

And she said, “If so, why is it that I am thus?” (25:22)

Rivkah was experiencing what she perceived to be a strange pregnancy. Something unusual was occurring in her body. When she walked by a house of (monotheistic) prayer, a house of learning, she felt the fetus within her womb gravitating toward it. Likewise, when she passed by a house that catered to idol worship, she once again felt a pulling to leave and embrace the idols. What kind of child was she carrying? *Rashi* explains the words, *Lamah zeh anochi*; “Why is it that I am?” Why is it that I am desiring and praying for pregnancy? Had I known that I would be carrying a child whose values would be mixed, I would have been better off not becoming pregnant.

Ibn Ezra explains that as this was Rivkah’s first pregnancy, she asked women who had given birth whether her experience was normal. When they said that it was not, she asked, “If this is unusual, why is it so? Why is my pregnancy unlike that of others?”

Ramban rejects the expositions of both *Rashi* and *Ibn Ezra*. He explains that Rivkah mused, “If this is the way that it will be for me, why am I in this world? I wish that I would no longer be.” According to *Ramban*, *anochi* does not refer to the pregnancy, but rather, to Rivkah herself. [Rivkah felt that if she could not achieve her purpose in life, what purpose would she serve in living?] Clearly, these expositions, which are expounded by the *gedolei ha’Rishonim*, reflect their varied approaches to understanding Rivkah’s lament over her condition. Each exposition is holy and profound, far beyond anything we can understand.

Horav Nissan Alpert, zl, offers a powerful approach, one which delves deep into the psyche of our Matriarch and simultaneously mandates us to look at ourselves in the mirror and ask the question: “Am I the problem?” He suggests that perhaps (quite possibly), the inner conflict which we observe in our children – the agitation, uncertainty, anxiety, their acting as if they are being pulled in opposing directions – is all a reflection of what is taking place in the psyche of their parents.

A child that suffers from uncertainty and inner conflict might be acting out what he perceives upon observing his parents. Perhaps the parents’ personal conflict, being torn between opposing value systems, is carried over to their child. This might be what troubled Rivkah when she sensed that the child she was carrying was conflicted, torn between paganism and monotheism. Her first reaction was: “Why am I thus? Is something wrong with me, my soul, my spirituality? What is the discord that I am feeling in my womb telling me about myself?” She wondered whether something about her *anochi* was conflicted, something which required re-evaluation and resolution before she could continue. It was not enough to just serve Hashem. It was necessary that every aspect of her service be perfect and irreproachable.

When things do not go as we had planned, we often look for a scapegoat to blame for our personal failure. Those who play the blame game shy away from responsibility. If something goes wrong in our life, someone else must be to blame. It is our way of avoiding the truth. It is so much easier to place the onus of guilt on someone else, rather than to accept one’s own mistakes. I cite a

powerful quote concerning laying blame on everything and everybody, rather than where it really belongs, “You can get discouraged many times, but you are not a failure until you begin to blame someone else and stop trying.” When we lay blame on others, we provide ourselves with a distraction – from ourselves. We would rather focus on others than do some serious introspection into ourselves. By projecting our negativity at others, we make them appear to be the villains, thus taking the heat off ourselves. One more quote that hits home: “People who have trust issues need only to look in the mirror. There, they will meet the one person who will betray them most.”

Rivkah *Imeinu* teaches us that the first place one should look is at himself/herself. Introspection does not come easily, but nothing of value comes easily. If all parents would look inside themselves before laying blame at the feet of their children, we might have children who are much less conflicted.