Chomer Lidrush

Some ideas to turn your gears heading into Parshas Vayeitzei.

Parperet: Yesterday's Early Sunset

"*Hen od hayom gadol, lo es he'asef hamikneh*" (29:7). Yaakov has just arrived in Charan, a stranger at the well, and moments after greeting the local shepherds he tells them they are quitting too early. Rav Chaim Shaul Kaufman zt"l, in *Mishchas Shemen*, asks how a guest could presume to lecture them, and whether he could have expected them to listen. He brings the Sforno, that a *tzaddik* cannot bear wrongdoing even when it is done to others, "*to'avas tzaddikim ish avel*" (Mishlei 29:27), and the Ponevezher Rav, who said that this is why Yaakov first opened gently with "*achai, me'ayin atem*" (29:4), so that a stranger's warmth and respect would soften them to hear him.

Then he cites an amazing answer from the sefer *Har Sinai*, from Rav Sinai of Ulanov, Poland [late 18th century]. The day before, the sun had set ahead of its time. When Yaakov saw the shepherds gathering so early, he understood that they were afraid it would happen again and leave them tending their flocks in the dark. So he was not scolding them at all; he was reassuring them that what happened yesterday does not happen every day, and the day is still long. Sometimes what sounds like criticism is really comfort, and sometimes people need to hear that yesterday's darkness is not today's.