



We see this when Leah later accuses Rachel, “Isn’t it enough that you took my husband?” (30:15)

Leah genuinely felt that Ya’akob had chosen her as a wife. She simply didn’t realize that Rachel had given her the *simanim*. This was the modesty – Rachel’s ability to keep the secret and prioritize her sister’s feelings without any publicizing of her kindness.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Reuven Semah

## Impressions

”וַיִּשָּׂק יַעֲקֹב לְרַחֵל וַיִּשָּׂא אֶת־קוֹלוֹ וַיִּבְדֹּךְ׃”

“Ya’akob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept.” (Beresheet 29:11)

*Rashi* cites various reasons, which *Hazal* mention, for Ya’akob’s weeping upon meeting Rachel. One reason is that Ya’akob lamented the fact that when Eliezer came to Ribkah, at Abraham *Abinu’s* behest to seek a wife for Yitzhak, he came with jewelry and precious stones. In contrast he was coming empty-handed. *Rashi* explains that Ya’akob gave all of his possessions to Elifaz, Esav’s son, who at his father’s command had chased after him to kill him. At the last minute, however, Elifaz just could not do it. He was overcome with doubt, confused by a life of error and misconception. On the one hand, his father had commanded him to slay his uncle. On the other hand, he did not feel he could kill Ya’akob, as he had been raised under Yitzhak’s supervision, visiting and spending time with his sainted grandfather. Sensing his confusion, Ya’akob advised him to take away his possessions, which caused him to become poor. We are taught that “*ani hashub kemet.*” a poor man is like a dead man. Hence, Ya’akob could be declared dead, absolving Elifaz from his father’s directive.

The lessons to be inferred from *Hazal* are captivating. Rav Zaidel Epstein notes the *yesser hara’s* incredible capacity for confusing and misguiding a person. Elifaz was prepared to kill Ya’akob, to murder his Rebbe, in order to fulfill his father’s command. He refrained from taking action only because he had grown up in Yitzhak’s home. Yet the *misvah* of *Kibbud Av Ve’em*, honoring one’s parents, had a compelling effect on him, leaving him no recourse. Certainly, he was not driven by fear of Esav. Had this been the case, he would not have accepted Ya’akob’s *halachic* alternative. Esav did not want alternatives; he wanted Ya’akob completely out of the picture!

Thus, we must conclude that because Elifaz had been raised in Esav’s home, where he was taught by Esav’s example to appreciate the *misvah* of *Kibbud Av*, he was acutely sensitive to this *misvah*. At the same time, he also saw, and was influenced by, a father whose life revolved around murder. Human life had no value to Esav. He lived by the sword. Is it any wonder that Elifaz was confused? He had no concept of murder and its evil! He also spent time with his grandfather, which left an impression to the point that he did not know what to do. The evil of murder, which was not as clearly defined to him as a result of his exposure to Esav, coupled with his sensitivity to *Kibbud Av* left him with a strong argument for carrying out his father’s command. At the same time, the impression that was imprinted upon him as a child of his grandfather prevented him from committing murder.

The lessons are compelling. First, we see that impressions leave an indelible imprint upon a child’s psyche. Growing up in an environment hostile to Torah leaves an indelible impression. On the other hand, those moments with Yitzhak saved Elifaz. Thus, we never know the powerful impact that a visit with a *sadik* can have on a young person. It may take years to surface – but it is there! We also see how the evil inclination can color a sin as heinous as murder and present it as a *misvah*. Elifaz

viewed killing Ya’akob as the fulfillment of the *misvah* of *Kibbud Av*! Do we need to say more? (*Peninim* on the Torah)

## Blessing in Disguise

”וַיִּשָּׂג לָבוֹן אֶת־יַעֲקֹב וַיַּעֲקֹב תָּקַע אֶת־אָהָלוֹ בְּהָר וְלָבוֹן תָּקַע אֶת־אָהָלָיו בְּהָר הַגִּלְעָד׃”

“Laban overtook Ya’akob. And Ya’akob had pitched his tent on the mountain and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mountain of Gilad.”

(Beresheet 31:25)

Laban was intent on destroying Ya’akob. What prevented him from executing his diabolical plan? *Hazal* tell us that Laban feared two things: First, Hashem told Laban to stay away from Ya’akob. Second, Laban was aware that Esav was coming toward Ya’akob with an army of four hundred men. If Laban had killed Ya’akob, his brother Esav would have sought revenge. Laban was not prepared to risk his life to kill Ya’akob. What an incredible statement! The four hundred men who were apparently viewed as the enemy were, ironically, actually Ya’akob’s savior in disguise. Rav Chaim Zaitchik z”l takes this lesson a bit further. We are plagued with pain, affliction, and illness, periods of anguish that to the human eye are nothing more than what they seem. We do not understand the ways of Hashem. We cry, moan and hope that the suffering will soon go away.

Do we ever think that perhaps our suffering might be helping us? If we could view this painful occurrence through Heavenly vision, we would see an entirely different picture. We would see good, not bad; happiness, not sorrow; joy, not pain. Who would ever imagine that an army of four hundred armed soldiers, prepared for war, could be a source of deliverance? While the human eye sees trouble, the Heavenly perspective presents a picture of salvation. Laban realized this. Perhaps we should also open our eyes. (*Peninim* on the Torah)

## Law of Averages

“How are you doing?” Yaakov asked Shelomoh.

“Well, to be honest, not so good,” replied Shelomoh sadly. “It seems every business deal or job that comes my way ends in disappointment. But how are you, my friend?”

“I am also having a hard time with my economic situation, but unlike you, I am doing great!” was the cheerful reply.

“I don’t understand,” Shelomoh replied, looking puzzled.

“Let me explain,” Yaakov calmly answered. “I used to think like you. If life wasn’t perfect, I felt it wasn’t good at all. Then one day I was glancing at the sports section of the *Times* while sitting in the barber’s chair, and I read about a twenty-four-year-old athlete who signed a \$50 million contract with our local baseball team. I looked at his stats and saw that he had a .348 batting average. That means he gets a hit only once every three or four times he comes to bat. Six times out of ten he fails to get a hit – yet he is considered one of the best in the game!

“Well, I have a very special wife, good children, and a decent job. My home is no palace, but it is comfortable. I live in a nice community, and, thank Hashem, I have my health. Some things that people consider important I don’t have – but I am certainly batting better than .348! I’m a \$100 million player.”

Are you batting better than .348? All things considered, you probably are. So, rather than complain, why not bask in the knowledge that you are a multi-million-dollar star! (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)