

[Kohelet Discussion](#)

Parshah Vayeitzei

2022-12-03

Judith Cohen

I like to call this parshah the As the World Turns or maybe the Days of Our lives parshah. It is full of deceit and lots and lots of sex. Rachel and Leah take over managing Jacob's sexual encounters in order to ensure that the requisite number of sons, that being 12, are produced. Jacob more or less goes along while the coupling decisions are made by the wives.

Meanwhile, the commentaries bend over backwards to excuse any hint of bad behavior by any of the actors. I was particularly struck by the comment on 4-16, bottom of page 161. I am told that the rabbi at the Alliance a few weeks ago gave her sermon on the convoluted logic of some of the commentaries.

Finally, this parshah repeats what we hear in others in Bereishit: the importance of the land. G-d could have said, "I'll give you rules to live by and you must follow my laws wherever you end up. But the Torah doesn't tell us that. G-d gives not only laws, but specifically land. And Jacob is drawn back to this land. On page 157, verse 30-25 we read: When Rachel had given birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Grant me leave that I may go to *my place and my land...*" It isn't until three pages later that G-d tells Jacob to return to his native land and "I will be with you." The original decision to return to his land is Jacob's.

This attachment to land is not specific to Jews. In the Washington Post on Wednesday, in an article about putting 700 square miles in southern Nevada under federal protection, tribal representatives offered testimonies about how ancient sites in the area are still an active part of their lives. In a book about how decorative sewing plays a crucial part in expressing many facets of our lives, author Clare Hunter describes a banner sewed by a group of Aboriginal women. Hunter observes that these women had lost their land and that land was their anchor and they drew strength from it.

Perhaps there is something within the human psyche that needs land to be attached to and G-d understands this primal need by giving land to his people.

So I have two questions for you:

1. I would like to draw a distinction between the culture and people of a land and the physical geography of that space. And if that distinction makes sense to you, does the land of Israel mean anything to you and if so, what is that meaning? And
2. Is there other land that has special meaning to you.