



TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Vayetzei

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A Taste of Torah

Earn Your Destiny

by Rabbi Dov Holczer

As the parsha opens, Yaakov leaves travels to Charan, where he will marry and build the Twelve Tribes and, by extension, the Jewish Nation. At the end of last week's parsha, Yaakov's mother Rivka had sent him to the house of her brother Lavan in Charan to escape Yaakov's murderous brother Eisav, who sought to avenge what he saw as Yaakov's theft of the blessings meant for him, and to find a wife. Which brings us to the story of Lavan and his two daughters.

The Torah tells us (Vayetze 29:16-17) that Lavan had two daughters, Leah and Rochel. The Torah describes Leah as having tender eyes, while Rochel was beautiful. Rashi explains that Leah's tender eyes were due to that fact that she would cry because the locals would say, "Lavan had two daughters; his sister Rivka two sons. The older (Leah) to the older (Eisav), and younger (Rochel) to the younger (Yaakov)." Hearing that her destiny lay with the wicked Eisav brought Leah much pain, causing her to cry.

The Shem Mishmuel (Rabbi Shmuel Bornsztain of Sochatchov; 1855-1926) takes this matchmaking idea to the next level. He explains that this wasn't just a bad joke made up by the local townspeople in Charan. Our Sages teach that forty days prior to the formation of a fetus (the moment of conception), a *bas kol* (echo of a Heavenly voice) announces whom the unborn child will marry. Leah, with her great spiritual stature, was aware that her predestined mate was, indeed, Eisav, while Rochel was destined for Yaakov. Yet this is not what happened. Rochel did, indeed,

marry Yaakov, but so did Leah! How can such a thing possibly happen?

Leah's tears, discussed by Rashi, were not empty tears, explains the Shem Mishmuel. Leah cried to Hashem to spare her having to marry Eisav. The power of prayer is so great that it can even overturn something that is predetermined. However, the Shem Mishmuel provides a deeper explanation of the aforementioned predetermined destiny of whom one will marry which shows the greatness of Leah beyond her power of prayer. He states that the idea that a particular couple are destined for each other is based upon the character traits and realization of potential of the two parties. These two individuals, with their unique traits and potential, will perfectly complement each other in fulfilling their purpose on Earth - assuming that they are both on track up to the point when they are to meet and marry. If one or the other, using his or her free will, goes in a different direction, they are no longer the perfect match that they were supposed to be.

The fact that Rochel was destined for Yaakov and Leah for Eisav means that Yaakov's and Rochel's natural traits and mission in life made them suited for each other, while Eisav's and Leah's personalities and mission made them a good couple. This status quo would remain only so long as all of the people involved did what they were supposed to do. Had Yaakov decided to go in the direction of evil, though, he would have lost Rochel. Which was, in fact, the case with Leah. Eisav had a propensity for evil,

Stories for the Soul

Dress Rehearsal

Rabbi Shimshon Pincus (1944/45-2001) would often speak of the power of prayer. He would say that if one truly desires something from Hashem, he must pray with all his heart and soul and beg Hashem to help him, and related an incident that occurred to him as a young boy.

At the age of six, he begged his father, Rabbi Avraham Pincus, to allow him to attend the all-night Torah study session that his father was attending the first night of Shavuot. His father, however, told him he could not go and departed for the *bais medrash*.

A short while later, the elder Rabbi Pincus had a change of heart and returned home to take the young Shimshon with him. To his surprise, he found Shimshon already dressed in his holiday finery, ready to go. The father asked the young boy why he was already dressed.

The boy explained that he had known his father would return home for him, for he had prayed to Hashem with all his might that he be allowed to attend the all-night study session. Because of his heartfelt prayer, concluded Shimshon, he had been confident his father would return home for him!

Hashem cause most of the Matriarchs, with the exception of Leah, to wait for many years before having children. Our Sages teach us that Hashem caused this to happen because He desired to hear their prayers. It was not the natural process of events, but, rather, their prayers that brought them their children.

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Kollel Happenings

NEW! MILE HIGH TORAH PODCAST

The Kollel is pleased to introduce Mile High Torah Podcast. Featuring a variety of subjects, from halacha to hashkafa to haftara, you are sure to find a Torah podcast that will pique your interest! Available on Amazon, Google, iTunes, Podbean, Spotify & Stitcher. Visit <https://jewishpodcasts.fm/denvercommunitykollel> for all podcasts.

THE SEVEN DAYS OF CREATION ON ZOOM

The Story of Creation is one of the most cryptic parts of the Torah – yet it is also the very beginning of the Torah! Join Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky on Monday nights, 7:10-7:55 pm, for a seven-part Zoom series focused on achieving a deeper perspective of the Seven Days of Creation. These classes, based on the teachings of the brilliant Torah scholar and teacher Rabbi Moshe Shapiro, will allow you to get re-acquainted with some of the fundamentals of Torah in a deeper fashion. Visit www.denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org for more info.

HELP BUILD THE FUTURE OF TORAH IN DENVER

Claim your part in building the future of Torah in Denver! The Kollel is in the midst of a capital campaign to build a three-story, state-of-the-art Torah Center that will serve the entire Denver Jewish community. To contribute, or for dedication opportunities and details on the building, visit denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org.

Halacha Riddles

Last week we asked: When is it problematic to leave bread hanging?

Answer: The Gemara (Pesachim 111b) states that leaving a basket with bread in it hanging is a cause of poverty. While this ruling is not cited in the Shulchan Aruch, it is cited in the Shulchan Aruch Harav (Hilchos Shemiras Haguf Vihanefesh 9) and Kaf Hachaim (180:14), and some contemporary authorities advise caution (Ohr Letzion 12:18). However, many halachic authorities rule that one needn't be concerned with this issue (see Vizos Habracha 5761 ed. Ch.

2 Kavod Hapas 4 [pg. 18]). Even if one is particular to avoid hanging bread, a teacher may hang students' lunch bags from hooks and the like (Ohr Letzion ibid.; see Vezos Habracha ibid.). In addition, hanging bread for a mitzvah purpose, such as the bag containing the bread from *bedikas chametz*, is also permitted (Kaf Hachaim 434:13).

This week's question: What category of food, due to multiple opinions as to its exact identity, leads to many types of foods requiring a *mezonos* blessing instead of *hamotzi*?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Saadia Gaon - Part V

During his time in *Eretz Yisrael*, a controversy emerged that brought Rav Saadia's scholarship and leadership qualities to the fore.

The leader of the Jewish community in *Eretz Yisrael* at this time was a man by the name of Rabbi Aharon ben Meir, a scion of the princely families who had led the Jewish People in the Holy Land for centuries. While the Torah scholars of Babylon had been the supreme Torah authority for centuries, Rabbi ben Meir sought to reestablish the Torah scholars of *Eretz Yisrael* to their former place of international leadership.

During this time, the yeshiva in Sura

had weakened, and the yeshiva in Pumbedisa had emerged as the main yeshiva in Babylon. The eventual closing of the Sura yeshiva seemed to signal some weakening of the Torah leadership of Babylon. The Exilarch in Babylon was empowered to appoint the *Rosh Yeshiva* (dean) of the Babylonian yeshivos, but the decision often took on political overtones. The Exilarch at this time, Dovid ben Zakkai, became embroiled in a dispute with the Torah leadership in Babylon regarding whom to appoint as the new *Rosh Yeshiva* of Pumbedisa, further weakening the leadership of the Babylonian Torah scholars.

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and was supposed to struggle with that evil and overcome it. Leah, as well, was given this mission. Leah did, indeed, turn her personality around as she subdued the negativity within herself, but Eisav failed. Leah, through her efforts and tearful prayers to Hashem, succeeded to such a degree that she was now a perfect match for Yaakov!

Every person is given a set of tools - traits and talents - with which to achieve greatness in this world. One cannot necessarily change one's fate - though, as in the case of Leah, it is sometimes possible. What is in our power is whether we will use those tools for good or for evil.

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