

א ב י ס כ ל ת ו ר ה !

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ח' כסלו תשפ"ו · ויצא

Life Advice From the פרשה

By Maya Marcus '29

This week's פרשה, ויצא, offers a window into what it means to grow ethically and practically as human beings. Picture יעקב at the beginning of his journey - alone, afraid, and heading into the unknown. He is not yet the strong, steady figure we will later recognize. And yet, in that moment of fear, he experiences the famous dream of the ladder, a vision that teaches him - and us - that even in our most uncertain moments, Hashem is present, and our actions still matter. יעקב's journey reminds us that we do not need to be perfect to begin living ethically. We simply need to recognize that every step we take, even in confusion or fear, has the potential to bring holiness into the world. פרשת ויצא does more than just give hope; it gives a model for ethical resilience.

Throughout the פרשה, יעקב works for לבן - honestly, consistently, even though he is tricked and taken advantage of. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks taught that true morality is not tested when life is easy; it is tested when others behave dishonestly or unfairly. יעקב's integrity becomes a quiet act of moral courage. He chooses fairness even when he himself is not treated fairly. And this challenges us in our everyday frustrations, to maintain our ethical grounding even when others challenge it.

יעקב's story invites us to remain anchored in who we want to be, not in how others behave toward us. At the same time, פרשת ויצא is a deeply practical guide

for personal growth. Rabbi Abraham Twerski often emphasized that meaningful change happens gradually, through steady, intentional effort. יעקב's years of labor - seven years for רחל, seven years after that, and then more years of building a family and livelihood - teach us that growth is not instant, nor is it glamorous. It is consistent. It is patient. And, it is built from honest self-assessment. Rabbi Twerski reminds us that יעקב succeeds, not by becoming someone new overnight, but by taking one step, then another, then another - each one building his character and shaping his future. In our own lives, this is a call to embrace progress rather than perfection, to value small improvements, rather than waiting for dramatic transformation.

Finally, the פרשה teaches the importance of setting boundaries - something many struggle with. יעקב's turning point comes when he finally has enough of לבן and runs away. לבן chases after him and after years of unfair treatment, יעקב speaks clearly about what he has done, what he will accept, and what he will no longer tolerate. Rabbi Twerski taught that boundaries are not walls; they are expressions of self-respect. They allow healthier relationships and healthier lives to be built. יעקב shows us that it is not only permitted but necessary to stand up for ourselves with clarity and dignity. As we move through our own journeys - whether in school, work, family, or friendships - פרשת ויצא encourages us to blend יעקב's patience with his courage, to grow steadily while also knowing when to say, "this is what I need, and this is who I am."

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Making a Choice Between יעקב and ישראל

By Shifra Leibowitz '29

In this week's פרשה, we follow the life of יעקב אבינו, a person whom we associate with kindness, honesty, and hard work. When we look at יעקב in this week's פרשה and last, the theme is deception, both as someone who uses it and later as someone who suffers from it.

The first moment is the well-known scene in which יעקב and his mother deceive יצחק in order to receive the blessing meant for עשו. יעקב does not feel guilty at the time; he believes he is doing the right thing. יעקב, however, does in fact choose deception instead of speaking to his father or finding a more honest way to resolve the situation. This becomes part of his personality and in the very meaning of his name: יעקב, one who deceives.

Later, the tables turn. After working seven years for לבן in order to get רחל, יעקב gets deceived by לבן, who gives him לאה instead of giving him רחל who he promised. Suddenly, יעקב is the victim. He cries out, "וְלָמָּה רָמִיתָנִי" "and why have you deceived me?" (בראשית כט:כה) and לבן simply answers, that "כֵּן בְּמָקוֹמִינוּ" "this is how things are done in this place" (בראשית כט:כו) not to marry the younger daughter before the older. When יעקב feels the pain of being deceived - what he used to do - something shifts inside him. He begins to understand the weight of deception and the damage it causes.

This experience became a turning point in יעקב's life. Later in the תורה, after struggling with an angel, he receives a new name: "יִשְׂרָאֵל" "since you have fought with devine and human beings and prevailed" (בראשית לב:כט). This name represents his new identity - not of trickery but of strength, integrity, and a direct relationship with Hashem. It symbolizes his transformation from the "deceiver" to the man who stands upright and honest before G-d.

What we learn from this is that one's past does not define one as a person. One can always change and always have the option to do תשובה as one goes through a week. It is important to remember to think about whether a decision should be made with a יעקב attitude or an ישראל attitude.



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