

And he (Yaakov) encountered the place and he stayed there. (28:11) - And Yaakov went on his way; and Angels of G-d encountered him. (32:2)

Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl, explains that the word *vayifga* has the special connotation of an unexpected encounter. Thus, we understand that Yaakov *Avinu* experienced something unexpected when he arrived at “that” place. He saw Heavenly Angels ascending and descending a ladder. This was a significant personal experience which conveyed a special message to the Patriarch.

Likewise, at the end of the *parsha*, as the Patriarch was leaving the house of his wicked father-in-law, Lavan, he encountered Angels. This time, however, it was the Angels who encountered him. They were “surprised” by Yaakov as he had been surprised by them twenty years earlier. What revelation did the Angels have that surprised them so?

This encounter with the Angels was an event, because Yaakov was the only one of the *Avos*, Patriarchs, who could claim that *mitaso sheleimah*, his marital bed was complete, all of his children were righteous and followers in their father’s ways and beliefs. Even after having lived for twenty years in Lavan’s home, Rachel and Leah and their children remained resolute and committed to Hashem. Neither the world nor the Angels had ever seen such upstanding, righteous individuals. The Angels were truly taken aback by this astonishing sight. Thus, Yaakov’s surprise at seeing the Angels on his way to Lavan was matched by the Angels’ surprise upon seeing the perfection of man as personified by Yaakov.