unable to get out and do the simplest of things. Because of the suffering and oppression, our thoughts and abilities become constricted and obstructed. In other words we are stuck in our tzores. This is symbolized by the exile in Mitzrayim (Egypt), which means "constraints," and where we were in servitude.

To this the haftarah says that when Moshiach comes, “He will roar like a lion... They will hurry like a bird from Egypt, and like a dove from Assyria, and I will settle them in their homes, says G-d.” What is the lion’s roar? That is the sound of the shofar that G-d will sound when Moshiach comes. Why does He use the metaphor of a bird and a dove? Because no matter how far they stray from their nest, these birds always find their way back home. The same is true about the Jewish people. No matter which kind of exile, or how far we stray, we will find our way back home.

Now the haftarah says, “Like a merchant who has deceitful scales in his hand.” This is the neshamah, which when it was above was filled with silver and gold, which means love and awe of G-d. But like a merchant who spends all his silver and gold just to make a profit, so is the neshamah willing to give up everything—descend to this lowly world, enter the body and do everything to affect the body—just for the gain it will attain through the mitzvahs that the body will do.

This is the meaning of the verse in Tehilim, “To me, the Torah of Your lips is better than thousands of gold and silver.” The Torah uttered by the lips, down in this physical world, is more valuable to the neshamah than all the love and awe it experienced while it was still in heaven.

This is a testament to how precious and valuable even the smallest mitzvah we do is to our neshamahs, and by extension, to G-d.

May we each get closer to G-d through teshuvah, and may our precious mitzvahs finally tip the scales and usher in the redemption. May it happen soon.

Yahrtzeits

This week the Carnegie Shul acknowledges the yahrtzeits of:

Anna Osgood York

Constance Sara Sherman

Minnie Sherman Kaliski

Cilli Moskovitz

George Raskin

Dr. Zayne Wilk

Golda Shenderovich

May their memories be for a blessing.