

Up, Up and Away

What goes up must come down. A lesson learned after my balloon floated away from me to the high ceiling of the synagogue. I was reassured over and over again that eventually the balloon would shrivel as the helium escaped, and my balloon would come back to me, albeit slightly smaller. It always made sense to me that before something could come down, it needed to go up, but this week's *parshah* brings new understanding to this concept.

This week we read *parshat Vayetzei*, which in English means "and he went out." The *parshah* is about Jacob leaving his father's home, on the run after he receives the blessing of the first born meant for his brother. On his trek, Jacob lays down for sleep one evening and uses a rock as a pillow. As he sleeps, he dreams of angels of God going up and down on a ladder. Though it seems like semantics, the question that arises is how can angels go up and *then* down? That order makes sense for a balloon, but shouldn't angels come down from the heavens and return up?

The commentator *Rashbam*, *Rashi's* grandson, suggests that this order isn't a literal description; rather, we say "up and down" because it is proper for us to first mention the attributes of a person that lift them up in our eyes, then - and only then - to remember when they have fallen. That is to say, we are to always focus on finding the positive in each individual. It is our job as members of a community to lift one another up, to bring reminders of the positive and look for the best in one another.

I am often asked why our forefathers are the men we look to as the great leaders of our people. Aren't the first words we read from Abraham (asking Sarah to pretend she is his sister) part of a lie? Isn't Isaac too quiet and passive? And what does Jacob's lie to Isaac say about his character? It's important to remember that the task of building a nation of people doesn't come easy. Yes, the *Torah* tells us that our nation has come from them, but it took many tough choices and stumbles along the way.

Jacob is on a journey and not really sure where he will end up. During Jacob's travels he will eventually meet up with his Uncle Laban, be tricked into working seven years for Rachel, but marrying Leah instead, only to work longer to marry Rachel, his love. Jacob was at a point in his life where it would have been easy to only see the angels come down, where everything could have felt like a giant weight on his shoulders, but God, acting as the great cheerleader, reminds him that there is always a way up. We can learn the same lesson as Jacob: to look for the upside first and make that what we carry with us.

ללמוד **To Learn:** ללמד **To Teach:** Chapter 30 of Bereshit speaks about Rachel's attempts to overcome infertility. The matriarchs, Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel each have a struggle with childbirth and infertility in one way or another. Their struggles are still felt today by many families in our community, and treatments can be very costly. Consider making a donation to [Priya: A New Fund for Jewish Reproduction of the Dallas Jewish Community Foundation](#). The word "Priya" is Hebrew for "Being Fruitful." This fund provides education to the Jewish community about infertility as well as financial assistance to Jewish families experiencing infertility.

לשמור **To Keep:** לעשות **To Do:** *Parshat Vayetzei* is full of interesting family dynamics, one of the most prominent is the importance of children to a family. Children represent the continuation of a family line. This week, let your children know that you treasure them. On Friday evening for Shabbat, give them a blessing.