

Vayeitzei 5781
November 27, 2020

NAGEELA SHABBOS

Have-a

SEASON 5 EPISODE 7

a kid friendly publication of Nageela West Coast Joyfully Jewish Experiences



Where Ya Headed?

by Rabbi Dani Locker

As Jacob travels away from home, to visit his uncle and find a wife, he makes a stop. It was the busy tourist season so there were no AirBnb homes available. After striking out on Hotels.com and VRBO as well, Jacob settled for the Bedrock Inn. As in, he used rocks for a bed, and went to sleep. According to the Talmud, this place happened to be Mount Moriah (also known as the Temple Mount) in Jerusalem. After he falls asleep is where it gets interesting...

interesting. The Midrashic tradition tells us the angels climbing up the ladder were Jacob's special angelic bodyguards assigned for Israel. Since he was leaving Israel, they were climbing up the ladder, leaving their shift, and the 'out-of-Israel' angelic shift was taking over. Then at the very end of the portion, as Jacob returns to Israel, he meets a group of angels at a place called Machanayim. We're told once again that this was a geographic changing of

your location is determined more by where you're headed than by where you are

Jacob dreams of a ladder, and angels are traveling up and down this ladder. You ever try climbing a ladder with one leg?

It must have been

the guards. The Israel angels were replacing those of the Diaspora.

Speaking of geography, have you

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heard of the really funny geography joke? Never mind, you had to be there. Speaking (actually) of geography, I have a problem. Jerusalem is not on the border of biblical Israel. It's well inside the country. Why would the Israel angels leave before he reached the border? Machanayim as well, apparently is firmly outside the borders of Israel. Why did the changing of the guard happen then?

When you're traveling physically, the actual borders determine where you are. If you visit the Four Corners monument, you might be able to hop between Utah, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona. Whichever line you step over determines the state you're in with whatever comes along with state residency. On a more spiritual level though, your location is determined more by where you're headed than by where you are. You

can be really close to a place, but if you're heading away from it, you might as well be a million miles away. When Jacob heads out of Israel, he's already spiritually out of land, even before he reaches the border. The same thing applies on the way back in. Since he's returning to Israel, it's as if he's there already. This is such a valuable lesson for life. God cares much, much more about where we're headed than where we are. Our goal must be to make sure we're on the right freeway and headed in the direction we want to be.

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PICKLE

JEWS



Yaakov Polonsky
Babbi Locker
Zevi Frid
Rabbi Dani Locker
Eli Banner
Levi Guttman
Sean Perry
Joshua Rafaeil

MAZEL TOV!



Mazel Tov to Camp Nageela West camper Ori Roth who is celebrating his Bar Mitzvah this week!



Stump the Rabbi is a forum where kids can ask ANY Jewish question.

Have a question? Please send it in to stump@nageelawest.org

Questions here are real. Names and some wording have been changed.

Stump the Rabbi



#149 Meaningful Memorial

Hi Rabbi,

I would love some information about the Kaddish prayer. My understanding is that it's a prayer for the dead, usually said by mourners during the year of mourning. I never really understood why it's written in Aramaic instead of Hebrew. Also, I think the cantor or chazzan says Kaddish even if they're not in mourning, so what...is it really?

Thanks,
Yisrael Gadal



Dear Yis Gadal,

The great Rabbi Akiva was having a conversation, in a cemetery, with the spirit of someone who had died. I know, creepy, but that's the story. This person had been a rather nasty person, and apparently wasn't having a super-dope-mad-chillin afterlife. In other words, he was in pain. He told Rabbi Akiva

that if his son, who was ignorant of Torah values would praise God's name in public, then the dead father's suffering would end.

Rabbi Akiva searched for this young man, taught him how to say Kaddish, and thereby helped the father move on. Why did that work?

The truth is, Kaddish is not a memorial prayer. It's not a prayer for the dead at all. In fact, nowhere in

the words of Kaddish does it mention the dead. Kaddish is a beautiful praise of God. Here are a few quotes: "May His great name be blessed for ever and ever." "Above all blessing, song, praise and consolation uttered in this world." See, nothing to do with mourning. As we see from the story of Rabbi Akiva, the reason Kaddish works is that for a child to praise God publicly is a great merit for the parent. If you bring a child into this world, raise him and teach him (or her) and that child brings more awareness of God's greatness into the world, then the parent gets serious cred! It's for this reason that mourners say Kaddish - not for their parents - for God, in hope that it will cause benefit for their parents. As Kaddish is not really a memorial prayer, it's no surprise that it's not just

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Stump the Rabbi; continued

said by mourners. Every public prayer has a Kaddish or three attached to it. Generally these Kaddishes are said by the chazzan, or whomever is leading the congregation. However, at certain specific parts of the prayers, the Kaddish is designated for mourners to say, as a credit to their deceased relatives. We mentioned that the goal of Kaddish is to publicly declare God's awesomeness. A key phrase here is 'publicly'. In talmudic times, Aramaic was the more commonly spoken language of the people. Though it's not as holy as Hebrew, since the goal is publicity, it's done in a more understandable language. Saying words nobody understands doesn't bring all that much glory to God. I'll also add that Kaddish has 'one-up' over other prayers which also praise God. Kaddish is

participatory. The congregation responds with Amen- "I agree, totally" at several points, as well as repeating some of the actual praises. This kind of joint, partnered, public praise of God is so powerful that it was instituted as the main prayer to be said on behalf of someone who has passed away. The custom is for everyone to have Kaddish said for them for 11 months after their death. This is usually done by a son, but can be done by anyone.

Technically speaking, anyone can say Kaddish (as we mentioned earlier, at certain points during the prayers, the cantor or leader leads Kaddish). However, it is considered inappropriate for those who are fortunate and blessed to still have both their parents to say the Kaddishes usually reserved for mourners. So unless your

parents have specifically given you permission (which is unusual but not unheard of) you should not say the mourner's Kaddish, even if you're the chazzan.

As with everything, it's important that we keep in mind the purpose and focus of the Kaddish. It is to bring glory and awareness of God to more people. If you're not saying Kaddish, there are other really good ways to do that, like showing the world the kindness, honesty, respect and respectability that the Torah demands of us.

Have a Nageela Shabbat,

the Rabbi



Did you hear
about the
writer who
broke the laws
of grammar?

He just got sentenced.

OUCH! GROAN!

Do you have a better joke? I sure hope so!
Send it to dlocker@nageelawest.org



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