

Torah Portion for Vayetzei

Shabbat beginning December 2, 2022

Vayetzei (he went out) deals with the development of belonging. Jacob traveled north having his ladder dream at Bethel. Arriving at the Abrahamic homestead, he met Uncle Laban and his two daughters, weak-eyed Leah and beautiful Rachel. Jacob and Laban build their relationship on trickery. Jacob fell in love with Rachel and worked for seven years to marry her. When the term was up, Laban and his daughters snuck Leah into the marriage bed. Jacob ultimately weds Rachel too but had to work another seven years for her. Many children later, Jacob repays Laban's deception by tricking him out of the best of his herds and leaving with them and his family to return to his birth home.

A team of expert counselors characterized belonging development as beginning with being disconnected, then becoming more assertive, later joining and finding friends, while finally taking personal responsibility in the community. Jacob was disconnected at first, became more assertive, enriched the community for years, but finally left to make another community where he raised the twelve sons that fathered the tribes of Israel. Many members of Adas Shalom, like other thriving synagogues, avoid Laban's repelling actions by helping other members find meaningful involvement.