

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT VAYETZE

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

RACHEL'S SECRET

At the time of this writing, Palestinian terrorists are brazenly attempting to capture Kever Rachel, Rachel's tomb. What relevance do they have to the tomb of our Bubby Rachel? How can we bring this nonsensical act into the realm of understanding?

"And it was, in the morning, that behold it was Leah (Breishis 29:25)!" Note the difficulty: Was she not Leah the evening before as well? Thus, explains Rashi, that in the evening, under the Chuppah, Yaakov actually thought Leah was Rachel. Yaakov and Rachel, in anticipation of Lavan's treachery, devised a secret sign to allow Yaakov to disclose the deception. However, when Rachel saw her father setting up Leah in her place, she had a change of heart. "My sister will be mortified!" Rachel, overwhelmed by sympathy, gave the secret sign to her sister.

A superficial reading makes Rachel's act sound very nice and altruistic. After all, she spared her sister shame. Surely, each of us would have done the same.

Taking a deeper, more accurate look, however, we will discover that concealed between the lines lies a superhuman self-sacrifice of unparalleled proportions.

Remember, Yaakov worked for Rachel for seven years. Their profound love made it seem like only a few days (v. 20). During all this time, Rachel anticipated the day she would finally marry her beloved.

At the last minute, Rachel realized that her unscrupulous father had deceived them, and was dressing Leah in the wedding gown. How would we have felt under such circumstances? She was losing her husband! She had no way of knowing that Yaakov would agree afterward to marry her as well. As far as she

was concerned, she was relinquishing Yaakov forever.

All Rachel had to do was make a scene so that Yaakov would realize that she was not the bride. But Rachel kept quiet. Moreover, she gave her sister the secret sign, so that Yaakov would think he was actually marrying Rachel. Rachel did everything possible to spare her sister disgrace. All this, despite the permanent loss of her husband.

In addition, Yaakov was not just a husband. He was to become the third and culminating patriarch of the Jewish nation. Rachel had a one-time opportunity to mother the Shivtei Kah, the tribes of Hashem.

Furthermore, by failing to marry Yaakov, Rachel would surely be suggested as a shidduch for the wicked Esav. "Everyone was saying: Rivka has two sons, and Lavan has two daughters. The older daughter for the older son, and the younger daughter for the younger son (Rashi 29:17)." Leah had been the natural bashert (intended) for Esav. Now that Leah was marrying Yaakov, Rachel would obviously be expected to marry Esav. Moreover, Esav apparently had his eyes set on Rachel (See Rashi 30:22,33:7). Rachel was systematically forfeiting absolutely everything for her sister's sake!

But the greatest question of all: Why did Rachel do it? Why didn't she protest this grave injustice? And why did she provide Leah with the secret sign?

Says the Mishna: "One who humiliates his friend publicly... though he may have Torah and good deeds, he has no share in the World to Come (Avos 3:11)." A person can be a consummate Tzaddik, he can learn Torah 24/7, he can donate one fifth of his income to Tzedaka, he can dedicate his life to helping others, yet he will have no place in the Afterlife!

"All who descend to Gehinnom ascend except for three, who descend and never ascend... and a person who humiliates his friend public-

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Rachel's Secret
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KIDS ZONE
Quiz & Comic

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ly." What goes down, must come up. Except for this.

"A person should sooner throw himself into a fiery furnace, before he embarrasses his friend publicly (Kesuvos 67b)." According to some opinions, a person is obligated to give up his life before humiliating someone! (Tosfos, Sotah 10b; Shaarei Teshuva 3:139; Minchas Shlomo I:7)

Consequently, Rachel did not protest. Had she made a scene, what would she have gained? She may have married Yaakov, mothered the twelve tribes, and spared herself a life with Esav, but in the end she would have lost. Of what benefit are all these things if one has no place to enjoy it after all is said and done?

But from Rachel, we learn an additional lesson. To absolve herself from eternal condemnation, it would have been sufficient to keep quiet. Any shame Leah experienced would have been attributed to her father, Lavan. Yet Rachel did far more than simply keep quiet. She gave the secret code to Leah. Totally beyond anyone's expectations, Rachel went the extra mile to spare Leah pain.

What reward did Rachel receive for her unrivaled self-sacrifice? First of all, she lost nothing. Human logic dictates that a person is justified in cutting corners to receive what he feels is coming to him. Had Rachel cut corners, had she contributed even indirectly to her sister's humiliation, she would have ended up bankrupt. By doing what was right, Rachel lost nothing. She married Yaakov, became one of the matriarchs, and thus

stayed out of the clutches of Esav. Furthermore, let us not forget that Rachel was born barren; she was incapable of giving birth (Breishis 29:31). Had she protested, and subsequently married Yaakov in a straightforward manner, she may never have mothered a child. It was solely due to her willingness to forego her future that she attained motherhood (See Rashi 30:22).

But the greatest reward of all is evident from the Medrash (Introduction to Eichah Rabba). After the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash, various Tzaddikim arose to plead on behalf of the Jewish people. It was an all-star cast. Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Moshe, etc., all tried to rescind the tragic decree and to restore the Jewish people to their former glory. One by one, their prayers were rejected by Hashem; All their vast merits did not help them! Finally, one last voice made itself heard:

"At that moment, Rachel our mother jumped up and said to Hashem, 'Master of the universe, You well know that Your servant Yaakov loved me deeply, and he worked for my father for seven years. When those seven years were up and the time of my wedding to my husband arrived, my father schemed to substitute my sister for me, and this was terribly difficult for me. I informed my husband, and I gave him a sign so that he could distinguish between my sister and me, to thwart my father's scheme. Afterwards, I regretted what I had done, and I suppressed my yearning. I had mercy on my sister, so that she would feel no

shame. In the evening, they gave my sister to my husband in my stead, and I gave my sister all of the signs that I had given to my husband, so that he would think she was Rachel... I was not jealous of her, and I did not humiliate her. If I, mere flesh and blood, dust and ashes, did not envy my competitor and did not humiliate her, You, the everlasting, merciful King, why did You envy idolatry which has no substance, and You exiled my children, and they were killed by the sword, and the enemies did with them as they pleased?'

"Immediately, Hashem's mercy was aroused and He said, 'For you, Rachel, will I return Yisrael to their place.' As it is written, 'Thus said Hashem, A voice is heard on high, wailing, bitter weeping, Rachel weeps for her children; she refuses to be consoled for her children, for they are gone. Thus said Hashem, Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears; for there is reward for your accomplishment and they will return from the enemy's land. There is hope for your future and your children will return to their border.' (Yirmiyah 31:14-16)"

The secret to our success and to our ultimate redemption was revealed by Rachel Imeinu. Follow in her footsteps, develop sensitivities to our fellow man, abstain from embarrassing others, and Hashem will rescue us posthaste. The Palestinians, hoping to break our spirit, focus their rage on a tomb. Unbeknownst to them, the real secret lies within us.

"There is hope for your future your children will return!"



RABBI DAVID BAADANI
Director - TAL Chazanut Program

PARSHAT VAYETZE

Rashi tells us something unusual in this week's parasha. When Yaakov left the city of Be'er Sheva, the Torah emphasizes not only that he arrived in Charan but also that he departed from Be'er Sheva. Why mention his leaving? Rashi explains: when Yaakov left, the glory, the beauty, and the splendor of the city left with him.

But that raises a question. Yitzchak and Rivkah, two of the holiest, most refined souls, were still there. Shouldn't

their presence have been enough to keep the city radiant?

Rabbi Reuven Feinstein points out that this teaches us a profound truth: the power of the individual.

We often underestimate what one person brings into the world. We assume that if we don't show up, if we don't speak up, if we don't take part, things will be fine without us. "The class will go on. The minyan will happen. The event will still be nice." And maybe it will. But it won't be the same.

Because your presence is not replaceable. When Yaakov left, even with Yitzchak and Rivkah remaining, some-

thing unique departed. The particular light that Yaakov carried, his warmth, his perspective, his holiness. The city could not shine the same way without it.

We live in a world that celebrates the crowd, the collective, the big picture. But the Torah reminds us that every crowd is made of irreplaceable individuals. When you stand back and say, "They don't need me," you're missing how deeply needed you are, not because of what you can do, but because of what you are.

The splendor of Be'er Sheva left when Yaakov left. The splendor of any place, any moment, leaves a little when you do.



RABBI DANNY FISHER

Director - TAL Boys After School Programs

PARSHAT VAYETZE

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

The פסוק tells us "וישכב 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 יצחק, the great grandson of יעקב and was brought up in the home of יעקב. יעקב instructed אליפז to go and find יעקב and kill him. Once אליפז found him he had a dilemma, on the one hand he had to have אב 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 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.

Have a wonderful Shabbos!

This Dvar Torah should be a Zechus for my Grandfather Avraham Ben Mordechai Zelig on his 20th Yahrzeit (7th Kislev)



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

The Origin of Baruch She'amar

The Pesukeh De'zimra section of our morning prayer service begins with a special introductory Beracha – Baruch She'amar. Some say that this is the Beracha over the Misva of Pesukeh De'zimra. Therefore, if, for whatever reason, one who neglected to recite Baruch She'amar before Pesukeh De'zimra does not recite it afterward.

Interestingly enough, this blessing does not appear anywhere in the Talmud. The Or Zarua (Rav Yishak of Vienna, 13th century) writes that the Ansheh Keneset Ha'gedola (Men of the Great Assembly), which existed in the beginning of the Second Commonwealth, instituted the recitation of this Beracha after the text descended from the heavens. A piece of paper bearing the text of Baruch She'amar fell from the skies, and so the Rabbis of the time

chose to incorporate it into the daily prayer service. An allusion to this recitation can be found in a verse in Shir Hashirim (5:11): "Rosh Ketem Paz" – "His head is the finest of gold." The word "Paz" in Gematria equals 87 – the number of words in Baruch She'amar, and thus hints to the fact that "Rosh" – the beginning of the prayer service, features "Ketem Paz" – the beautiful, "golden" blessing of Baruch She'amar.

Due to the unique importance of Baruch She'amar, it was instituted to be recited while standing, just as the angels stand while praising G-d in the heavens.

The Peri Hadash (Rav Hizkiya Da Silva, 1659-1698) raised the question of how we are allowed to recite this blessing, given that it was not mentioned in the Talmud. Seemingly, we do not have the authority to introduce new Berachot

which the Gemara does not instruct us to recite. In truth, however, the Tur (Rabbenu Yaakov Ben Asher, 1270-1340) brings a source tracing the origins of this blessing back to the times of Rabbi Yishmael, who lived during the Second Temple era. And the Hida (Rav Haim Yosef David Azulai, 1724-1806) notes that this blessing is mentioned in the Zohar, which is attributed to Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai, one of the Tannaim. Therefore, it certainly has a legitimate basis, and there is no room to question the legitimacy of reciting it.

The Mishna Berura (Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan, 1839-1933) writes that since this Beracha is not mentioned in the Talmud, it may be treated more leniently than other Berachot. Therefore, if somebody hears somebody recite a different Beracha while he recites Baruch She'amar, he may interrupt his recitation of Baruch She'amar to

answer "Amen" to that other Beracha. However, Halacha does not follow this opinion. We treat Baruch She'amar no differently than other Berachot, and thus one may not interrupt his recitation of Baruch She'amar to answer "Amen" to another Beracha.

Summary:

Baruch She'amar is regarded as the introductory blessing to Pesukeh De'zimra, and therefore one who neglected to recite it before Baruch She'amar does not recite it afterward. As with all Berachot, one who hears a

different Beracha while reciting Baruch She'amar does not interrupt his recitation to answer "Amen" to that other Beracha. Due to its unique importance, Baruch She'amar is to be recited standing.



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Vayetze

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,
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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.

