



## *Parshas Vayetze 2021, love conquers all?*

*This week's Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.*

*This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna and Shaul Ben Berta.*

Our Parsha begins with Ya'akov fleeing Beer Sheva to escape Esav's anger and rage. On his way to Charan, he rested overnight on the future home of the Beis Hamikdash, Mt. Moriah. He dreamt of a ladder reaching the heavens with angels ascending and descending it that night.

G-d then appeared to Ya'akov and told him that He would give the land he was sleeping on to his children and guard him until he returned to Cana'an. The following day, Ya'akov woke up, recognized this mountain's holiness, and named it Beis E-l - the house of G-d.

When Ya'akov arrived in Charan, he saw Rachel, Lavan's younger daughter and cousin, by the city well with her father's sheep. But, a large rock blocked access to the well's opening. So Ya'akov single-handedly rolled off the massive stone that sat atop the well and gave water to the sheep.

Rachel ran home to her father and told him that his nephew had come to town, and Lavan went out to greet Ya'akov and invited him to stay in his house. Lavan also offered Ya'akov the job of tending to his cattle and asked him what he would like as payment.

Ya'akov answered him that he wished to marry his youngest daughter, Rachel. Lavan replied that he must work seven years in exchange for her hand in marriage.

After seven years of work, Lavan arranged a wedding but switched his daughters, giving Leah instead of Rachel. The following day Ya'akov realized what had happened, but it was already too late, so he worked another seven years to marry Rachel.

Our Parsha has the births of eleven of the twelve children of Ya'akov; Leah gave birth to Reuven, Shimon, Levi, Yeudah, Yssachar, and Zevulun. Zilpah, Leah's maidservant, gave birth to Gad and Asher. Rachel gave birth to Yosef, and her maidservant Bilhah gave birth to Dan and Naftali.

However, a question comes to mind: While her sister, Leah, had five sons, Rachel had none, so she wept to her husband. (31:1) ***“And said, give me children, or I shall die.”*** Ya'akov responded angrily (30:2), ***“Can I take the place of G-d, who has denied you the fruit of the womb?”*** But how is this the correct response to his most beloved wife telling him that she is suffering? Why did he react so sharply instead of empathizing with her pain and misery?!

One of the many answers is that Ya'akov felt personally attacked by Rachel as if he was deliberately not giving her children. Since Rachel said, **“give me children,”** directly blaming him for infertility. Hence, he responded, **“I am not G-d, nor am I to blame for your infertility.”**

In actuality, Ya'akov wanted nothing more than to have children with Rachel. We see this because when Rachel gave birth to her son, Yosef, Ya'akov loved him more than the rest and treated him like a first-born son.

However, the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh (*Rav Chaim Ibn Attar, a Moroccan commentator and kabbalist*) gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He writes that Ya'akov responded sharply because he felt that Rachel wanted to have children with him for the wrong reason. The Pasuk first says that Rachel was jealous of Leah's five sons and then recounts what she said to Ya'akov.

The Ohr Hachaim writes that Ya'akov knew that Rachel was extremely jealous of Leah; he felt she only wanted children because of her sister's five sons.

Therefore, Ya'akov responded that he was not inhibiting or blocking her ability to have children. Yet it angered him, for it seemed like she did not want children

because of their love and connection to each other. But rather because her sister was giving Ya'akov many children.

Accordingly, Ya'akov was upset and asked Rachel, what is the real and underlying reason you want children with me? **Is it because of our deep connection and devotion to each other? Or because Leah has already given me many children?!**

We see that she answers Ya'akov in the next Pasuk. For she tells Ya'akov to marry her maidservant, Bilhah. This was the custom of the time; a wife who had no kids would give her maidservant to her husband. This was done hoping that some blessings would come upon her, like Sarah told Avraham to marry her maidservant, Hagar.

So, if Rachel was jealous and envious of Leah, she wouldn't want Ya'akov to have more kids with someone else. But since she truly wanted to have children with Ya'akov because of their profound connection, having other children is inconsequential and irrelevant to their relationship.

In our daily life, it is imperative that we understand that if we are jealous and envious of others, **it will paralyze and stop our growth.** Jealousy urges and forces us to define ourselves by others, not by who we indeed are. This is detrimental and harmful to our development, as it leads us on a path that is not our own.

However, aspiring to grow and achieve like someone else can give us the motivation and necessary drive to begin our journey. Propelling us to focus and concentrate on finding our uniqueness and purpose in this world.

***“To cure jealousy is to see it for what it is,  
a dissatisfaction with self.”***

*Have an inspirational Shabbos,  
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*