

## Rabbi's Column

About 20 years are encompassed in this week's Torah Portion, and one of its uniquenesses is that there are no paragraph breaks. The entire time that Jacob spends in the "old country" is all considered as a single episode, no matter how much actually happened. Small things, like 11 sons and 1 daughter, dreaming about angels and at another time, the planned fertility of sheep. Larger things like being tricked by one's father-in-law in both marriage and money, or running afoul of differing laws as they are applied and understood.

This latter was indeed a case where both parties were 100 percent correct, although they were 180 degrees apart.

To recap a bit - Jacob left secretly with all four of his children's mothers as well as his 12 children with one on the way, hoping to get into Canaan before Laban could catch up to him. He felt (and the text is written so that the casual reader would agree) that as a nephew he deserved to take his family and the flocks he had earned and introduce the family to the people he had left behind, and Laban was always acting to prevent such an event from ever happening. Laban felt that Jacob entered his household as a penniless person, who basically came into the category of Hebrew Slave (before the term was invented, but not before the concept was utilized). He came with nothing and he should leave with nothing. His family belonged to Laban, and so did all the flocks.

Their compromise position was that each would stay on their own side of the boundary, as long as Jacob treated his wives fairly.

Which enabled Jacob to focus on his greater fear - meeting up again with his brother, who at last report was still waiting to kill him.

I always find it an interesting exercise to imagine that even people who say something I disagree with might be correct. In what way could their opinion (which I might not agree with) be correct, and be one I might hold if I were in their shoes?

On another note, it is not too early to think about Purim, and if you are thinking of helping out in some fashion, please let me know.