



VAYETZE

WHEREVER YOU GO, THERE YOU ARE

Finding G-d's Purpose in Your Detours

PARSHAH OVERVIEW

Vayetze

Jacob leaves his hometown of Be'er Sheba 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.

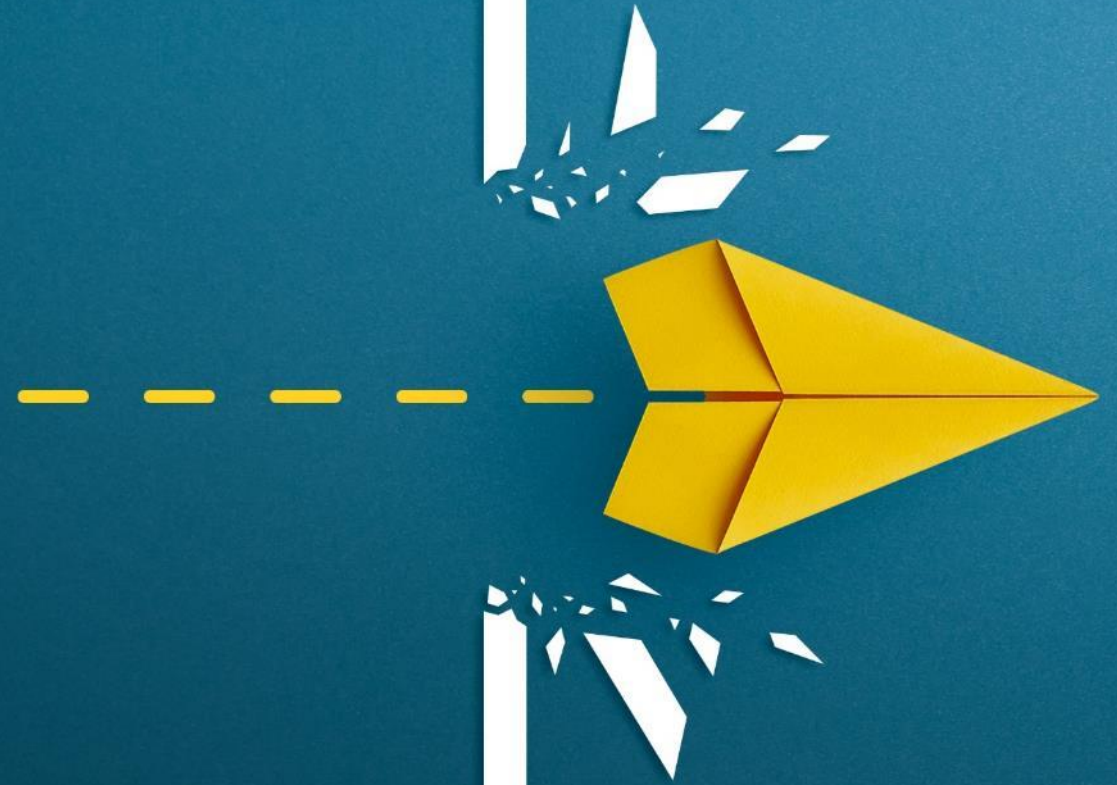
Leah gives birth to six sons—Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun—and a daughter, Dinah, while Rachel remains barren. Rachel gives Jacob her handmaiden, Bilhah, as a wife to bear children in her stead, and two more sons, Dan and Naphtali, are born. Leah does the same with her handmaiden, 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 fourteen 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 will 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.

QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

What is your best coping mechanism for life's challenges?





Jacob was accompanied by angels as he returned to Canaan from Mesopotamia, where he had fled to escape Esau's anger.

TEXT 1

Genesis 32:2-3

ב. וַיַּעֲקֹב הֵלֶךְ לְדַרְכּוֹ, וַיִּפְגְּעוּ בּוֹ מַלְאֲכֵי אֱלֹהִים.

ג. וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב כִּי־אֲשֶׁר רָאָם מַחֲנֵה אֱלֹהִים זֶה,
וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא מַחֲנַיִם.

2. And Jacob went on his way, and G-dly angels met him.
3. And when Jacob saw them, he said, "This is G-d's camp," and he named the place Mahanaim—a double camp.

TEXT 2

*Midrash, Tanchuma,
Vayishlach 3*

מהו מחננים?

שְׁתֵּי מַחֲנֹת. שְׁבִשְׁעָה שְׁהֵלֵךְ יַעֲקֹב
לְאֶרֶם נְהַרִים הָיוּ מִלְּאֲכֵי אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל
מְשַׁמְרִין אוֹתוֹ וּמְלוֹיִן אוֹתוֹ. כִּינֵן
שְׁהִגִּיעוּ לְחוּצָה לְאֶרֶץ, נִסְתַּלְקוּ וַיֵּרְדוּ
אֲחֵרִים וַנְתַּלּוּ לוֹ.

כִּינֵן שְׁחֹזַר מִן לָבָן, הָיוּ אוֹתָן מִלְּאֲכֵים
שְׁנַמְסְרוּ לוֹ מְלוֹיִן אוֹתוֹ עַד אֶרֶץ
יִשְׂרָאֵל. כְּשֶׁהִרְגִישׁוּ מִלְּאֲכֵי אֶרֶץ
יִשְׂרָאֵל שִׁיעֲקֹב בָּא, יָצְאוּ לְקִרְאָתוֹ
לְהִתְלוֹוֹת לוֹ, שְׁנֵאָמַר: "וַיִּפְגְּעוּ בוֹ
מִלְּאֲכֵי אֱלֹקִים" (בְּרֵאשִׁית לב, ב).
הִתְחִילוּ שְׁתֵּי מַחֲנֹת עוֹמְדִין אֶצְלֵ יַעֲקֹב.

What is the meaning of the two camps?

There were two camps of angels. When Jacob traveled to Mesopotamia, angels from Israel protected and accompanied him. When they arrived at the border of the Holy Land, the angels from Israel departed, and other angels [from the Diaspora] descended to escort him.

Upon his return from Laban's home, the angels in whose care he had been entrusted accompanied him until he arrived at Israel's border. When the angels from Israel sensed Jacob's impending arrival, they left Israel to greet and escort him back. As it is written, "And the G-dly angels met him" (Genesis 32:2). Thus, two camps of angels were standing near Jacob.

As Jacob neared the border of Canaan, angels from the Land of Israel came to meet him, joining the angels who had accompanied him from Mesopotamia.



QUESTIONS

Why did Jacob need two sets of angels?

Why couldn't the same set of angels escort him?

ANSWERS

Angels in the Holy Land are holier than those of the Diaspora. Therefore, the first group couldn't leave the Holy Land, and the second group couldn't enter it.

TEXT 3A

*Midrash, Tanchuma,
Vayeshev 2*

שׂאִין הַמַּלְאָכִים הַמְשַׁמְשִׁין בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל
מְשַׁמְשִׁין בְּחוּצָה לְאֶרֶץ, וְלֹא שֶׁל חוּצָה
לְאֶרֶץ בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Angels that serve in the Land of Israel are not permitted to serve outside of Israel. Similarly, the angels that serve outside of Israel are not allowed to serve in the Land of Israel.

TEXT 3B

*Midrash, Tanchuma,
Vayeshev 2*

וכשבא לחזור, קרא הקדוש ברוך הוא לאותן המלאכים שהיו משמשין אותו בארץ.
אמר להם: הרי יעקב חוזר, צאו ונצא לאנפטי שלו.

למה הדבר דומה?

למלך שיצא בנו למדינת הים ליקח אשה, אחר ימים בא לחזור לבית אביו, אמר המלך
לאפסיקין שלו: בואו ונצא לאנפטי של בני. כך כשבא יעקב לחזור לבית אביו הקדוש
ברוך הוא למלאכי השרת, אמר להם: בואו ונצא לאנפטי של יעקב.

When Jacob arrived at the border and was about to enter, G-d summoned the angels that served Jacob in the Holy Land. He said to them, "Jacob is about to return; let us go out to him."

To what may this be compared?

To a king whose son traveled abroad to marry. Many days later, when he returned to his father's palace, his father told his guards, "Come, let us go out to my son." Similarly, when Jacob was about to return to his father's home, G-d summoned the ministering angels and said, "Come let us go out to Jacob."



When Jacob returned, the angels from Israel were commanded to leave the Land to greet him.

QUESTION

If these angels are forbidden to leave the Holy Land, why did G-d justify allowing them to leave now?

TEXT 4A

*Maimonides,
Mishneh Torah, Laws
of Kings 5:9*

אָסוּר לָצֵאת מֵאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְחוּצָה
לְאֶרֶץ לְעוֹלָם, אֲלֵא לְלַמַּד תּוֹרָה, אוֹ
לְשֵׂא אִשָּׁה, אוֹ לְהַצִּיל מִן הָעוֹבְדֵי
כּוֹכָבִים וּמַזְלוֹת, וַיִּחְזֹר לְאֶרֶץ. וְכֵן
יוֹצֵא הוּא לְסַחֲרָה.

אָבֵל לְשֹׁכֵן בְּחוּצָה לְאֶרֶץ אָסוּר, אֲלֵא
אִם כֵּן חֹזֵק שָׁם הָרָעֵב עַד שֶׁנֶּעֱשֶׂה
שָׁנָה דִּינָר חֲטִיף בְּשָׁנֵי דִּינָרִין.

בְּמָה דְבָרִים אָמוּרִים?

כְּשֶׁהָיוּ הַמַּעוֹת מְצוּיִים וְהַפְּרוֹת בְּיָקָר.
אָבֵל אִם הַפְּרוֹת בְּזוּל וְלֹא יִמָּצֵא
מַעוֹת וְלֹא בְּמָה יִשְׁתַּכֵּר וְאֵבֶדָה
פְּרוּטָה מִן הַכִּסִּים, יֵצֵא לְכָל מְקוֹם
שֶׁיִּמָּצֵא בּוֹ רִוַח.

It is forbidden to travel from Israel to the Diaspora. The only exceptions are to study Torah, to marry, and to save one's property from gentiles. Then one must return to Israel. One may also leave Israel for business purposes.

However, it is forbidden to leave Israel with the intention of settling permanently in the Diaspora unless the famine in Israel is so severe that a dinar's worth of wheat is sold at two dinars.

When do these conditions apply?

When one possesses financial resources, but food is expensive. However, if food is inexpensive, but a person cannot find financial resources or employment and has no money available, he or she may leave and go to any place where they can find relief.

WHEN LEAVING ISRAEL IS ALLOWED

1. To study Torah from a teacher who lives outside of Israel. 
2. To get married. 
3. To save an at-risk property. 
4. To do business. 
5. Under conditions of famine. 

TEXT 4B

*Rabbi Yosef Caro,
Kesef Mishneh, ad
loc.*

ומה שכתב "ויחזור לארץ", כלומר, אבל
אפילו לשום אחד מאלו הדברים לא יצא
לחוץ לארץ להשתקע שם.

Maimonides writes that one must return to Israel. By this, he means that even if one was allowed to leave, they may not leave to settle permanently in the Diaspora.

Even if allowed to leave, one must return to Israel after fulfilling their objective.



TEXT 5A

*Talmud, Kidushin
31b*

רב אסי הָוּה לִיהּ הֵיִיא אַמָּא זְקִינָה . . . שְׁבָקָהּ וְאִזְל לְאַרְעָא דִּישְׂרָאֵל. שָׁמַע דְּקָא אֲזִלָּה
אַבְתְּרִיהּ. אָתָּא לְקַמֵּיהּ דְּרַבִּי יוֹחָנָן, אָמַר לִיהּ: "מַהוּ לְצֵאת מֵאַרְץ לְחוּצָה לְאַרְץ?"
אָמַר לִיהּ: "אַסוּר."

"לְקִרְאת אַמָּא מַהוּ?" . . .

אָמַר לִיהּ: "אַסִּי, נִתְרַצִּית לְצֵאת, הַמָּקוּם יִחְזִירָךְ לְשָׁלוֹם."

Rav Asi had an elderly mother . . . whom he left behind when he moved to the Land of Israel. After settling in Israel, he heard she was coming to join him. He came to Rabbi Yochanan and asked, "May I leave Israel for the Diaspora?"

Rabbi Yochanan replied, "It is forbidden."

Rav Asi asked, "Is it different if I am going to greet my mother?"

Rabbi Yochanan replied, "Asi, you want to go; may G-d bring you back in peace."



Rabbi Asi left Israel to visit his elderly mother, which some commentators understand as permitting travel abroad to honor one's parents.

TEXT 5B

*Rabbi Menachem
Me'iri, ad loc.*

מותר לצאת מארץ ישראל לחוזה לארץ
לצאת לקראת אביו או לקראת אמו, וכן
לשאר מיני כבוד.

It is permissible to leave Israel for the Diaspora to greet one's father or mother or to perform any other act of honor.

THE OMISSION

Honoring one's parents is not included in Maimonides's list of exceptions for leaving Israel. This omission suggests he does not consider it a valid reason.

THE INTENT

Rabbi Asi didn't leave Israel for personal reasons; he traveled through the Diaspora to bring his mother back to Israel. His journey was always toward Israel, not away from it, so he never truly left.

The purpose defines the journey. When you travel for Israel, Israel goes with you.



TEXT 6

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei
Sichot 25, p. 152*

וויבאלד אז דאס וואס מלאכי ארץ ישראל
זיינען ביציאתם פון ארץ ישראל געווען אויסן
"ללותו לארץ", איז אויף דעם מלכתחילה ניט
חל דער גדר יציאה מהארץ לחוצה לארץ.

The angels from Israel left Israel to escort Jacob back to Israel. Thus, there was no prohibition against leaving.

ANSWER

When Jacob left Israel, the angels couldn't accompany him because they are bound to the Holy Land. But on his return, the angels were allowed to leave Israel to escort him back.



Our detours in life are often
G-d's direct path.

Jacob's journey was about
building the future of the
Jewish people.

TEXT 7

Talmud, Pesachim
87b

וְאָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר: לֹא הִגְלָה הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת
יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבֵין הָאֻמוֹת אֲלָא כְּדִי שְׂיִתְוַסְּפוּ עֲלֵיהֶם גֵּרִים,
נְשַׁנְאֵמַר: "וַיִּזְרַעַתִּיָּהּ לִי בְּאֶרֶץ" (הוֹשֵׁעַ ב, כה). כְּלוּם
אָדָם זֹרֵעַ סֵאָה אֲלָא לְהַכְנִיִס כַּמָּה כּוֹרִין.

Rabbi Elazar said, "The only reason G-d exiled the Jewish people among the nations was for them to be joined by converts." The Torah states, "I will plant [the Jews] in the earth for my sake" (Hosea 2:25). The only reason one plants a small measure of seeds is to harvest many bushels of grain.

G-d dispersed us among
the nations to help us find
the precious souls
embedded among them.





Exile is not punishment
but a deliberate act for
our growth.

QUESTIONS

What is our purpose in exile if we don't facilitate conversions?

Doesn't Judaism discourage conversion?

TEXT 8

*Rabbi Dovber of
Lubavitch, Biurei
HaZohar, Vayigash,
p. 136a*

אך הענין הוא . . . שכאשר נגרש האדם
מגן עדן אחר החטא, נפלו הרבה נשמות
וניצוצות . . . אורות עליונים דקדושה
למטה בעולמות הנפרדים . . . דזהו ענין
גלות השכינה בע' שרים כדי להוציא
מהן אותן הנשמות והניצוצות שנפלו בהן
. . . ובהיותה שם בגלות, בזה הגלות
מתבררים כל הניצוצות שנפלו שמה.

בכל גלות, כאשר ישראל שוכנים תחת
אותו השר בגלות ומולידים ופרים
ורבים, כל הנשמות שיולידו, הן הן
הנשמות שמלובשים ומשוקעים באותו
השר . . . מזמן השבירה בחטא אדם
הראשון . . .

The idea is . . . that when Adam was
driven from the Garden of Eden after
sinning [with the forbidden fruit], many
souls and sacred sparks . . . fell below to
a space of fragmentation and division. .
. . . G-d exiled us among the nations to
extract these souls and sparks. . . .

When dispersed among the nations, we
can repair the sparks that fell among
those nations.

When we are exiled to a country under
the aegis of its ministering angel, all the
children born to us receive Jewish souls
that were embedded in that nation and
its archangel . . . since Adam's sin, when
everything shattered. . . .

TEXT 8

*Rabbi Dovber of
Lubavitch, Biurei
HaZohar, Vayigash,
p. 136a*

וזהו שאמרו רבותינו זכרונם לברכה
על פסוק "וזרעתיה לי בארץ כו'",
לא גלו ישראל אלא כדי שיתוספו
עליהם גרים. פירוש, הניצוצות
דקדושה שמולידים שם בהיותם
בגלות . . . הן הנקראים גרים, לפי
שבאו ממקום זר ורחוק להתקרב
לקדושה . . . ובהוליד נפש בישראל
נמשך מניצוץ זה שמלובש בבשר
ההוא בגוף היהודי לעבודת ה'
בתורה ותפלה ע' שנה. ואם כן, הרי
זה כמו על דרך הגר הפשוט הבא
להתגייר ולחסות תחת צל כנפי
השכינה.

This is the deeper meaning of our sages' statement: "[Jews were dispersed] among the nations to be joined by converts." The statement refers more broadly to all [souls and] sparks that are born to us while dispersed among the nations. . . . They are all called converts because they come from a distant foreign space and are drawn back to holiness. . . . When a Jewish child is born in exile, a spark formerly embedded in our host nation enters the Jewish body to serve G-d through Torah study and prayer for seventy years. It is similar to someone who converts and takes refuge under the wings of G-d's sheltering presence.

ANSWER

This refers to the souls of Jewish children born in the Diaspora who will find divine sparks. As they grow and perform holy deeds, these sparks return to their rightful place, like converts reunited with the Jewish people.

The sparks that we create
and uncover in exile are
like spiritual pockets of
Israel in the Diaspora.



TEXT 9

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei
Sichot 25, pp. 154-
155:*

צוויי סוגי מלאכים:

די מלאכי ארץ ישראל וואס "ליווהו בארץ" קודם ארויסגיין אין חוצה לארץ, אין גלות, איז ענינם - נתינת כח מלמעלה אויף דער עבודה בזמן הגלות.

און דער ענין פון "מלאכים של ארץ ישראל" וואס "באו לקראתו ללותו לארץ", איז די תוצאה פון דעם וואס מ'האט פון חוצה לארץ געמאכט ארץ ישראל, בגמר העבודה פון יעקב'ן בחוצה לארץ.

וויבאלד אז ער האט דארט "געמאכט ארץ ישראל" על ידי עבודתו, דערפאר קומען דארט די מלאכים של ארץ ישראל. המשכת קדושת ארץ ישראל בחוצה לארץ.

There were two types of angels:

When Jacob traveled to Mesopotamia, angels from Israel accompanied him in Israel to empower him for the task that lay ahead of him in the Diaspora.

The angels who came to greet him upon his return were created by Jacob's success in transforming the Diaspora into a pocket of Israel.

These were permitted to enter the Diaspora because Jacob transformed it into a mini-Israel by drawing Israel's sanctity into the Diaspora.

A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

Jacob transformed the Diaspora into a pocket of Israel. The angels were allowed to cross the border and meet him because they entered the holy space created by Jacob and his family.

HOW TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES

- 1. Divine Protection:** God sends angels with us wherever we go to protect and empower us on life's journey.
- 2. Trust in God's Path:** When we follow the path God has set for us, we receive His strength to overcome challenges.
- 3. Find Meaning:** View hardships as opportunities to expand holiness and fulfill God's plan.



Jacob's journey shows that every twist in the road is Divinely charted, and every challenge holds a spark waiting for you to uncover.

KEY POINTS

1. It is forbidden to leave Israel under ordinary circumstances. If we go for permissible reasons, we are required to return.
2. However, leaving Israel to recruit or escort others to Israel is not considered leaving Israel. Since we are traveling for the sake of Israel, wherever we go, we are in Israel.
3. G-d dispersed us among the nations so we would collect the Divine sparks embedded among those nations through our good deeds, prayer, and Torah study. This creates pockets of mini-Israelis in the Diaspora.
4. We often think we live where we do or visit the places we visit for reasons that further our interests. When we arrive, we discover a task that furthers G-d's interests and makes it a holier place. Retroactively, we discover that this was our main reason for being there.
5. When we recall that G-d scripted our lives with its challenges and successes and that He dispatches angels to protect and empower us, our challenges become more meaningful and easier to overcome.

