

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT VAYEITZEI

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

PARASHA INSIGHTS

After seven years of working hard for Lavan in order to marry his daughter Rachel, and eager to build the next block in Am Yisrael, Yaakov awakens in the morning and is stunned to find out that he has been tricked and instead married Leah!

Our Sages (Midrash Rabah, Bereishit) bring an interesting dialogue that ensued shortly after Yaakov realised what had really happened.

Understandingly upset, he reproached Leah. How could she do such a thing? Leah's response was so sound it seems that Yaakov accepted it never going back on this marriage.

Leah cleverly replied that she was put in a very awkward situation. Her father had asked her to marry Yaakov and surely she had to obey her father.

Even though the circumstances were not correct or just, she told Yaakov that she looked to none other than Yaakov himself as an example.

As if to say, "I said what would Yaakov do if his father told him to go to the Chupa?

I heard that you were put in a similar dilemma! Your mother told you to go and get the Beracha (before Eisav) from your father.

You entered your father's presence and announced that you were Eisav.

If that is what you did given the

circumstances, then I justified my actions through yours. Surely what I did was correct!?"

From then on, Yaakov accepted her as his wife and proceeded with the wedding celebrations for seven days, only after which he married his second wife Rachel (for a further seven years work).

These two wives of Yaakov became the forbearers of our nation.

Rather than cast aside, Leah is there together with Rachel and we merited to have four great woman as builders of Am Yisrael, all Imahot – Sarah, Rivka, Rachel and Leah.

But why did we end up with three Avot and four Imahot? Normally we would expect it all to equal out?

Let us explain.

When the Torah introduces Rachel and Leah to us (29:16) we are told, "And Lavan had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.

Our sages are perplexed as to why the Torah needs to tell us that Lavan had two daughters and then proceed to name the two daughters. The Torah could have merely stated that Lavan's daughters were called Leah and Rachel and we would have known that he had two. Why mention the number two?

There are similar occurrences where the Torah mentions the number two, and where we would have known there were two from the pursuing Pesukim (e.g. in relation to the two Seirim (goats) on

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Yom Kippur and the two Chatsotrot (trumpets) in the temple). There, our Sages explain that the reason is to teach us that they were exactly the same. Similar in height, look and value.

This would imply that here too, Rachel and Leah were similar.

How were they similar?

When Avraham was in doubt as to who would continue his legacy, he put forth his son Yishmael as a good candidate. Hashem informed him otherwise. Yishmael would not be the one to continue the legacy; rather it would be through Yitzchak that the great future nation would be established. (21.12) Ki B'Yitzchak Yikareh Lecha Zara – because through Yitzchak will your seed be called.

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 59b) learns out – B'Yitzchak – from some of Yitzchak, "but not all of Yitzchak". Yitzchak had two children, Yakov and Eisav.

Only part of Yitzchak, i.e. Yaakov would continue the legacy. Eisav, like Yishmael, is not considered a descendent and heir of Avraham.

On closer inspection, destiny could have taken a different turn.

Eisav was the first born, he was blessed with great physical strength, and could have been a wonderful partner to Yaakov. What could have transpired could have been – B'Yitzchak – Bet Yitzchak – through the two children of Yitzchak – will your seed continue.

However Eisav forgave his rights, choosing instead to use his strength and power for the pursuit of worldly matters.

Yaakov on the other hand concentrated on the Torah, eventually masterminding even worldly matters. He took on the spiritual and physical role of his brother.

Rashi (29:17) teaches that Leah was originally destined to marry Eisav, and Rachel, Yaakov.

That's right there could have been four Avot! However that prestige was forgone.

Yaakov listened to his mother, dressed as Eisav and entered towards his father to receive the eternal blessing.

Of all the Avot only Yaakov had two eternal names – Yaakov and Yisrael. The Michtav Me'Eliyahu (Parshat Vayeishev) explains that Yaakov connects to Rachel and Yisrael to Leah. Yaakov filled the void created by Eisav, functioning as two Avot. He was therefore given a second name, Yisrael.

Originally Leah was destined to marry Eisav. When Leah saw that Yaakov took over the mantle of Eisav, Leah realized that Yaakov became her soul mate. This is what she alluded to when she told Yaakov, "It is from you I learned"; since you substituted for Eisav, taking his blessings and birth right, you have become my soul mate. Everything is written from above, but there are many different ways of interpreting life's challenges.

Leah learnt from the best, and proactively yearned to be a founding mother of our nation.

What seemed like a simple story has now taken on a completely new meaning.

Shabbat Shalom



RABBI DAVID BAADANI
Director - TAL Chazanut Program

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

The Torah recounts that Ya'akov Avinu, fleeing from Esav, lay down to rest: "He took from the stones of the place and placed them under his head, and lay down in that place" (Bereishit 28:11). Rashi, quoting the Midrash, explains that the stones began to quarrel, each one desiring the merit of supporting the head of the Tzadik. Ultimately, the stones united and miraculously became one.

This episode teaches a profound lesson in Achdut (unity). Although

Ya'akov could rest his head on only one part of the unified stone, every individual stone shared in the merit because they became one. When individuals join in unity for a shared purpose, their collective achievement benefits everyone.

So too with Klal Yisrael. Unity does not require uniformity or the absence of disagreement. The Talmud is replete with machloket l'shem shamayim (disputes for the sake of Heaven), such as those between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel. These debates reflect differing perspectives in the pursuit of truth, yet they never undermined mutual respect or cooperation. The

Mishnah states that Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel maintained peace, even ensuring intermarriage between their families (Yevamot 14b).

The final Mishnah in Shas emphasizes that shalom (peace) is the vessel that holds all blessings: "לא מצא הקדוש ברוך הוא כלי מחזיק ברכה לישראל אלא השלום" (Uktzin 3:12). The challenge lies in preserving that unity in daily life—disagreeing respectfully while focusing on our shared mission.

May this unity and shalom bring the ultimate blessing: the coming of Mashiach speedily in our days.



RABBI DANNY FISHER

Director - TAL Boys After School Programs

TORAH - THE PATH TO TRUE LIVING

In this week פרשה we find יעקב אבינו running away from עשו, fearing for his life.

The תורה tells us "ישכב במקום ההוא", indicates that only at that place once יעקב had arrived did he finally rest. All the years earlier when he had left יצחק house, and learnt in ישיבת שם ועבר for 14 years he had not rested. It was only now that he allowed himself to sleep.

עשו was the grandson of עשו, the great grandson of יצחק and was brought up in the home of עשו. יצחק instructed יעקב to go and find יעקב and kill him. Once אליפז found him he had a dilemma, on the one hand he

had to have יעקב and listen to עשו, on the other hand he didn't want to kill יעקב. The solution יעקב told him, is to take all my possessions and money as someone who has no money is considered dead.

Rav Shamai Zahn asks, why is it only now that אליפז finds יעקב. Didn't עשו realise that all these years earlier, יעקב would be learning in Yeshiva, why not go search for him in Yeshivah?

Rav Shamai Zahn shares a story, about a certain person who was recently appointed as a Rov. Someone knocked on his door and asked to speak to the Rov. He was told the Rov can't come to the door, since he is busy learning. The visitor couldn't understand why a Rov who has semicha would still be learning Torah.

In the same way, עשו didn't realise the difference Torah is to all other

subjects. It is not merely a subject to learn and once understood to stop. Rather it is our very life and purpose for existence; one must continue learning and strive to reach deeper levels and understanding of that which is being learnt. There is no end to learning Torah, but עשו didn't understand this. He wouldn't have imagined that יעקב אבינו would be in Yeshivah for 14 years. The purpose being to enrich himself, to plumb to the depths of Torah and be a changed person because of this.

This was the point that עשו missed hence he didn't send אליפז to search for him in Yeshivah, for he never thought he would still be there.

This Dvar Torah should be a Zechus for my Grandfather Avraham Ben Mordechai Zelig on his 19th Yahrzeit (7th Kislev)

Have a wonderful Shabbos!



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

Which Beracha Does One Recite Over Sugar-Coated Almonds?

Different opinions exist as to the Beracha recited over Labas – almonds with a thick coating of sugar. The Mishna Berura (Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan of Radin, 1839-1933) writes (204) that one recites "Ha'etz," just like over ordinary almonds, because the almond is the primary component and the sugar is secondary. The Ben Ish Hai (Rav Yosef Haim of Baghdad, 1833-1909), by contrast, felt that neither the almond nor the sugar can be regarded as primary

or secondary, and therefore a separate Beracha must be recited over each. He ruled that one should first scrape off some sugar and recite "She'hakol" over the sugar, followed by "Ha'etz" over the almond. This view is brought by Rav Yisrael Bitan in Yalkut Yosef.

A third view is that of Hacham Bension Abba Shaul (Israel, 1924-1998), who maintained that given the uncertainty surrounding the Beracha over Labas, one should simply recite "She'ha'kol." This was the practice followed in Baghdad,

despite the ruling of its Rabbi, the Ben Ish Hai.

All three views are valid, and therefore one can either recite "Ha'etz," recite "She'ha'kol," or recite separate Berachot over the sugar and over the almond.

Summary:

Three views exist as to the Beracha over Labas – almonds with a thick coating of sugar – and all three are valid: 1) "Ha'etz"; 2) "She'ha'kol"; 3) "She'hakol" over some of the sugar, followed by "Ha'etz" over the almond.



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Vayeitzei

Fleeing from Esav, Yaakov leaves Be'er Sheva and sets out for Charan, the home of his mother's family. After a 14-year stint in the Torah Academy of Shem and Ever, he resumes his journey and comes to Mount Moriah, the place where his father Yitzchak was brought as an offering, and the future site of the Beit Hamikdash. He sleeps there and dreams of angels going up and down a ladder between Heaven and Earth. G-d promises him the Land of Israel, that he will found a great nation and that he will enjoy Divine protection. Yaakov wakes and vows to build an altar there and tithe all that he will receive. Then he travels to Charan and meets his

cousin Rachel at the well. He arranges with her father, Lavan, to work seven years for her hand in marriage, but Lavan fools Yaakov, substituting Rachel's older sister, Leah. Yaakov commits himself to work another seven years in order to also marry Rachel. Leah bears four sons: Reuven, Shimon, Levi and Yehuda, the first Tribes of Israel. Rachel is barren, and in an attempt to give Yaakov children, she gives her handmaiden Bilhah to Yaakov as a wife. Bilhah bears Dan and Naftali. Leah also gives Yaakov her handmaiden Zilpah, who bears Gad and Asher. Leah then bears Yissaschar, Zevulun, and a daughter, Dina. Hashem finally blesses Rachel with

a son, Yosef.

Yaakov decides to leave Lavan, but Lavan, aware of the wealth Yaakov has made for him, is reluctant to let him go, and concludes a contract of employment with him. Lavan tries to swindle Yaakov, but Yaakov becomes extremely wealthy. Six years later, Yaakov, aware that Lavan has become dangerously resentful of his wealth, flees with his family. Lavan pursues them but is warned by G-d not to harm them. Yaakov and Lavan agree to a covenant and Lavan returns home. Yaakov continues on his way to face his brother Esav.

Rabbi Sinclair,
Seasonsofthemoon.com

Q

1. When Yaakov traveled to Charan, the Torah stresses that he departed from Beer Sheva. Why?
2. On the night of his dream, Yaakov did something he hadn't done in 14 years. What?
3. G-d compressed the entire Land of Israel underneath the sleeping Yaakov. What did this symbolize?
4. Yaakov said "I will return with shalom." What did he mean by "shalom"?
5. Why did Yaakov rebuke the shepherds?

A

1. 28:10 - The departure of a righteous person leaves a noticeable void in that place.
2. 28:11 - Sleep at night lying down.
3. 28:13 - That the Land would be easy for his descendants to conquer.
4. 28:21 - Completely without sin.
5. 29:7 - He thought they were loafing, stopping work early in the day.



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