Dedicated by Anthony & Tamara Renton, on the Yahrzeit of
Dr. Peter Renton, Pesach ben Avraham z"l

בס"ד

21 NOVEMBER 2026 | 11 KISLEV 5787 VOLUME 40 | #12

DAF HASHAVUA

וַיֵּצֵא VAYEITZEI

SHABBAT ENDS:

London: 4.55pm
Birmingham: 4.59pm
Bournemouth: 5.09pm
Cardiff: 5.11pm
Dublin: 5.14pm
Edinburgh: 4.55pm
Glasgow: 5.00pm
Hull: 4.55pm
Leeds: 4.54pm
Liverpool: 5.05pm
Manchester: 4.59pm
Nottingham: 4.59pm
Sheffield: 4.59pm
Southend: 4.52pm
Southport: 5.05pm
Jerusalem: 5.16pm

"[Yaakov] took from the stones of the place which he arranged around his head, and lay down in that place" ***(Bereishit 28:11)***

The United Synagogue

JEWISH WOMEN'S AID

Sponsored by JWA to mark Jewish Women's Aid Shabbat

SIDRA BREAKDOWN

וַיֵּצֵא
VAYEITZEI

7th Sidra in:
בְּרֵאשִׁית
BEREISHIT

By Numbers:
148 VERSES
2,021 WORDS
7,512 LETTERS

Headlines:
BIRTH OF 11 OF THE 12 TRIBES

VAYEITZEI:
Artscroll p.144
Hertz p.106
Koren Sacks p.185
Soncino p.164

HAFTARAH:
Artscroll p.1140
Hertz p.118
Koren Sacks p.1435
Soncino p.188

SIDRA SUMMARY

1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – BEREISHIT 28:10-22

On Yaakov's (Jacob) journey to Charan, he falls asleep and dreams of a ladder resting on the ground and reaching up to heaven, with angels ascending and descending. God is at the top of the ladder, telling Yaakov that he will inherit the Land and that he will have plentiful offspring. Yaakov wakes up, having realised the holiness of the place, which is where the Temple would later be built (Rashi). He builds an altar and takes a vow committing to serve God fully (Ramban).

2ND ALIYA (LEVI) – 29:1-17

Yaakov travels eastwards. He sees a well in a field, covered by a large stone. The local shepherds tell Yaakov that the daughter of his uncle Lavan is approaching. Yaakov moves the boulder blocking the well and waters Rachel's flock. He kisses Rachel and weeps.

3RD ALIYA (SHLISHI) – 29:18-30:13

Yaakov wants to marry Rachel, the younger sister of Leah, and offers to work for Lavan for seven years as payment. Although Lavan agrees, when the time comes, he tricks Yaakov, swapping Rachel for Leah. Lavan defends his actions and agrees to let Yaakov marry Rachel a week later, if he works for another seven years. Leah, unlike Rachel, is blessed with children: Reuven, Shimon, Levi and Yehuda. Rachel gives Yaakov her maidservant Bilhah to conceive 'on her behalf'. Bilhah gives birth to Dan and Naftali. Leah then gives Yaakov her maidservant Zilpah, who gives birth to Gad and Asher.

4TH ALIYA (REVI'I) – 30:14-27

Reuven finds some *dudaim* (jasmine – Rashi) in the field and brings them to his mother Leah. Rachel asks for some of the jasmine. Leah agrees, but only in return for the right to sleep that night with Yaakov. Leah conceives and has a fifth son, Yissachar. This is followed by a sixth, Zevulun. She then has a daughter, Dinah. Rachel finally has a child, Yosef (Joseph). Yaakov demands that Lavan let him return home after all his years of work.

Point to Consider: *What is the connection between the birth of Yosef and Yaakov's demand to leave? (see Rashi to 30:25)*

5TH ALIYA (CHAMISHI) – 30:28-31:16

Lavan asks Yaakov to stay on and to specify his payment. Yaakov replies that he will keep the plain-looking animals currently in the flock, and any offspring born to them with unusual-patterned skin. Yaakov becomes very prosperous. Lavan's sons accuse Yaakov of theft. God tells Yaakov to return to Cana'an immediately. Rachel and Leah agree to leave.

6TH ALIYA (SHISHI) – 31:17-42

Yaakov's entire family leaves. Lavan finds this out three days later and chases after Yaakov, catching up with him at Mount Gilad. God appears to Lavan in a dream, telling him not to harm Yaakov. Lavan criticises Yaakov for fleeing and for stealing his idols. Yaakov denies the latter charge, unaware that Rachel was hiding them. Yaakov also defends his record in Lavan's house, where he worked tirelessly, despite Lavan's trickery.

7TH ALIYA (SHEVI'I) – 31:43-32:3

Lavan proposes a peace treaty, which Yaakov agrees to, symbolised by a stone monument built by Yaakov's sons. Lavan and Yaakov part ways.

HAFTARAH (HOSEA 12:13-14:10)

The haftarah, according to the general United Synagogue custom, is taken from the Book of Hoshea. The prophet Hoshea rebukes the tribe of Ephraim for their rebelliousness, warning them of the dire consequences. However, they will ultimately return to God, Who will welcome them back.

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Editor-in-Chief: Rabbi Baruch Davis
Editorial and Production Team:
Rabbi Daniel Sturgess
Rebbetzen Nechama Davis
Shevi Grunewald
Jennifer Dorling

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WILL THE REAL ME PLEASE STAND UP?

BY: **RABBI ALBERT CHAIT MBE**
UHC Leeds

OK! Before reading another word, please be honest, how many of you have already wondered whether ChatGPT wrote this article?!?

You know, it's a strange world in which we live.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) can now write our speeches, compose our emails, create our photographs and even imitate our voices. And whilst I recognise the extraordinary benefits of technology, I do wonder whether something rather precious is slowly disappearing from our world – authenticity.

I was officiating at a wedding recently and at the evening dinner, the groom delivered the most beautiful speech. It was heartfelt, humorous, poetic and incredibly moving. Yet, as he raised his glass to toast his new wife, someone on my table leant forward and announced, "*Oh, I bet he just ChatGPT'd it*!"

How very sad, I thought.

Not because using ChatGPT would necessarily make his words any less sincere, but because we seem to have reached a point where our first instinct is to question whether something genuinely came from the heart.

Having written sermons, articles and speeches for over 20 years, I suspect those who know me well would notice if my style had suddenly changed with the arrival of ChatGPT! Mind you, perhaps that's precisely what makes this whole subject so fascinating. Technology can increasingly reproduce the way we express ourselves. But can it ever replace what we actually feel?

This week's Sidra of Vayeitzei offers us a beautiful insight.

When Leah gives birth to her fourth son, Yehudah, she declares:

"*Hapa'am odeh et Hashem* - This time I will thank God" (*Bereishit* 29:35).

The Talmud (*Berachot* 7b) makes an extraordinary observation. From the creation of the world until Leah, nobody had expressed thanks to God in quite this way.

Of course, people had experienced gratitude before. But Leah teaches us something remarkable about recognising our blessings and giving that gratitude a voice.

And what I find particularly moving is that her words are so simple. No elaborate speech. No extraordinary poetry. Just four Hebrew words, expressing something that comes directly from her heart.

Perhaps that is something we need reminding of today.

There is nothing inherently wrong with using AI. It is a remarkable tool and one that can help us communicate in ways we might otherwise struggle to do. But there is an enormous difference between finding the right words to express what we feel and allowing something else to determine what those feelings should be.

> **“ Leah reminds us that the beauty of an expression of thanks is not simply in the words themselves, but in the person who truly means them.**

We can ask ChatGPT to write a thank-you letter, but it cannot experience gratitude on our behalf. It can compose a beautiful apology, but it cannot feel remorse. It can produce the most moving words about kindness, but it cannot perform that act of kindness in our place.

Leah reminds us that the beauty of an expression of thanks is not simply in the words themselves, but in the person who truly means them.

And that is something we learn this week.

In a world where almost anything can be made to look genuine, we must ensure the most important things carry that genuine spirit that can only be found in our heart and our soul.



SEEING THE UNSEEN

BY: **RABBI YONI BIRNBAUM**
Finchley United Synagogue

There is something reassuring about the familiar. We know where we are, we know the people around us, and we know what to expect. Leaving that behind can be exciting, but it can also be unsettling. Suddenly, what once seemed obvious no longer does.

That is one way of understanding the opening of *Parashat Vayeitzei*. Yaakov (Jacob) leaves Be'er Sheva, the place he knows as home and as the centre of his spiritual life. According to Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, 1040-1105), he encounters Mount Moriah on his journey, the eventual site of the Temple. The Rashbam (Rabbi Shmuel ben Meir, 1085-1158), however, understands the verse differently. Yaakov simply arrives at a place outside the familiar city of Luz, somewhere where travellers would stop and rest. Either way, Yaakov discovers something important: holiness is not confined to the places we already recognise as holy.

When Yaakov wakes from his dream, he says: '*Achen yesh Hashem bamakom hazeh, ve'anochi lo yadati*' – 'Surely God is in this place, and I did not know' (*Bereishit* 28:16). God was there before Yaakov recognised it. The reality had not changed. What had changed was Yaakov's ability to see it.

This idea is particularly powerful this week, as communities mark Jewish Women's Aid Shabbat. JWA's work reminds us that there can be another kind of unseen reality in our midst. A home may look happy and settled from the outside while, behind closed doors, someone is being controlled, isolated, humiliated or frightened.

Coercive control does not necessarily announce itself through visible violence. It can involve monitoring someone's movements, restricting contact with family and friends, controlling money, constant criticism, humiliation or making someone feel that the abuse is their fault. JWA points out that it can be difficult to recognise abuse when the person responsible is charming or well respected, or when a family appears to be thriving from the outside.

That is why seeing the unseen matters. JWA asks us to listen, to take concerns seriously and to offer support when we sense that something is not right. Its support is confidential, non-judgmental and client-led: women are listened to, believed and helped to understand their options rather than being told what they should do.

There is a particular responsibility here within a Jewish community. We rightly place enormous value on the home and on family life. But those values must never become a reason for someone to remain silent about abuse.

> **"Sometimes seeing the unseen begins simply by being willing to look again.**

Shalom bayit cannot mean preserving the appearance of peace while someone inside the home is living without it. JWA itself highlights the particular difficulties that Jewish women can face in speaking out, including shame, fear of not being believed and concern about bringing embarrassment to their family or community.

Yaakov's words offer a challenge: 'I did not know.' Sometimes we too can walk past a reality because we have not learned how to see it. Jewish Women's Aid Shabbat asks us to look more carefully, to listen when something does not seem right, and to create a community where a person who finds the courage to speak will be believed.

Sometimes seeing the unseen begins simply by being willing to look again.

JEWISH WOMEN'S AID

ISRAEL IN THE PARASHA

This series is an adaptation of short ideas written by former Chief Rabbi Lord Jakobovits z"l in the 1960s, which were later reprinted in a compilation of his writings, 'Mishnat HaSar'.

VAYEITZEI: GOD'S SPECIAL PROVIDENCE OVER THE LAND

Why do the angels in Yaakov's (Jacob's) dream first ascend the ladder and only then descend it? (*Bereishit* 28:12). Rashi explains that the angels accompanying Yaakov in the Land of Israel could not leave the Land. They therefore ascended, and a different group of angels descended to accompany him outside the Land.

At the end of the *parasha* too, we find that the Holy Land is protected by special angels. When Yaakov returned, "The angels of God met him" (32:2). Rashi explains that these were the angels of the Land of Israel, who came to greet him as he re-entered the Land. Yaakov therefore named the place *Machanayim* (Two Camps), referring to the two groups of angels: those who escorted him to the border and those who then came to meet him.

Furthermore, Divine Providence is more pronounced in the Land of Israel. God tells Yaakov: "Return to the land of your fathers and to your birthplace, and I will be with you" (31:3). Rashi comments: "[In Israel] I will be with you, but while you remain attached to the impure one [Lavan, outside the Land], I cannot cause My Presence to rest upon you."

Yaakov's dream was also a symbol of the fulfilment of God's promise regarding the Land. On the verse, "The land upon which you are lying I will give to you" (28:13), Rashi explains that God "folded up" the entire Land of Israel beneath Yaakov, symbolically showing that it was destined for his descendants.

PHRASE OF THE WEEK

S **T** U

BY: **RABBI ALEX CHAPPER** | Borehamwood & Elstree United Synagogue

Each week, working our way through the alphabet, we explore a Jewish word or phrase, bringing clarity and deeper understanding to its meaning.

Does ***TAHARAH*** mean:

1. Purity? | **2.** Wedding dance? | **3.** Sesame paste?

Taharah means "purity" and refers to the spiritual state of a person, object or animal.

The term is first found in *Bereishit* 7:2 when God instructs Noach (Noah) to select seven pairs of all the animals that are pure and one pair of those that are impure. Rashi explains that this is a delicate way of referring to kosher and non-kosher animals.

Here we also learn that some animals are considered pure and fit to be offered in the Temple, while others are impure (*tamei*) and unfit to be offered.

The concepts of *tumah* (impurity) and *taharah* also apply to humans. Whilst we are inherently pure, impurity reflects the spiritual impact of an encounter with death or loss of potential life.

Depending on the level of *tumah*, ritual washing of the hands or immersion in a *mikveh* are potential remedies. These have nothing to do with physical cleanliness, but rather restore a spiritual state of purity.

The book of *Vayikra* mentions a number of sources of impurity and the methods through which purification is achieved. The Torah also describes certain moral transgressions, such as sexual immorality and forms of idolatry, as causing *tumah*.

The *Mishna* contains an entire Order called "*Taharot*," devoted to the laws of *tumah* and *taharah*.

The term *taharah* is also used for the ritual preparation of the deceased before burial, a final act of dignity and care performed by the *Chevra Kadisha* (Burial Society).

JWA SHABBAT
20-21 NOVEMBER 2026

SEE THE *Unseen*

See the signs. Start a conversation.

Coercive control isn't always loud or obvious. It can look like care, concern or a reasonable request, while quietly taking away a woman's independence, choices and everyday freedoms.

88% **of the women we supported last year were experiencing coercive control.**

Find out more and get involved
jwa.org.uk/shabbat2026



If something doesn't feel right, for you or someone you care about, you don't need to be certain to reach out.

0808 801 0500 • advice@jwa.org.uk • jwa.org.uk/webchat

Jewish Women's Aid supports Jewish women and children affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence.

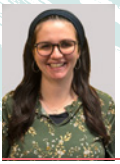
JEWISH WOMEN'S AID

Charity no.1047045

In loving memory of Bayla bas Eliezer z"l (Bertha Reichenbaum)

THE TRIBE WEEKLY
PARASHAT VAYEITZEI 20-21 NOVEMBER | 11 KISLEV

THE DOWNWARD ESCALATOR



BY: **SHIFRA CHESLER**

Community Liaison Manager, Tribe

In *Parashat Vayeitzei*, Yaakov (Jacob) has a dream about a ladder reaching from the ground up to heaven, with angels going up and down. There's an interesting idea we can learn from this. Imagine you're standing on an escalator that's moving down. If you just stand still, what happens? You go down! If you want to get to the top, you have to make an effort to climb up, because the escalator is moving against you.

Life is a bit like that escalator. We might think that if we're not doing anything bad, we're doing fine. But becoming a better person takes effort. If we stop trying to be kinder, or stop making good choices, we can slowly move backwards without even noticing. The good news is that every small effort helps us move up. Maybe you choose to include someone who is being left out, stay calm when your brother or sister annoys you, or do the right thing even when your friends are doing something else. Each of these choices helps you grow.

So here's a question to think about: Are you climbing up, or are you letting the escalator take you down? You don't have to become perfect overnight. Just pick one thing you want to get better at and make a little effort each day. Because every small step counts, and the person you become is shaped by the choices you make today.

Spot the Difference!

See if you can find all 10 differences between these two scenes from Jacob's dream!

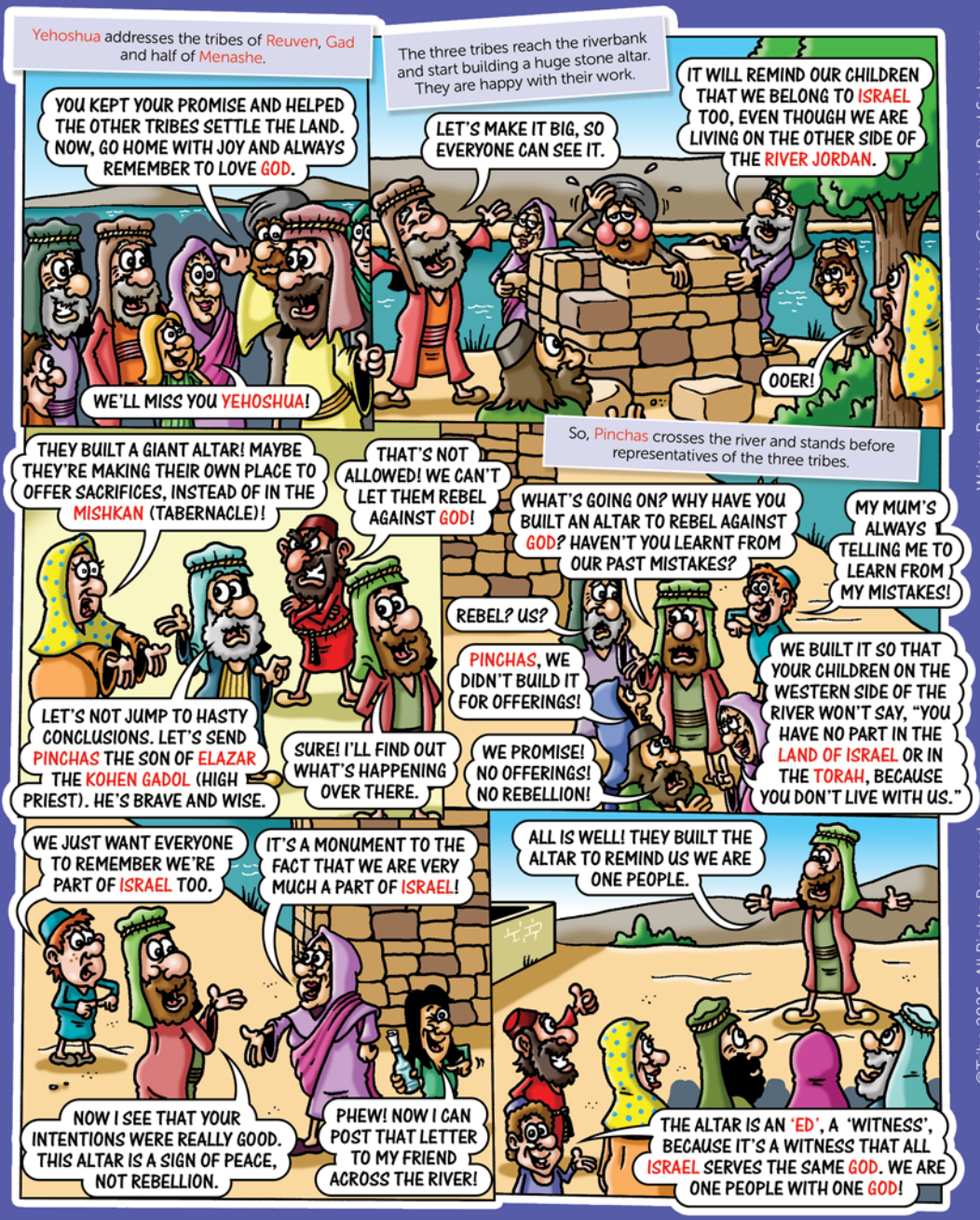




THE BOOK OF JOSHUA (YEHOSHUA): PART ELEVEN

THE TRIBE SCRIBE

Brothers Across the River!



Writer: Rabbi Nicky Goldmeier Cartoonist: Paul Solomons

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