

“And it was in the morning, and behold- it was Leah!” (29:25)

Lavan lived up to his reputation as a corrupt, duplicitous miscreant. Yaakov and Rachel were prepared for Lavan's certain deception. They, therefore, arranged a secret signal between them. Upon seeing that her sister, Leah, was about to be substituted for her, Rachel decided to give Leah the pre-determined sign, in order not to cause her embarrassment. *Horav Aharon Kotler, z.l.*, observes that had it not been Hashem's will that Leah marry Yaakov, then all of Lavan's “*shtick*,” contrivances, would have been futile. One should not think that it was Lavan's dishonesty, and Rachel's magnanimous gesture, that brought about the marriage of Leah to Yaakov *Avinu*. Rather, it was Hashem Who deemed it so. Leah was to become Yaakov's primary wife, the mother of as many sons as the three other wives combined. Indeed, she was buried with him in the *Meoras Ha'machpeilah*. As *Rav Aharon* adds, Yaakov *Avinu* detected nothing wrong with his marriage to Leah, because his trenchant spiritual perception recognized that, indeed, he was with his predestined partner in life.

Horav Eliyahu E. Dessler, z.l., comments about the respective roles of the two sisters. Rachel was to be Yaakov's intended mate for this world, while Leah was to be his partner in the spiritual world of *Olam Haba*. Yaakov possessed two names: Yaakov, signifying his physical dimension, and Yisrael, designating his spiritual role in the future. Indeed, Rachel produced Yosef, who sustained his family during the great famine. Leah, on the other hand, produced Levi and Yehudah, the progenitors of the *Kehunah*, Priesthood, and *Malchus Beis David*, Davidic Messianic sovereignty, respectively. Yaakov's destiny as *Yisrael* demanded that he marry Leah, an arrangement devised by Hashem.

There is, however, one aspect of the marriage that should be addressed. Suspecting Lavan's deceitful nature, Yaakov gave Rachel a special signal by which he could identify her. Selfless in nature, Rachel gave the sign to her sister, so that Leah would not be embarrassed. This is praiseworthy, but, what about Yaakov? Who gave Rachel the right to share Yaakov's private signal with her sister? True, she did not want to see her sister humiliated, but what about Yaakov? His intention was to marry Rachel – and not Leah! *Horav Sholom Schwadron, z.l.*, cites a story within a story that gives us an insight into Rachel's action. It occurred with *Horav Yehoshua Brim, z.l.*, a distinguished *Rosh Yeshivah* in Yerushalyim, who had undertaken to see to the welfare of a widow and her children, whose husband and father had passed away a week before *Pesach*. He had arranged for a *bachur*, young man from the *yeshivah*, to lead the *Pesach Seder* as it should be. On *Pesach* night, he told his family that he would be home a little bit later than usual, since he was dropping by the widow's home to make sure everything was in order.

After *davening*, *Horav Brim* visited the widow and noticed that the *bachur* who was to “lead” the *Seder* had not yet arrived. The widow, who was understandably anxious, began to cry, bemoaning her tragic circumstances. No husband, no father, no one to sit at the head of the table

and lead the *Seder*. *Horav* Brim was not going to permit this widow to suffer any more anguish. He proceeded to begin the *Seder* – himself. One can only begin to imagine the great joy in that home as the widow and her children realized that the great *Rosh Yeshivah* was going to lead their *Seder* personally.

Horav Brim did not rush the proceedings. He took his time in explaining the story of the exodus from Egypt. He carefully and poignantly focused upon the dire situation of the Jews of that generation, how they were liberated from servitude and their misery was transformed to joy overnight. So, too, the Exodus should serve as a portent for us all, lending hope and encouragement where it is needed. As soon as the *Seder* was over, *Horav* Brim bid the family *Gut Yom Tov* and immediately ran home. His family, by now thoroughly puzzled by his tardiness, was waiting for an explanation. “I will explain everything soon, but first we must hurry up the *Seder*, so that we may eat the *Afikoman* in its proper time,” he said. After they had eaten the *Afikoman*, he told them the reason that he was late. “But what about your family?” his children asked. “It is a *mitzvah* to help a widow, but not at the expense of your own family,” they exclaimed. “Let me explain to you why I acted the way I did,” he responded.

“When I was much younger, I once went with one of my friends to the *Chazon Ish*, z.l., to discuss a certain situation that troubled us. At the end of the conversation, after we received the *Chazon Ish*’s advice, he turned to us and said, ‘One of your friends is in need of a *shidduch*, suitable mate. We must address this issue as soon as possible.’ We, of course, immediately looked into the matter, and in a short while the *bachur* became engaged to a fine young woman. We immediately notified the *Chazon Ish*, who was overjoyed. He expressed his interest in attending the “*vort*,” engagement celebration, and asked that we notify him when everything was prepared and they were about to read the “*tenaim*,” agreement between the *chason* and *kallah*.

“At the moment that they were prepared to read the *tenaim*, we went to call the *Chazon Ish*. When we came to his home, we found him speaking to an elderly couple concerning their little store which they managed. He patiently advised them in regard to every aspect of their business. This advice however took over an hour, during which time we waited not so patiently for the *Chazon Ish* to finish. After all, all the guests were waiting for him to appear, so that the *simchah* could proceed.

“The *Chazon Ish* walked the couple to the door and bid them good- night. He immediately took his hat and rushed with us to the *simchah*. On the way, he turned to us and said, ‘You probably are wondering why I took so long with the elderly couple, knowing fully well that everyone at the *simchah* was waiting for me. You should know that these people are broken Holocaust survivors whose only source of sustenance is their little store. Why they came to me for advice, I do not know. I do know, however, that while I cannot help them financially, I can give them support, hope and encouragement.

‘This *mitzvah* is not only my obligation; it is the collective responsibility of the entire Jewish

community – including yourselves and all those who were at the *simchah*. By waiting for me to join them, they were taking part in the *mitzvah* of helping another Jew.'

"So, too," continued *Horav* Brim, "it applies to us. Tonight, you could not be of service to the widow, but the obligation to help her still applies. By waiting for me while I led her *Seder*, you were taking part in the *mitzvah*!"

What a remarkable perspective on *chesed*, kindness, and its application from a *Torah* point of view. The obligation to act kindly, with sensitivity and love to a fellow Jew applies not only to the one to whom the *mitzvah* is availed, but to everyone involved. However remotely one may be affected by this *mitzvah*, he is obligated to support it. With this in mind, *Horav* Schwadron comments that *Yaakov Avinu* also was obliged to protect Leah from humiliation. If that is the case, then Rachel did nothing wrong by giving Leah the sign she received from *Yaakov*. Indeed, she was doing him a favor by letting him share in the *mitzvah* of shielding Leah from disgrace.