

Parshas Vayeitzei

This week's Parsha is Vayeitzei. In it, we are told of Yaakov's journey from his father's house to his uncle Lavan, where he spent the next 20 years working for Lavan, marrying, having some of his kids, etc. The Torah is very precise in what is written in the Torah. The precision is so we can derive "Hora'ah" (guidance, lessons) from it. In today's world, falseness is professed ad nauseam on social media, mainstream media and academia. The blindness and silence to antisemitism, Jewish women, terrorism death, etc. are loud, more so the false narratives are pushed as if they are authentic, and there is a distinct cognitive dissonance between moral reasoning and people's desire to justify conflicting opinions through willful blindness and changing narratives¹.

As Jews, this is excessively scary, frustrating, and emptying. Except we have the Torah and this week's Parsha, which scripts how we interact with the world and what to do.

I will first point out a few things from the Parsha and Haggadah and then tie it all together.

In the Haggadah, in the paragraph Tzei Ulimad, Lavan was pointed out to be worse than Pharaoh. Because Pharaoh only wanted to destroy the men, whereas Lavan wanted to destroy everything. Where do we see this in the Parsha?

¹ One example that comes to mind is that there was a prisoner/hostage swap for Israeli hostages. No one condemned the fact that the prisoners being released are convicted criminals. Even as Israel negotiated, the terrorists demanded 3 criminals for 1 innocent hostage. A lady had the audacity, when

Lavan first tricked Yaakov by giving Leah as the first to be married because, as Lavan said in the Parsha, it is not the custom of the place to put the younger before the older (29:26). The words chosen are similar to the prophecy to Rivka, that the older will serve the younger (25:23). Lavan must have known about this prophecy and wanted to do all in his power to change that, in this case by wearing Yaakov down, and tricking him into marrying Leah, the daughter seemingly destined to Esav.

Later, when Yaakov leaves with his whole family, Lavan chases them and makes them crazy (ransacks their possessions looking for his miniature idols Rochel took). Then Lavan says in 31:28 that you didn't allow me to kiss my children, you have acted foolishly. The words are **וְלֹא נִטְשָׁתִי לְנִשְׁק לְבָבִי וְלִבְנֹתִי** **עָתָה הִסְכַּלְתָּ עִשָׂו**. If you look at acting foolishly, the **הִסְכַּלְתָּ עִשָׂו** can be read as you worked like Esav. Lavan had been trying to wear Yaakov thin, to the point that Esav, his brother, would be the progeny of Yitzchak. If he succeeded, he would have destroyed the Jews in a way worse than Pharaoh.

We know Lavan attempted to wear Yaakov down, by the Torah showing us the distinct way Yaakov shepherded and grew the flock of sheep to great wealth, all while having the goal post for wages and expectations changed as the posuk says 100 times. Yaakov was so fearful, and because Lavan's 'face changed,' he made a mad dash (with

discussing this on the news, to use that against Israel by saying that Israel must value Palestinian life less than Jewish life if they think that 1 Jew equals 3 Palestinians. Willful blindness. You cannot make this stuff up.

his wife's permission and Hashem's direction) to leave in the middle of the night. Lavan then gaslights Yaakov, blaming him for being the bad one and excusing his behaviour as not problematic. Yaakov pushes back, and Lavan tries to show his power that the only reason he is showing restraint is that Hashem said so (in his dream- all in Chapter 31 onwards).

Yaakov's success process is recorded through a blessing from Hashem to show that Lavan was just a foolish, conniving, deceitful, gaslighting person who switched the narrative and terms on Yaakov "100 times". This is the world we live in. When the Jews succeed, the world changes the narrative 100 times on us. Israel will do all in its power to act under moral principles, and the world (the Lavans) will twist and change to try to put the Jews down constantly. But Yaakov pushed back and returned to his father's house; Yaakov persisted and succeeded because that was Hashem's plan.

And guess what? The Lavans around us, who try to bring us down, gaslight and deceive us, will lose. We will win and ultimately be meritorious to have Mashiach speedily in our times.