

TORAH PORTIONS
Parashat Vayetzei

THIS WEEK'S TORAH PORTION

GENESIS 28:10-32:3

Parashat Vayetzei / פרשת וַיַּעֲזֵב

In this week's guide...

Our **COMMENTARY** from Rabbi Jason explores Jacob's mysterious vision of a ladder that reached to heaven. Even though this biblical story is quite well-known (having inspired many songs and pieces of art), its deeper meaning remains elusive for many of us. In this study you will discover rabbinic insights as well as alpha-numeric details which reveal impactful and profound truths. You will be blessed and enlightened as you study with Rabbi Jason this week..... 1

The **NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN** connects the content of Jacob's dialogue with God following his dream and his encounter with the love of his life, Rachel. If you want to be fully present to God's calling and purpose for your life...pay close attention! And beyond this, Jacob's initial meeting of Rachel points backward one generation and forward several centuries, revealing deeply moving redemptive truths..... 2

BY THE NUMBERS is going to prepare your heart and your mind to not only enjoy a fabulous meal in a couple weeks, but to truly engage in thanksgiving. America's holiday season may kick off in a couple weeks, but we're going to journey deeper into the biblical significance of thanksgiving. We're going to travel from the "heavens and the earth" to your very chromosomes and back again! We pray that this article will not only enrich your Thanksgiving celebration, but empower you to live a lifestyle of *thanksgiving*..... 4

OVERVIEW

Abraham's only son, Isaac, gave birth to twin sons. The younger twin, Jacob, wreaked so much havoc that he had to flee for fear of his life, hence the name of this Torah portion (*Vayetzei* is Hebrew for "and he left"). In this portion we read about Jacob's transition to a husband (of two women) and father (of twelve sons). His leaving brought him to his uncle Laban and much prosperity, but also more drama.

WORD OF THE WEEK

tôdâ / תּוֹדָה

n. **Confession, praise, sacrifice of praise, thanks, thanksgiving, thank-offering.**

The term was employed uniquely in reference to the sacrificial system of Israel. One could bring a "thank-offering" (or "praise-offering") in which he would make declarations of praise to God and/or confession of sin to God as he offered his sacrifice. When the sacrifice was accompanied with praise (confession) of God, it was especially a time of joy (Ps 95:2; Jer 17:26; 33:11).

taken from the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament

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FUSION GLOBAL WITH RABBI JASON
Weekly Torah Portion – *Parashat Vayetzei* / פרשת וַיֵּצֵא
Genesis 28:10-32:3

COMMENTARY

by Rabbi Jason Sobel

He happened upon a certain place and spent the night there, for the sun had set. So he took one of the stones from the place and put it by his head and lay down in that place. He dreamed: All of a sudden, there was a stairway [“ladder” in Hebrew] set up on the earth and its top reaching to the heavens—and behold, angels of God going up and down on it! Surprisingly, Adonai was standing on top of it. (Gen. 28:11–13)

On his way to Haran, Jacob had a life-changing encounter. He dreamed of “a ladder standing earthward and its top reached the heaven.”ⁱ The ladder originated in heaven and was sent to earth by the Lord Himself. One commentator noted, “its [the ladder] summit touching the place where a glory shone that paled even the lustrous constellations of that pure sky.”ⁱⁱ

The ladder is a vehicle of revelation, how heaven and earth communicate. The Hebrew word for “ladder” is *sulam*, which has the same numeric value as “Sinai” and “voice” (130). God’s voice (130) was heard at Sinai (130). God’s voice (130) can still be heard through the Torah given at Sinai (130). The Torah—representative of God’s Word, like Jacob’s ladder (130)—is God’s primary means of speaking to us.



Jacob's Ladder by Lesley Friedmann

Jesus said to His disciple Nathaniel, “Amen, amen I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God going up and coming down on the Son of Man!” (John 1:51). The ladder (130) Jacob saw is a symbol of the Messiah. In and through Him, the fullest revelation of God is made manifest to the world. The Voice (130) that spoke at Sinai (130) now speaks through the Messiah. “In these last days He has spoken to us through a Son” (Heb. 1:2).

As God, Jesus has origins in heaven but descended to earth through the incarnation. When Adam and Eve sinned, they broke the connection between heaven and earth. God restored this connection through Jesus, the ladder. Believing in Him, listening to His voice, and walking with Him will lead you to new spiritual heights. Jesus has the power to turn you from a Jacob, or even an Esau, into an Israel—a prince or princess of God.

Before Jacob went to sleep and dreamed of the ladder, he put a stone by his head (Gen. 28:11). When he awoke from his divine encounter, “Jacob got up and took the stone [singular], which he had placed by his head, and set it up as a memorial stone and poured oil on top of it” (Gen. 28:18). According to one Jewish tradition, a miracle occurred, and three rocks became one stone. The three stones became one, prophetically communicating to Jacob that the Lord would unite His name, His plan, and His promises with Jacob as He had done with Isaac and Abraham. Even though Jacob used deceptive means to obtain God’s blessing, the Lord assured him, by this miracle, that He would use Jacob to help advance the promised Seed and divine plan.

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The three rocks in the Jewish tradition are an allusion to the essential triune nature of God. The word for “stone” in Hebrew (*evan*) has three letters, *aleph*, *bet*, and *nun*, and they are an acronym for the Godhead: The *aleph* (numerical value of 1) represents the *Abba/Av* (Father). The *bet* is symbolic of the Son; it is the first letter of the word *ben* and has a numerical value of 2. The *nun* has the numerical value of 50, which is associated with the Holy Spirit (*Ruach HaKodesh*) because God gave the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the fiftieth day. Fifty in Jewish thought is associated with freedom (“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” / 2 Cor. 3:17 NIV). *Evan* can also be read as a contraction of the words *Av* (Father) and *Ben* (Son). This alternate translation points to the fact that the Father is seen and made manifest through the Son. It also alludes to the oneness that exists between the two, as Jesus declared, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30).

What does this mean to us? Pastor Warren Wiersbe gives us insight:

Jacob is a perfect picture of the lost soul — in the darkness, fleeing for his life, away from the father’s house, burdened with sin, and ignorant of the fact that God is near him and wants to save him. The ladder pictures Christ as the only way from earth to heaven. He opens heaven for us and brings heaven’s blessings to our lives. And He alone can take us to heaven. Jacob thought he was in a lonely wilderness and awakened to discover he had been at the very gate of heaven!ⁱⁱⁱ

What about you? Do you think you’re wandering in the wilderness without hope? No, look to *Yeshua*, the ladder who awakens us to salvation, breakthrough, and renewed hope.

Portions of this week’s commentary are from Rabbi Jason’s best-selling book, *Mysteries of the Messiah*. Why not [order copies as gifts](#) for friends and family this holiday season?

NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN

As the previous *parsha* (*Toldot*) neared its end, we read that when Esau saw that Isaac charged Jacob not to marry a Canaanite, he decided to marry Ishmael’s daughter (Gen 28:6-10). Against this backdrop, Jacob set out to the house of his uncle Laban to find himself a wife. Since children were a central aspect of the covenant God made with Abraham, Jacob’s marriage would be especially critical (and Isaac knew this). In addition to Esau’s contemptuous nuptials, this week’s portion calls to mind *Parashat Chayei Sara*, in which Abraham sent his servant (rather than Isaac) to find a bride for his son. Jacob’s “mission” played out quite differently, however.

At the very outset, Jacob had a vision of a ladder that reached heaven. We should understand this experience as an integral part of his quest to find a bride. That nighttime encounter established Jacob’s identity as a participant in the covenant established with Abraham and Isaac. God’s words to Jacob echo His previous communications,



Jacob's Dream by José de Ribera (1639)

“I am *Adonai*, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your seed. Your seed will be as the dust of the land, and you will burst forth to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed—and in your seed. Behold, I am with you, and I will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land, for I will not forsake you until I have done what I promised you.” (Gen 28:13-15)

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Jacob's response is worth noting: "If God will be with me and watch over me on this way that I am going, and provide me food to eat and clothes to wear... then *Adonai* will be my God" (vv. 20-21). His concern about food and clothing connects us to these words in the Sermon on the Mount, "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?'... But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt 6:31 & 33). In other words, it appears as though Jacob understood that his faithful participation in Abraham's covenant was the result of divine invitation and, therefore, God's provision would sustain him. The same is true for us: believers are free to pursue God's greater purposes in the earth only *as* we are free from worry about food and clothing.

We find this worry-free living in *Yeshua's* life as well. He said that "Foxes have dens and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (Matt 8:20). He could go to desolate places with no food or water because, as He said, "My food is to do the will of the One who sent Me" (John 4:34). Jacob and *Yeshua* were present to their covenantal purpose because they trusted in God's willingness and ability to provide for them.

Isn't it curious that both Jacob and *Yeshua* showed up at a well in the heat of the day? At the well in Genesis 29, there were **three** flocks. The number three speaks of resurrection and new life in the context of sacrifice. On the **third** day of Creation, God created plants yielding seeds (that go into the ground and spring up). On the **third** day, Abraham saw Moriah, where Isaac would be given back to him, alive (Gen 22:4). And, of course, *Yeshua* arose on the **third** day. And flocks (we read later in this portion that these were goats and lambs) consisted of the animals used in sacrifice. John the "Immerser" announced *Yeshua* as the "Lamb of God."

At this well, Jacob met his future bride, Rachel. After revealing his identity to her, she "ran and told her father" (Gen 29:12). After *Yeshua* revealed Himself to be the Messiah, the Samaritan woman "left her water jar and went back to the town" to tell the residents about Him (John 4:26-29). While Jacob's encounter with Rachel at the well was a connection to the Abrahamic promise of **children**, *Yeshua's* encounter with the Samaritan woman (at "Jacob's well"!) pointed to the promise of **nations**!

In the story of Isaac and Rebekah, we see types and shadows of the Holy Spirit bringing the Bride to *Yeshua*. In the story of Jacob and Rachel, we see a prophetic sign of *Yeshua* coming to us. We are participants in the covenantal life by grace through faith. We are found and chosen for intimacy and fruitfulness with our Maker for the blessing of the world!



traditional site of Jacob's Well (West Bank, Israel)

BY THE NUMBERS

Just before we celebrate the Jewish holiday of *Chanukah* this year, Americans will celebrate the civic holiday called Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is a time (especially for believers) to express gratitude and thanks to God for His blessings in our life. In Hebrew, the expression for “Thanksgiving” is *Chag Hodayah*, which has the numerical value of **46**. On Thanksgiving (46), we need to make it a priority “to thank” (*letovah/46*) “God” (*Elohai/46*).

God created heaven and earth, which symbolize the two primary forms of good by which He blesses humanity. Therefore, we need to thank God for all the spiritual (heavenly) and material (earthly) blessings we are privileged to enjoy. Jewish tradition holds that we should bless God a minimum of 100 blessings each day, which is astounding since the word for 100 in Hebrew—*me’ah*—equals 46, the same as Thanksgiving (46).

On a spiritual level, 46 points to some particular things for which we should show gratitude. We need to thank “God” (46) for “his Redeemer” (*VeGo-alo/46*) who saved us “by the blood” (*ba-dam/46*) and made us “righteous” (*dikaia/46*). Those who leave all for Him will receive “100” (*me’ah/46*) times in the Kingdom (see Mark 10:30).



But of course, there is still more! Another of God’s greatest gifts is Scripture. Hebrew and Greek are the primary languages for the written Word of God. The Hebrew alphabet contains 22 letters, and Greek has 24 for a total of 46 letters. But even more incredibly, each human cell consists of 23 pairs of chromosomes for a total of 46. Much like the 23 chromosomes that make up our DNA are connected to the number 46, so are the alphabets used to write Scripture, for it is creation’s spiritual building block. All our chromosomes (23x2) should praise the Lord not only on “Thanksgiving” (46) but every day of the year.

But there is still more! As conception occurs when 23 male chromosomes pair with 23 female chromosomes, the number 46 conveys the idea of being joined together. The priestly tribe of Israel whose calling was to unite Israel to the Lord is “Levi,” which has the numerical value of 46 and means “to be joined” or “to join together.” Not only does the Word of God join us to the Lord, but so does thanksgiving and praise. It should be no surprise that the Hebrew expression, “and [people] will praise you” (*ve-yooducha*) adds up to 46. On “Thanksgiving” (46), it is essential to take the time to recognize all the spiritual and material blessings that “God” (46) has given us and thank him “for the good” (46).

Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *Tree of Life Version*.

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Rabbi Jason Sobel & Fusion Global present BY THE NUMBERS
HEBREW & GREEK ARE "ALPHANUMERIC" // LETTERS = NUMBERS

Words and phrases that add up to **46**:

Chag Hodayah / "Thanksgiving"

letovah / "to thank"

Elohai / "God"

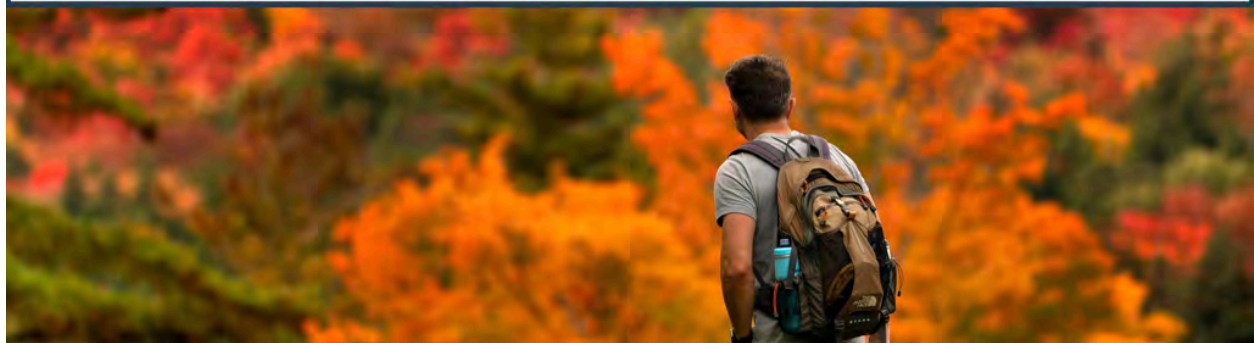
VeGo-alo / "his redeemer"

ba-dam / "by the blood"

dikaia / "righteous" [Greek]

me'ah / "100" (number of daily blessings)

ve-yooducha / "and [people] will praise you"



THOUGHTS for REFLECTION

Take some time this week to prayerfully consider and discuss with friends:

- Personal drama—especially within our families—can leave us feeling isolated, lost, and questioning the future. Perhaps this was what Jacob experienced as he tried to sleep that night. His dream is a source of hope for all of us who feel alone or may be questioning our future (because of our past). If you, or someone you know, needs that kind of hope, tell the Lord—**He is your "ladder" to hope!**
- There is wisdom in preparation. Just as we wouldn't try to throw together a Thanksgiving dinner the day of, let's not enter this season spiritually unprepared. What are you most grateful for in your life on a personal level? As you reflect on this question, it can be fruitful to recall stories—moments that made a difference in your life. For instance, do you remember the first time you consciously "met" *Yeshua* (like Rachel meeting Jacob at the well)? May we enter this season of thanksgiving more **prepared to praise** than ever!

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NEXT WEEK'S READINGS: *Parashat Vayishlach* / פרשת וַיִּשְׁלַח

TORAH

Sunday / Genesis 32:4-13
Monday / Genesis 32:14-30
Tuesday / Genesis 32:31-33:5
Wednesday / Genesis 33:6-20
Thursday / Genesis 34:1-35:11
Friday / Genesis 35:12-36:19
Saturday / Genesis 36:20-43

Prophetic Reading (*Haftarah*): Obadiah 1:1 - 1:21

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 2:13-23

ⁱ *Baal Haturim Chumash*, vol. 1, *Bereishis* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1999), 253.

ⁱⁱ Alexander MacLaren, *MacLaren's Commentary: Expositions of Holy Scripture*, (New York: A.C. Armstrong & Son, 1906), 208.

ⁱⁱⁱ Warren Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament*, (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 1993), 63.