



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

The Power of Prayer

Presented by Rabbi Moshe Sadwin, Kollel Scholar

“Leah’s eyes were tender, while Rachel had a beautiful form and appearance” (Bereishis 29:17)

The Torah introduces us to Lavan’s two daughters, Rachel and Leah, in quite an unusual way. The Torah describes Leah as having tender, bloodshot eyes and Rachel as having a beautiful appearance. The Gemara (Bava Basra 123a) asks why the Torah seemingly disparages Leah’s appearance while lavishing praise on Rachel’s beauty. The Gemara answers that the Torah was not belittling Leah’s looks. Leah, the eldest daughter of Lavan, was destined to marry Eisav, the eldest son of Rivka, Lavan’s sister. Not wanting to live with such a wicked individual, Leah cried a great deal over her destiny to marry Eisav, and as a result, her eyes were inflamed.

While this explains that Leah’s tender eyes and relatively less attractive appearance were the result of noble intentions, why the Torah goes out of its way to introduce us to Leah in this way still requires explanation.

Using Leah as the exemplar, the Torah is actually imparting a tremendous lesson. True, Leah was supposed to marry Eisav; she was his *bashert* (heavenly predestined match). But, due to her fervent prayers and tears, she was able to change that destiny and position herself to marry Yaakov. The Torah is describing in graphic detail Leah’s dedication and devotion to prayer – she prayed so hard that her eyes were constantly red and tender. It was through that prayer that she was able to change her destiny and merit to be the primary mother of the twelve tribes.

Through Leah, the Torah teaches us never to underestimate the power of prayer, as it can bring about staggering results when conducted with the proper devotion.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

Lavan said: "Such is not done in our place, to marry off the younger sister before the older one." (29, 26)

If a father accepted kiddushin for his daughter but did not specify for which daughter, we can assume that the kiddushin was for the older one, as the verse says, "Lavan said, 'Such is not done in our place, to marry off the younger sister before the older one.'" (Tosafos Kiddushin 52a)

How can we prove the intent of a law-abiding father from the words of 'sly' Lavan?

Parsha Riddle

In which two places in this week's Parsha do we see the power of prayer?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

How old was Yaakov when he received the brachos from Yitzchak?

Answer: 63

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In parashas Vayeitzei, Rachel and Leah deplore their father Lavan's unfatherly, mercenary treatment of them: "Are we not considered by him as strangers? For he has sold us and even totally consumed our money!" (31:15) Rashi explains their complaint: "Even on the occasion that it is normal for one to give a dowry to his daughters, he conducted himself toward us as strangers, for he sold us [in that you [Jacob] worked for him in exchange for us for fourteen years, and he only gave us to you] in compensation for the labor."

In the Sheiltos DeRav Achai Gaon, a major Geonic halachic work arranged according to the parashiyos of the Torah, one of the sheiltos for our parashah (#21) begins: "One who has a daughter and marries her off is required to give her some portion of his property [as a dowry]", and then proceeds with the Talmudic discussion of dowries. Rather unusually for the Sheiltos, it cites no verse from, and makes no explicit connection to, the parashah. The most straightforward explanation of the association between our parashah and dowries is based on the above exegesis of Rashi: the unnatural Lavan who sells his daughters in marriage is the exception that proves the rule that a normal father gives his daughter property upon her marriage. (Toafos Re'eim (Pardo) and R. Shmuel Mirsky in their commentaries to the Sheiltos, but see Torah Sheleimah #36 for a different explanation)

While dowries are uncommon in modern society, the halachic endorsement of giving property to a daughter remains relevant in the context of wills. It is standard for a father to bequeath property to his daughters in his will – a custom that in some form or another has been practiced for centuries. (See Mishpat Hatzavaah p. 66) One of the motivations for this, as well as one of the justifications for doing so despite the halachah's general disapproval of the circumvention of the Torah's laws of inheritance, is the same justification that the Talmud gives for the granting of dowries: the imperative of enhancing one's daughters' marriageability. (Kesubos 52b; Mishpat Hatzavaah pp. 67-68)

PRESENTED BY
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I could be meet.
2. I could be pray.
3. I hint to quick travel.
4. I referenced Yaakov's Maariv.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I could be round.
2. I could be straight.
3. A stick caused me.
4. I went to Yaakov.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Kehuna (Priesthood) (I was for the first, I ended up for the third, Watch your drinking, Esav rejected me.)

#2 Esav (I was made, I was red, I was not bald, I was a fielder.)

All children 13 and under who answer a "Who Am I?" correctly will be entered into a raffle to

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RAFFLE WILL BE
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