

TWELVE BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

1. TIME LINE

Lech Lecha

2023 Abraham leaves Charan for Israel
2034 Hagar gives birth to Yishmael
2047 Abraham circumcised at 99, names changed

Vayera

2047 Three angels
2048 Birth of Isaac
2050 Yishmael sent away
2083 Terach dies
2085 Akedat Yitzchak

Chaye Sara

2085 Sarah dies
2087 Lot dies
2088 Eliezer finds Rivkah for Isaac

Toldot

2108 Isaac & Rivkah pray for children and birth
2123 Abraham dies, Jacob buys birthright
2171 Blessing to Jacob

Vayetze

2185 Jacob leaves Yeshivah and dreams, meets Rachel begins 7 years work
2192 Marries Leah & Rachel
2205 Yaakov runs away from Lavan

2. Birth of 12 sons

Reuben – Genesis 29:32 “And Leah conceived and bore a son, and she named him Reuben, for she said, ‘Because the Lord has seen my affliction; for now my husband will love me.’”

Simeon – Genesis 29:33 “And she conceived again and bore a son, and she said, ‘Since the Lord has heard that I am hated, He gave me this one too.’ So she named him Simeon.”

Levi – Genesis 29:34 “And she conceived again and bore a son and she said, ‘Now this time my husband will be attached to me, for I have borne him three sons’; therefore he named him Levi.”

Judah – Genesis 29:35 “And she conceived again and bore a son, and she said, ‘This time I will thank the Lord!’ Therefore she named him Judah.”

Dan – Genesis 30:6 “And Rachel said, ‘God has judged me, and He has also hearkened to my voice and has given me a son’; so she named him Dan.”

Naphtali – Genesis 30:8 “And Rachel said, ‘With divine bonds I have been joined to my sister; I have also prevailed’; so she named him Naphtali.”

Gad – Genesis 30:11 “And Leah said, ‘Because of my good fortune’; so she named him Gad.”

Asher – Genesis 30:13 “And Leah said, ‘Because I am happy! For women will call me happy.’ So she named him Asher.”

Issachar – Genesis 30:18 “And Leah said, ‘God has given me my reward, because I gave my maidservant to my husband.’ So she named him Issachar.”

Zebulun – Genesis 30:20 “And Leah said, ‘God has given me a good portion. This time, my husband will dwell with me, for I have borne him six sons.’ So she named him Zebulun.”

Joseph – Genesis 30:24 “She named him Joseph, saying, ‘May the Lord add to me another son.’”

Benjamin – Genesis 35:18 “When her soul departed—for she died—she named him Ben-Oni; but his father called him Benjamin.”

3. Ibn Ezra on Genesis 30:23

. It is clear from Scripture that Jacob’s twelve children were born in seven years. When the ancients numbered them they could only explain how this was possible by saying that each was born six months and some days after conception. However, this was not necessarily so. It is possible that Leah gave her handmaiden to Jacob before Naphtali was born, that Rachel conceived before the birth of Zebulun, and that we do not know when Dinah was born.

4. Sources:

1. Midrash Tadshe (MT) Attributed to: Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair Era: 2nd century CE Description: An early Midrashic work focusing on symbolic numbers, creation structure, and genealogies. Preserved in the classic *Otzar Midrashim* compilation.

2. Yalkut Shimoni (YS) Compiler: Rabbi Shimon Ashkenazi HaDarshan of Frankfurt Era: c. 1260 (13th century) Description: A major Midrashic anthology on all of Tanach, preserving many teachings otherwise lost. Universally cited in Orthodox Torah study.
3. Seder Olam Rabbah (SO) Author: Rabbi Yose ben Chalafta Era: 2nd century CE (Tanna of the Mishnah) Description: The classic rabbinic chronology from Creation through the early Second Temple era. Quoted extensively by Rashi and many later commentators.
4. Seder Olam Zuta (SOZ) Author: Anonymous traditional rabbinic source Era: Early medieval period (commonly placed around the 8th century) Description: Continues *Seder Olam Rabbah* with genealogies of kings and Exilarchs. Preserved in *Otzar Midrashim*.
5. Seder HaDorot (SH) Author: Rabbi Yechiel Heilprin Era: 1660–1746 Description: An authoritative rabbinic chronology and biography of world and Jewish history from Creation to the author’s time. Widely used by Orthodox scholars.
6. Rabbeinu Bachya (RB) Author: Rabbeinu Bachya ben Asher Era: 1255–1340 Description: A foundational Torah commentary integrating peshat, Midrash, philosophy, and Kabbalah. Standard in all Orthodox libraries.
7. Midrash Yoshor / Midrash Yoshon (MY) Author: Anonymous Era: Early medieval period (commonly cited as 10th–11th century) Description: A narrative Midrash recounting Biblical events based on teachings of Chazal. Included in *Otzar Midrashim*.
8. Sefer HaYashar / Sefer HaYoshor (SFH) Author: Anonymous rabbinic compiler Era: Early medieval period (commonly placed 10th–11th century) Description: A narrative retelling of Biblical episodes based strictly on Midrashic traditions. Preserved in *Otzar Midrashim*.
9. Me’am Loez Author: Rabbi Yaakov Culi (first author) Era: 1689–1732 Description: A monumental Torah commentary written originally in Ladino, integrating Midrash, halachah, aggadah, and ethical guidance. Later continued by leading Sephardic sages.

5. Birthdays

Name	Birth date	Age at death
Reuven	14 th Kislev, 2193 (-1568)	128 MT / 125 YS / 124 SOZ
Shimon	28 th SH, YS (21 st RB, MT) Tevet, 2194	120
Levi	16 Nissan, 2195	137*
Yehudah	15 Sivan YS, SH, (15 Nissan MT), 2196	119 MT, YS, SH / 129 SHY
Dan	9 th Elul, 2196	125 YS, SO, SH, SHY, RB, MY / 127 SOZ / 128 MT
Naftali	5 th Tishri, 2198	132 SFH / 133 MT, YS, RB, MY
Gad	10 th Cheshvan 2198	125
Asher	4 th MY, RB / 20 th ML, MT, SO (22 nd SH) Shevat, 2199	123 YS, MY, SHY, / 126 MT, SOZ
Yissachar	6 th Sivan ML (10 th Av SO), 2198	122
Zevulun	7 th Tishri, 2200	124 SOZ / 114 MT, RB, SHY / 110 SO, SH
Yosef	1 st MT, RB, (27 th SH) Tammuz, 2199	110
Binyamin	11 th Cheshvan, 2208	109 MT, RB / 111 SOZ / 115 SO, MY

Year	Leah	Rachel	Zilpah	Bilhah
2193	Reuven 1			
2194	Shimon 2			
2195	Levi 3			
2196	Yehudah 4			Dan 5
2197				
2198	Yissachar 9		Gad 7	Naftali 6
2199		Yosef 11	Asher 8	
2200	Zevulun 10			
2208		Binyamin 12		

JACOB & GENETICS

Epigenetics (the study of how external factors and behaviours can cause changes in gene activity without altering the underlying DNA sequence) in the Torah

1. TORAH AND EPIGENETICS

a. Berakhot 20a:

Similarly, the Gemara relates that **Rabbi Yoḥanan was accustomed to go and sit at the gates of the women's immersion sites.** Rabbi Yoḥanan, who was known for his extraordinary good looks, explained this and **said: When the daughters of Israel emerge from their immersion, they will look at me, and will have children as beautiful as I.** The Sages asked him: **Master, do you not fear the evil eye? He said to them: I descend from the seed of Joseph over whom the evil eye has no dominion, as it is written: "Joseph is a bountiful vine, a bountiful vine on a spring [alei ayin]"** (Genesis 49:22). "*Ayin*" can mean both "spring" and "eye." **And Rabbi Abbahu said a homiletic interpretation: Do not read it *alei ayin*, rather *olei ayin*, above the eye; they transcend the influence of the evil eye.**

b. Avodah Zarah 24a

The Gemara discusses the revised version of Rabbi Eliezer's statement. **The Master said above: Jews were safeguarding the red heifer from the time that it was conceived.** The Gemara asks: **From where do we know that the mother would give birth to a red heifer, which would warrant safeguarding her? Rav Kahana says: They would pass a red cup before her while the male mounts her, an act that would cause the offspring to be red.**

c. Gittin 58a

The Gemara relates that **initially the noblemen of Rome would keep an image imprinted on a seal by their beds and engage in intercourse** opposite that image, so that they would beget children of similar beauty. **From this point forward, from the time of the Great Revolt, they would bring Jewish children, tie them to the foot of their beds, and engage in intercourse** across from them, because they were so handsome.

d. Bereshit Rabbah 73:10

"Jacob took for himself rods of fresh poplar, and almond, and plane; he peeled white streaks in them, exposing the white that was in the rods" (Genesis 30:37).

This is what our patriarch Jacob would do: He would place the rods in the water troughs and an animal would come to drink. It would see the rods and recoil backward. The male would copulate with it and it would bear an offspring like that.

.... There was an incident involving an Ethiopian man who married an Ethiopian woman and fathered a white son from her. The father seized the child and came to the rabbi, he said to him: 'Is he, perhaps, not my child?' He said to him: 'Did you have any portraits in your house?' He said to him: 'Yes.' He said to him: 'Black or white?' He said to him: 'White.' He said to him: 'It is from there that you had a white son.'

Rabbi Huna of Beit Ḥoron said: The ministering angels were carrying from Laban's flock and coming and placing in the midst of Jacob's flock. That is what is written: "He said: Please lift your eyes, and see, all the males that mount [*haolim*] the flock" (Genesis 31:12) – "*olim* on the flock" is not written here, but rather, "*haolim*" – they mounted involuntarily. Rabbi Tanḥuma said: Torrential rain. The Rabbis say: Clouds of glory.

2. KEHOT CHUMASH

30:25 In the year 2199, the fourteen years that Jacob had agreed to work for Laban in exchange for Rachel and Leah were up. At the same time, Rebecca's wet nurse Deborah arrived in Padan Aram, sent by Rebecca to inform Jacob that Esau's hatred toward him had abated to the extent that it was now safe for him to return to Canaan.⁵⁴ Jacob therefore began to think about returning to [Canaan](#), but despite his mother's reassurances, he was afraid to risk a confrontation with his openly-rancorous brother. But **when Rachel gave birth to Joseph** that same year, Jacob sensed that God would protect him from Esau in the merit of his newborn son's unique spiritual qualities. **Jacob** therefore then felt confident enough to

undertake the journey home, and **said to Laban, "Please send me on my way, and I will go to my home and to my land.**

26 Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and I will go, for you know that during the time I worked for you I completely fulfilled the terms of my contract."

27 Laban said to him, "If only I would find favor in your eyes and you would stay!⁵⁵ I have learned by divination that it is on your account that God blessed me with sons. Until your arrival, I only had daughters."⁵⁶

Fifth Reading 28 But Jacob had no plans to stay. So Laban then said, "Specify your payment due from me, and I will pay you accordingly."

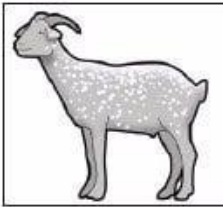


Figure 29: A Speckled Goat

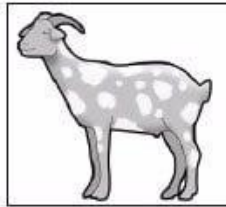


Figure 30: A Blotched Goat

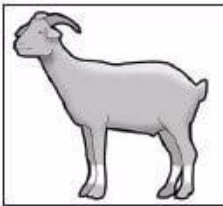


Figure 31: An Ankle-Ringed Goat

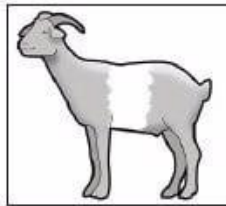


Figure 32: A Belted Goat

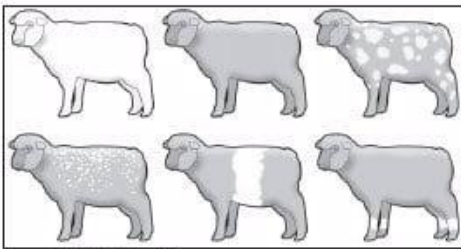


Figure 33: Varieties of Sheep

29 So Jacob said to him, "You know very well how faithfully I have toiled for you, and just how few were your livestock that you placed with me to herd when I first began working for you.

30 For the little you had before my arrival has increased substantially, and God has blessed you on my account. Until now, I have worked solely for you and your benefit, leaving my sons to work for their own subsistence. But now, if I continue to work only for your benefit, when will I have a chance to provide for my own household, as well? I now need to help my sons, because they cannot put aside anything for the future from the little they produce by themselves."

31 Laban asked, "So what shall I give you?" Jacob said, "Do not give me anything outright. If you will do this one thing for me, I will continue to pasture your flocks and to tend them: 32 As you know, the majority of goats are solid black or brown, while the minority have some white markings on them. These white markings come in four varieties: speckles (see Figure 29), blotches (see Figure 30), ankle-rings (see Figure 31), and belts (see Figure 32). As you also know, the majority of sheep are solid white, while the minority are black or brown, with or without white markings (see Figure 33).⁵⁷ I propose that you let me take

some of the goats and sheep born from now on that are in the minority, i.e., the goats that are born white-speckled or white-blotched and the sheep that are born solid brown or black. I want you to feel comfortable with this arrangement; therefore, in order to (a) allay any suspicion on your part that I am expropriating any of these types of goats and sheep that are already in the flock, and (b) minimize the probability that the offspring of the flock born from now on will be of these types, **let me pass with you⁵⁸ through all your flocks today. Remove from there every white-speckled or white-blotched he-goat,⁵⁹ as well as every solid-black or solid-brown lamb, and every white-blotched or white-speckled she-goat.** Segregate these irregular types of sheep and goats and give them over into the care of your sons. The remainder of the flock, which I will tend, will include all the regular animals plus the white-ankle-ringed and white-belted goats and the black or brown sheep with any white markings. The sheep and goats that they bear from now on with the markings and colorings of those you segregated **shall be my payment.** The rest shall be yours. **33 And at some time in the future, if you ever suspect me of having appropriated any of your flock, my integrity will testify on my behalf regarding my payment:**

any animal that is neither white-speckled nor white-blotched among the goats, or neither solid black nor solid brown among the sheep, is in my possession by theft." **34 Laban replied** reluctantly, for he suspected that Jacob was up to something, **"Very well, let it be as you say."** Being an experienced breeder, Laban knew that offspring usually inherit their parents' coloring and markings. Thus, by removing the gene-pool of the type of goats and sheep that Jacob was proposing to take, Laban stood to get the majority of the next generation of the flock. So logically, he had no reason to refuse Jacob's request.⁶⁰

But Laban also knew that Jacob could produce animals colored or marked differently from their parents by having the parents look at other animals of different coloring or marking while mating. This, Laban understood, was why Jacob wanted to keep some of the white-marked goats and sheep for himself.

35 Aware of this, Laban tried to further tip the odds in his favor. **On that day**, Laban also **removed the he-goats** that were white-**ankle-ringed**⁶¹ (which Jacob had not mentioned in his proposal)—**in addition to all the white-speckled and white-blotched he-goats and all the white-speckled and white-blotched she-goats** (which Jacob *had* mentioned)—in order to make it impossible for Jacob to have his female goats look at them while mating and thereby produce offspring with white markings. In order to make it even harder to produce goats with white markings, Laban removed **all the black and brown sheep**⁶² **with white markings** (which Jacob had not mentioned)—**in addition to all the solid-black and solid-brown sheep** (which Jacob *had* mentioned)—so Jacob could not have his *goats* look at these sheep while mating.⁶³ Nonetheless, Laban did not remove the female goats with white ankle-rings or the white-belted goats, because he felt that Jacob would not let him go so far as to remove *all* possibility of producing goats with white markings. Similarly, he did not remove the solid-brown or solid-black goats, because their absence would have precluded Jacob from having his *sheep* look at them while mating and thereby produce brown or black offspring; again, he felt that Jacob would not let him go so far as to remove *all* possibility of producing the offspring he wanted as payment.

By removing these additional types of animals, Laban implicitly included these types among those that would belong to Jacob. But, as stated, he believed that he had markedly reduced the probability that any such animals would be born.⁶⁴

Finally, in order to further reduce the number of newly-born animals that would belong to Jacob, Laban

Animal & Characteristic				Division According to Original Agreement	Actual Division According to Laban's Unilateral Changes
Goats <small>(normally solid black or solid brown)</small>	white-speckled			to Laban	to Laban
	white-blotched			to Laban	to Laban
	white-ankle-ringed	males		to Jacob	to Laban
		females	robust	to Jacob	to Laban
	weak		to Jacob	to Jacob	
	white-belted	robust		to Jacob	to Laban
		weak		to Jacob	to Jacob
	solid black or brown	robust		to Jacob	to Laban
weak		to Jacob	to Jacob		
Sheep <small>(normally solid white)</small>	solid black or brown			to Laban	to Laban
	black or brown with any white marking			to Jacob	to Laban
	solid white	robust		to Jacob	to Laban
		weak		to Jacob	to Jacob

also removed all the robust goats and sheep from those that he left Jacob, i.e., all the goats that were solid black, solid brown, or white-belted, plus the white-ankle-ringed she-goats, and all the sheep that were solid white.⁶⁵

He left all the aforementioned animals that he took **in the charge of his sons**, and left Jacob only the weak and/or

sterile goats without white markings and the weak and/or sterile sheep that were not brown.

36 **He then separated himself and his flocks from Jacob by a distance of a three-day journey.** This was more than enough time to ensure that the animals that had been segregated not breed with the rest, but Laban also wanted to ensure that the flocks under Jacob's care would not even be able to look at the segregated animals and thereby reproduce under their influence.⁶⁶ **Jacob continued pasturing the rest of Laban's flocks.** 37 Since Laban had left Jacob with almost no way of genetically producing goats with white markings, **Jacob** used the following method to induce the goats under his care to produce offspring with white markings: he **took himself fresh aspen sticks, hazel sticks, and chestnut sticks, and peeled white stripes in them by exposing the underlying white layer of the sticks.** On one type of stick he peeled off white pieces resembling speckles; on the second type of stick, strips resembling blotches; and on the third type of stick, strips resembling ankle-rings.⁶⁷ 38 When it was time for the goats to mate, **he displayed the sticks that he had peeled**, placing them **in the water running through the troughs where the flocks came to drink, facing the animals.** He brought the she-goats to drink; when they saw the sticks in the water, they were startled and recoiled, posturing themselves unwarily into their mating position. **Thus they mated** with the he-goats **when they came to drink.** 39 Since **the animals mated at the sight of the sticks, the young that the animals then produced were** all white-**ankle-ringed, white-speckled, and white-blotched.** Miraculously, none of the offspring were born with their parents' coloring or markings, but rather with those of the sticks. In some cases, the water miraculously impregnated the females without their actually having mated with the males. Jacob also used the sticks to produce some solid-black and solid-brown sheep with white markings.

Jacob did not have to employ any extraordinary techniques to produce brown sheep, since Laban had left brown goats in his care. When the sheep-mating season arrived, he simply segregated all the brown goats from the rest and placed them in front of the sheep. The sheep looked at the brown goats while mating and bore brown offspring.

40 After a few mating seasons, Jacob had successfully produced a sufficient quantity of white-marked animals to regulate the breeding naturally, no longer having to resort to the use of the sticks.⁶⁸ Laban had taken all the black and brown sheep and goats with white markings except for the weak, ankle-ringed female goats, which he had left in Jacob's care.⁶⁹ To these, Jacob added the white-marked sheep he had produced. **Jacob segregated these white-marked sheep. He had the rest of the goat-flock face the white-ankle-ringed and otherwise white-marked sheep and goats, so they would produce offspring with white markings. And as he did previously, he had his sheep face all the black and brown goats among Laban's flock. He made himself separate herds for this purpose and did not let them intermingle with the rest of Laban's flocks.** **41** Moreover, **whenever the stronger, early-bearing female animals were in heat, Jacob would place the sticks in the currents of water in full view of the animals, so that they would be stimulated by means of the sticks.** **42** But he did not place them in the water when the weaker, later-bearing animals were in heat. Thus, even though Laban had left him the weaker animals, Jacob selectively bred the relatively stronger ones for himself: **the weaker, late-born offspring became Laban's, and the healthier, early-born offspring became Jacob's.** When Laban noticed the prolific increase in the types of animals that had originally been designated for Jacob, he attempted to unfairly adjust the odds in his favor by unilaterally reinterpreting the terms of the agreement to mean that these types of animals were designated for him. But in response, Jacob simply adjusted his breeding techniques accordingly, so that the next time the animals reproduced, they did so in his favor. Laban continued to unilaterally change the terms in his own favor, but Jacob always managed to adjust his techniques accordingly, so the flocks continued to reproduce in his favor.⁷⁰ At one point, Laban informed Jacob that the goats that he was to receive as payment would be all those that were ankle-ringed, white-speckled, and white-belted; he then went ahead and transferred all the he-goats with these markings from the herd under Jacob's care to the herd under his sons' care. Rather than trouble Jacob with the cumbersome task of peeling a stick resembling a belted pattern, God had an angel bring the he-goats of these three types back from the herd under Laban's sons' care and re-place them in the herd under Jacob's care so they would reproduce in kind.⁷¹ **43** **The man thus became exceedingly prosperous. He owned abundant and prolific flocks, which commanded a high market price, so he was able to sell them at significant profit and, with these profits, purchase handmaids—who proved to be as fertile as his flocks⁷²—after having first purchased servants to assist him in caring for his flocks. He then also purchased camels and donkeys.⁷³** **31:1** **Jacob then heard what was being said by Laban's sons: "Jacob expropriated everything belonging to our father, and from our father's property he amassed all this wealth."** **10** **It happened just recently that, when your father told me that my payment from among the goats would be all those that were ankle-ringed, white-speckled, and white-belted, and then he removed all the he-goats of these types from the herd under my care, that I looked up during the mating season of the flocks and beheld in a dream that the bucks mounting the she-goats were in fact ankle-ringed, white-speckled, and white-belted. God sent an angel to bring these he-goats back to the herd under my care.⁷⁸**

11 **And in the same dream an angel called to me and said, 'Jacob,' and I replied, 'Here I am.'**

12 **He said, 'Raise your eyes, and you will see that all the bucks mounting the she-goats are ankle-ringed, white-speckled, and white-belted, for I have seen everything that Laban is doing to you and I was sent to return the bucks to the herd you are tending.'**

13 **The angel then spoke to me in God's name, saying, 'I am the God of Bethel, the place where you consecrated a monument as an altar, and made a vow to Me to offer up sacrifices on it.⁷⁹ Now arise and leave this land, and return to the land in which you were born.' "**