

^{47:28}Jacob lived in Egypt seventeen years, and the years of his life were a hundred and forty-seven.

1. יַעֲקֹב וַיְחִי—*Jacob lived*. The *sidrah* which tells of the death of Jacob is entitled: *Jacob lived*. Similarly, the one recounting the death of Sarah is called חַיֵּי שָׂרָה, *the life of Sarah*. **The righteous continue to live on after death ...**¹

This last *sidrah* in Genesis illuminates the end of Jacob's life with the soft light of dusk. His existence had been rocked by furious tempests and had quite often been shaken to its very foundations. Now the old patriarch lies on his deathbed and gives his supreme blessing to his children. He is at peace with God; he is no longer afraid of death. "I want to sleep with my fathers," he says. We hear him pray with his last words: "I hope for Your salvation, Hashem." For he knows that he will never be able to attain his goal without help from God. How many struggles Esau, Laban, Dinah, Joseph—how much suffering and sorrow each of these tragedies brought him! Yet he dies while giving blessings. Although he had begun as "a quiet man, dwelling in tents," he had never turned away from the things of this world. Jacob possessed a very rare art: as each one of the trials came upon him, he could see the good which it brought for the future. Thus, he erred and he stumbled but he always raised himself once again to his level of moral perfection. For his greatness of spirit had been forged on the anvil of suffering. In the land of Egypt, the Zohar tells us, Jacob lived the best years of his life. There he lived in tranquility, free of cares, with family harmony and the honors which the Egyptians bestowed upon him thanks to the prestige of his son Joseph. And there too he had the joy of seeing that his family "were fruitful and multiplied greatly" ...

a. Genesis Rabbah XCVI

R. Simeon b. Lakish said: **The days of the righteous die, but they themselves do not die.** It does not say, 'And David drew near to die,' but, 'Now the days of David drew near to die' (I Kings II, 1); not, 'And the Lord said unto Moses: Behold, thou hast drawn near to die'; but, 'Behold, thy days have drawn near to die' (Deut. XXXI, 14); **not, 'And Israel drew near to die,' but AND THE DAYS OF ISRAEL DREW NEAR TO DIE.**

On Jacob as a "type" of Israel.

"Jacob at Haran is a striking illustration of the nation descended from him in its present long dispersion. Like Israel, he (1) was out of the place of blessing (Gen. 26:3); (2) was without an altar (Hos. 3:4-5); (3) gained an evil name (Gen. 31:1; Rom. 2:17-24); but (4) was under the covenant care of the Lord (Gen. 28:13-15; Rom. 11:1,25-31); and (5) was ultimately brought back (Gen. 31:3; 35:1-4; Ezek. 7:21-23). **The personal lesson is obvious:** while Jacob was not forsaken, he was permitted to reap the shame and sorrow of his self-chosen way"—C. I. Scofield, *The New Scofield Reference Bible* (Oxford).

1. *Like Israel, he was out of the place of blessing ...*

Genesis 26:2-3

²"The LORD appeared to **Isaac** and said, 'Do not go down to Egypt.

³**Stay in this land ...** I will be with you and ... bless you."

—**The land of Israel is apparently the only place where the people of Israel can be blessed.**

a. Genesis 28:1-5

¹"So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him and commanded him: 'Do not marry a Canaanite woman. ²Go at once to ... the house of your mother's father ... ^{2b}Take a wife for yourself there ... ³**May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers ...** ⁴May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now live as an alien ... ⁵**Then Isaac sent Jacob on his way ...**"

b. Genesis 39:1-5

¹Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar ... bought him ... ²**The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered**, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. ³When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did ... ⁴Potiphar put him in charge of his household ... **the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph.** The blessing of the LORD was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field.

c. Daniel 6:28

So **Daniel prospered** during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

2. *Like Israel, he was without an altar ...*

Hosea 3:4,5

"For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, **without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or idol.** Afterward the Israel-

¹ Rabbi Elie Munk, *The Call of the Torah, Bereishis*, (Mesorah Publications, Ltd.), pp. 622-682.

ites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days."

a. Genesis 28:11-18

¹¹"When (Jacob) reached a certain place, he stopped for the night ...
¹²(and) had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³There above it stood the LORD, and he said: 'I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying' ... ¹⁶When Jacob awoke ... he thought, 'Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it.' ¹⁷He was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.' ¹⁸**Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar (i.e., a "standing stone") and poured oil on top of it.**"

b. Genesis 33:18-20

¹⁸After Jacob came from Paddan Aram, he arrived safely at the city of Shechem in Canaan and camped within sight of the city. ¹⁹For a hundred pieces of silver, he bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, the plot of ground where he pitched his tent.
²⁰**There he set up an altar** and called it El Elohe Israel ("God, the God of Israel").

c. Genesis 35:6-8

⁶Jacob and all the people with him came to Luz (that is, Bethel) in the land of Canaan. ⁷**There he built an altar**, and he called the place El Bethel, because it was there that God revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother. ⁸Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died and was buried under the oak outside Bethel. So it was named Allon Bakuth ("Oak of Weeping").

3. *Like Israel, he gained an evil name ...*

Genesis 31:1

¹"Jacob heard that Laban's sons were saying, '**Jacob has taken everything our father owned**' and has gained all this wealth from what belonged to our father."

Romans 2:17-24

¹⁷"Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God; ¹⁸if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; ¹⁹if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, ²⁰an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—²¹you,

then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? ²²You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? ... ²³You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? ²⁴As it is written: '**God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you**'" (Isa 52:5; Eze 36:20).

—**Israel gained an "evil name," i.e., God was blasphemed among the Gentiles because of Israel's sin.**

a. Romans 2:1—the context of the citation (Rom 2:17-24) is the problem of passing judgement on others.

¹You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.

b. Isaiah 52:4-6

⁴For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "At first my people went down to Egypt to live; lately, Assyria has oppressed them. ⁵"And now what do I have here?" declares the LORD. "For my people have been taken away for nothing, and those who rule them mock," declares the LORD. "**And all day long my name is constantly blasphemed.**" ⁶Therefore my people will know my name; therefore in that day they will know that it is I who foretold it."

c. Ezekiel 16:24-27

²⁴"Son of man, confront Jerusalem with her detestable practices. ²⁵At the head of every street you built your lofty shrines and degraded your beauty, offering your body with increasing promiscuity to anyone who passed by. ²⁶You engaged in prostitution with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, and provoked me to anger with your increasing promiscuity. ²⁷So I stretched out my hand against you and reduced your territory; I gave you over to the greed of your enemies, the daughters of **the Philistines, who were shocked by your lewd conduct.**

—**This is true in the lives of individuals as well!**

d. 2Samuel 12:13-14

"Then David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD.' Nathan replied, 'The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. **But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the LORD show utter contempt,** the son born to you will die.'"

—**Did Jacob gain an "evil name" because of his sin (or hypocrisy)—or because others were jealous of his character and his success?**

4. Jacob in Paddam-Aram

a. Genesis 29:18-20

¹⁸"Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, 'I'll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel.' Laban (agreed) ...

²⁰So Jacob served **seven years** to get Rachel, but **they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.**"

b. Genesis 30:25-27

²⁵"After Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, 'Send me on my way so I can go back to my own homeland. ²⁶Give me my wives and children, for whom I have served you, and I will be on my way. You know how much work I've done for you.' ²⁷**But Laban said to him, 'If I have found favor in your eyes, please stay. I have learned ... that the LORD has blessed me because of you.'**"

c. Genesis 30:28-34

²⁸"Name your wages, and I will pay them." ²⁹Jacob said to him, "You know how I have worked for you and how your livestock has fared under my care. ³⁰**The little you had before I came has increased greatly, and the LORD has blessed you wherever I have been ...** when may I do something for my own household?" ³¹"What shall I give you?" he asked. **"Don't give me anything ...** But if you will do this one thing for me, I will go on tending your flocks and watching over them: ³²"Let me go through all your flocks today and remove from them every speckled or spotted sheep, every dark-colored lamb and every spotted or speckled goat. They will be my wages.

³³**And my honesty will testify for me in the future,** when-ever you check on the wages you have paid me. Any goat in my possession that is not speckled or spotted, or any lamb that is not dark-colored, will be considered stolen." ³⁴'Agreed,' said Laban.

d. Genesis 31:26-32

²⁶"Then Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done? **You've deceived me, and you've carried off my daughters like captives in war.** ²⁷Why did you run off secretly and deceive me? ... ²⁸You didn't even let me kiss my grandchildren and my daughters good-by. **You have done a foolish thing.** ²⁹I have the power to harm you; **but last night the God of your father said to me, 'Be careful not to say anything to Jacob,** either good or bad.' ³⁰Now you have gone off because you longed to return to your father's house. **But why did you steal my gods?"** ³¹Jacob answered Laban, 'I was afraid, because I thought you would take your daughters away from me by force.

³²But if you find anyone who has your gods, he shall not live. In the presence of our relatives, **see for yourself whether there is any-**

thing of yours here with me; and if so, take it." Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the gods."

—**Was Laban upset because he didn't get to "kiss" his grandchildren good-bye—or because his household gods were missing? It doesn't seem like he learned anything after all, i.e., that Jacob's God was God!**

e. Genesis 31:37-42

³⁷"Now that you have searched through all my goods, what have you found that belongs to your household? Put it here in front of your relatives and mine, and let them judge between the two of us. ³⁸**I have been with you for twenty years now. Your sheep and goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten rams from your flocks. ³⁹I did not bring you animals torn by wild beasts; I bore the loss myself. And you demanded payment from me for whatever was stolen by day or night. ⁴⁰This was my situation: The heat consumed me in the daytime and the cold at night, and sleep fled from my eyes. ⁴¹It was like this for the twenty years I was in your household. I worked for you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flocks, and you changed my wages ten times. ⁴²If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me, you would surely have sent me away empty-handed. **But God has seen my hardship and the toil of my hands, and last night he rebuked you.**"**

—**Who took advantage of whom?**

f. Genesis 31:43-53

⁴³"**Laban answered** Jacob, 'The women are **my daughters**, the children are **my children**, and the flocks are **my flocks. All you see is mine.** Yet what can I do today about these daughters of mine, or about the children they have borne? ⁴⁴Come now, let's make a covenant, you and I, and let it serve as a witness between us' ... ⁴⁶So they took stones and piled them in a heap ... ⁴⁸(Laban said) 'This heap is a witness between you and me today' ... ⁴⁹It was ... called Mizpah (*look-out point, height*), because he said, 'May the LORD keep watch between you and me when we are away from each other. ⁵⁰If you mistreat my daughters or if you take any wives besides my daughters, even though no one is with us, remember that God is a witness between you and me' ... ^{52b}I will not go past this heap to your side to harm you and that you will not go past this heap and pillar to my side to harm me. ⁵³May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father judge between us.' So Jacob took (the) oath ..."

1) Avot 5:13

13. *There are four character types among people: (a) One who says, "My [property] is mine, and yours is yours," is an average character type ... (b) "Mine is yours, and yours is mine," is an unlearned person; (c) "Mine is yours and yours is yours," is scrupulously pious; (d) "Yours is mine, and mine is mine," is wicked.*

g. Genesis 32:9-12

⁹"Then Jacob prayed, 'O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, O LORD, who said to me, "Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper," ¹⁰**I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant.** I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two groups. ¹¹Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children. ¹²But you have said, "I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted.'" He spent the night there ...

h. Genesis 32:24

²⁴"So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. ²⁵When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched ...

²⁶Then the man said, 'Let me go, for it is daybreak.' But Jacob replied, 'I will not let you go unless you bless me.' ²⁷The man asked him, 'What is your name?' 'Jacob,' he answered. ²⁸Then the man said, 'Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because **you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome.**'

²⁹Jacob said, 'Please tell me your name.' But he replied, 'Why do you ask my name?' Then he blessed him there. ³⁰So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, 'It is **because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.**'"

—**What a tremendous legacy!**

On Jacob as a "schemer."

"... to move men, the leader must be able to move God ... **If a scheming Jacob could be given 'power with God and with men,' then is it not possible for any leader who is willing to comply with the conditions to enjoy the same power?**"—J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Moody Press), p.112.

1. Proverbs 24:8

"He who plots evil will be known as a schemer."

2. Genesis 30:32-31:1

³²Let me go through all your flocks today and remove from them every speckled or spotted sheep, every dark-colored lamb and every spotted or speckled goat. They will be my wages.

—**In the Near East, sheep are generally white and goats are dark brown or black. A minority of sheep may have dark patches, and goats white markings. It is these uncommon types to be born in the future that Jacob asks as wages for his unpaid services (JPS).**

³³**And my honesty will testify for me in the future**, whenever you check on the wages you have paid me. Any goat in my possession that is not speckled or spotted, or any lamb that is not dark-colored, will be considered stolen." ³⁴"Agreed," said Laban. "Let it be as you have said." ³⁵That same day he removed all the male goats that were streaked or spotted, and all the speckled or spotted female goats (all that had white on them) and all the dark-colored lambs, and he placed them in the care of his sons. ³⁶Then he put a three-day journey between himself and Jacob, while Jacob continued to tend the rest of Laban's flocks.

—**Laban doesn't even have to pray about this one—he quickly agrees, believing that he is getting a bargain because they are so rare (JPS).**

³⁷Jacob, however, took fresh-cut branches from poplar, almond and plane trees and made white stripes on them by peeling the bark and exposing the white inner wood of the branches. ³⁸Then he placed the peeled branches in all the watering troughs, so that they would be directly in front of the flocks when they came to drink. When the flocks were in heat and came to drink, ³⁹they mated in front of the branches. And they bore young that were streaked or speckled or spotted.

⁴⁰Jacob set apart the young of the flock by themselves, but made the rest face the streaked and dark-colored animals that belonged to Laban. Thus he made separate flocks for himself and did not put them with Laban's animals. ⁴¹Whenever the stronger females were in heat, Jacob would place the branches in the troughs in front of the animals so they would mate near the branches, ⁴²but if the animals were weak, he would not place them there. So the weak animals went to Laban and the strong ones to Jacob. ⁴³In this way the man grew exceedingly prosperous and came to own large flocks, and maidservants and men-servants, and camels and donkeys.

—**One account has it that he first segregates the feebler animals. Then he subjects the studier ones to visual impressions at mating time, in this way influencing the character of the progeny. Of**

course, the interpretation rests on folklorist beliefs and fallaciously assumes the inheritability of acquired characteristics (JPS).

- Another explanation is given in 31:8-12. Here the preferred characteristics are obtained through controlled breeding and transmitted from parent to offspring. Scientifically, **the required results could be achieved by the successive inter-breeding of the single-colored animals that carried recessive genes for spottedness**. Such animals are detectable by the characteristic known as *hybrid vigor* (increased vigor or other superior qualities arising from the crossbreeding of genetically different plants or animals) (JPS).
- This process made it necessary for Jacob to find a way to advance the mating season so that the rare types would be induced to engage in reproductive activity before (the flocks) were segregated (JPS).
- It should be noted that **Jacob claimed that he received the idea from God in a dream during the breeding season (31:10-12). The entire action is thus attributed to divine intervention, not to Jacob's ingenuity** (JPS).
- If this is the true explanation, then the varied accounts need not be contradictory. The first would describe the elaborate display put on by Jacob in order to mask his secret technique (*of course, in our time, there is no such thing as a "trade-secret"*).
- It is also possible that the three plants placed in the watering troughs, each known to contain toxic substances and used in the ancient world for medicinal purposes, could have had the effect of hastening the females receptivity to mating.

^{31:1}**Jacob heard that Laban's sons were saying, "Jacob has taken everything our father owned and has gained all this wealth from what belonged to our father."**

Jacob and the "stolen birthright."

1. Genesis 25:29-34

"Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, 'Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!' ... Jacob replied, 'First sell me your birthright.' 'Look, I am about to die,' **Esau said. 'What good is the birthright to me?'** But Jacob said, 'Swear to me first.' So he swore an oath to him, **selling his birthright to Jacob**. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and ... He ate and drank, and then got up and left. **So Esau despised his birthright.**"

a. Hebrews 12:16,17

"See that no one is ... godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you

know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears."

Jacob and the "stolen blessing."

1. Genesis 27:1-4

¹"When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him ... ²"I am now an old man and don't know the day of my death' ... ⁴(get) me the kind of tasty food I like ... to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die."

—**Isaac lived for another forty-three years.**

a. Genesis 27:5-10

⁵"Now Rebekah was listening ... When Esau left ... ⁶Rebekah said to ... Jacob, 'Look, I overheard your father (talking) to your brother Esau ... ⁸listen carefully and do what I tell you ... ⁹so I can prepare some tasty food for your father ... ¹⁰Then take it to your father to eat, **so that he may give you his blessing before he dies.**"

—**Why did Rebekah intervene like this?**

1) Genesis 25:21-23

²¹"Rebekah became pregnant. ²²The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, 'Why is this happening to me?' ... ²³The LORD said to her, 'Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and **the older will serve the younger.**"

b. Genesis 27:11-13

"Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, 'But my brother Esau is a hairy man, and (I have) smooth skin. **What if my father touches me? I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing.**' His mother said to him, **'My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say ...'**"

c. Genesis 27:14-19

"So he went ... to his father and said, 'My father.' 'Yes, my son,' he answered. 'Who is it?' Jacob said ... 'I am Esau your firstborn. Please ... eat ... that you may give me your blessing.'"

d. Genesis 27:20-29

"Isaac said to Jacob, 'Come near so I can ... know whether you really are my son Esau or not.' Jacob went close ... (and he) did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy ...so he blessed him ... 'May God give you of heaven's dew and of earth's richness - an abundance of grain and new wine. May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of

your mother bow down to you. **May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed**" (cf. Gen 12:3).

e. Gen.27:30-36

"Jacob had scarcely left his ... presence (when) Esau came in ... (Esau) said to him, 'My father ... eat ... so that you may give me your blessing.' His father ... asked him, 'Who are you?' 'I am your son ... your *firstborn*, Esau.' Isaac trembled violently and said, 'Who was it ... that ... brought (the game) to me? I ate it ... **and I blessed him - and indeed he will be blessed!**' When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, 'Bless me - me too, my father!' But he said, 'Your brother came deceitfully and *took your blessing*.' Esau said, 'Isn't he rightly named Jacob? **He has deceived me these two times: He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing!**'"

—**Esau was not deceived even once. He sold the birthright and Jacob received the blessing that God intended for him.**

f. Hebrews 11:8-9

⁸By faith **Abraham**, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. ⁹By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did **Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.**

—**'Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome'** (Gen 32:28).

1) *overcome*, f. שָׂרָה (*sarah*)—*to persist, exert oneself, persevere*, i.e., continue, keep on, keep trying—the opposite is "to give up."

—**Was Jacob a role model or bad example?**