



# Toras Avigdor

## Junior

Adapted from the teachings  
of Rav Avigdor Miller z"l

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פְּרֻשֵׁת וַיֵּצֵא

## Yitzy's Book and Lavan's Sheep

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לזכות

ריזל בת פיגא רבקה

לרפואה שלימה

## Yitzy's Book and Lavan's Sheep

There was a serious argument going on during recess, and right in the middle of it were Elazar and Yitzy. Yitzy looked like he was about to burst into tears.

“You have to buy me a new book!” he was yelling.

Elazar had borrowed Yitzy's new comic book yesterday and had just returned it — with red and yellow crayon markings all over the cover.

“But it's not my fault,” said Elazar, “My little brother Yudi colored it up when I turned around for a second. What was I supposed to do? I don't have eyes in the back of my head!”

Like usual the class was split – some boys thought Elazar was right. It's not his fault that Yudi writes on everything he sees. Elazar's best friend, Yanky, even told the boys that last time he was at Elazar's house, Yudi was coloring on the walls in the living room. “The only clean part of the wall is behind the couch,” said Yanky. “One time he even tried to color his mother's sheitel because he wanted her to have red hair like his sister Racheli.”

“So what do you want from Elazar already?” said Yanky. “What could he do about it? He borrowed the book and he gave it back. It's better than when Yudi flushed my new baseball down the toilet. I never got it back!”

But other boys said that you can't give back something that's damaged – they said that Elazar should buy a new book for Yitzy. And there was a third group yelling that the class should take a vote. There was so much shouting going on that no one even noticed when Rebbi Horowitz walked in.

“Boys. Boys! Boys!!” After the class quieted down somewhat, Rebbi Horowitz began to speak. “It's not for us to decide what to do. And we don't take votes either. When it comes to knowing how to behave we look to the Torah for advice.

“Now, I was going to wait till tomorrow to say over our dvar Torah for this week's parsha, but I see now that Hashem wants me to say it a

day early. I want to talk to you about how Yaakov Avinu spent his days and nights working for Lavan. Listen and I'll describe how it was.

It's a boiling summer day and Yaakov Avinu is sweating. It gets very hot in Padan Aram and suntan lotion wasn't even invented yet so Yaakov was getting a sunburn and he wished he could walk over to the tree down the road and cool off in the shade. Maybe he could even take a little nap – after all, he was up all night watching Lavan's sheep.

Yes, sometimes Yaakov had to work late into the night. And at night it got freezing cold too. Boiling days and freezing nights – that's the Padan Aram weather and that's what life was like for Yaakov when he worked for Lavan. Sometimes his breath turned to icicles on his mustache and he shivered in the cold.

Last night he had to scare away a wolf three different times, and nothing sounded better than the idea of taking a nap under a tree. But



the sheep had other plans; they weren't interested in shade and they didn't seem to care about sleeping either. They were having a good time munching on grass in the valley and that meant that Yaakov couldn't nap because he had a job to do. He was Lavan's shepherd and he was responsible for Lavan's sheep.

And that's the only thing the Torah tells us about Yaakov's twenty years in Padan Aram – that he was a loyal watchman. "I am responsible," he said to himself "and I can't slack off! No excuses, no laziness."

"You know *kinderlach*", Rabbi Horowitz continued, "I'm sure that Yaakov did many great things during those years he was by Lavan. You all remember what Rashi says: **עַם לָבָן גִּרְתִּי וְתַרְיָג מְצוּזוֹת שְׁמֵרְתִּי**. Yaakov kept everything!

But even though that's true, there's only one thing that the chumash tells us about how Yaakov Avinu became a great man. And that is that he was a loyal watchman! Yaakov excelled in the middah of being responsible for what belongs to someone else. Now, if we were writing the chumash, we probably would have mentioned what we think are the more important things – maybe "Yaakov Avinu one time said the whole Tehillim two times in one night —without a break!" Or, "Yaakov Avinu didn't speak any lashon hara all those years in Padan Aram."

"But Hashem has other ideas," said Rebbi Horowitz. "He says that the first and most important lesson that we learn from Yaakov is to be careful with other people's things. It doesn't matter if you're watching Lavan's sheep and protecting them from a wolf with big teeth, or if you're watching a comic book and protecting it from a Yudi with big crayons, it's the same thing."

"And so, whether or not Elazar is responsible to pay Yitzzy for the book, that I won't tell you right now. When we finish learning Perek Hamafkid this year, maybe we'll talk about this story again and we'll see if we can figure it out together. But what we know from this week's parsha is that if you want to be a tzadik like Yaakov Avinu, one of the first things you have to do is be very, very careful with other people's things. That's the one thing that the Torah tells us about the twenty years that Yaakov spent by Lavan – and that's how we know that it's one of the most important things that made Yaakov Avinu great in Hashem's eyes.

**Have a Wonderful Shabbos**

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