

## And Leah's eyes were tender (29:17)

*Rashi* explains that Leah *Imeinu* wept copious tears in prayer to *Hashem* that she not have to marry *Eisav*. People would say that *Rivkah Imeinu* had two sons and her brother, *Lavan*, had two daughters. It made sense that the older daughter, *Leah*, would wed the older son, *Eisav*; and the younger daughter, *Rachel*, would marry *Yaakov*. The prospect of having to spend the rest of her life with the evil *Eisav* is enough to make anyone cry. As a result, *Leah's* eyes became tender. *Targum Onkelos* interprets *rackos* as *ya'in*, beauty. Was *Rashi* unaware of *Onkelos's* commentary? Furthermore, *Chazal* (*Megillah* 3A) teach that *Onkelos's* translation of the *Torah* was based upon what he heard from *Rabbi Eliezer* and *Rabbi Yehoshua*. If so, how could *Rashi's* translation differ from the *Talmud*?

In his commentary to *Succah* 36A, the *Chasam Sofer* presents these questions as a springboard for an innovative exposition concerning true beauty. *Rashi* and *Onkelos* do not disagree. Indeed, as a result of *Leah's* weeping, her eyebrows fell off. Under normal circumstances, this alters a woman's physical appearance, except in *Leah's* case. Although the tears caused her eyebrows to fall off, that was the essential reason for her beauty. He explains that nothing is more beautiful than eyes that have sustained a major transformation due to the copious tears that a woman has shed. Tears that are spent in prayer so as not to fall into the hands of such a *rasha* bring out the true inner beauty of a person. True beauty is not defined by physical appearance, but by one's character and spiritual depth. *Leah's* tears, driven by a deep yearning for righteousness and holiness, transformed her physical features, but, in doing so, caused her inner beauty to shine through. A person is defined by her character, values and actions-not by her outward appearance. Soft eyes, which are the result of spiritual yearning, bespeak beauty at its apex.

As a result of this exposition, the *Chasam Sofer* issues a *chidush*, innovative ruling, concerning an *esrog* that was used by a large group. (In those days *esrogim* were hard to come by. Thus, only people of means could afford an *esrog*, which they shared with the community.) As a result of everyone touching the *esrog*, its color and outward appearance was altered. According to *halachah* (*Orach Chaim* 648:12), an *esrog* whose color has changed is *pasul*, invalid for use during the seven days of *Succos*. Nonetheless, the *Chasam Sofer* ruled that an *esrog* whose color changes were the result of numerous people using it to make a *b'rachah* has achieved the pinnacle of hidden beauty, enhancement of the *mitzvah*.

In a similar ruling, the *Noda b'Yehudah* writes about the prohibition against cutting hair ie, haircut, shaving during *Chol Ha'moed*, Intermediary Days of the Festival of *Pesach* or *Shavous*. *Chazal* were concerned that a person would delay his haircut or shave until *Chol Ha'moed*, thereby entering into *Yom Tov* in a state of untidiness. The *Noda b'Yehudah* asks: Since it is prohibited to cut hair during *Chol Ha'moed*, a person may very well enter into the last days of *Yom Tov* in an unshaven state. Why is there no dispensation as a result of his state of untidiness? He should be able to cut his hair out of respect for the last days of *Yom Tov*. He explains that, since he has entered the *Yom Tov* in an unshaven state only because he is following the ruling of *Chazal*, he

can display no greater sign of respect.

When we align our actions with the wisdom and guidance of *Chazal*, we show where our priorities lie. Spiritual values not only trump physical appearance, they redefine the meaning of beauty. The prohibition against cutting hair during *Chol Ha'moed* is an expression of our spiritual dedication and a commitment to honor the sanctity of *Yom Tov*. Can anything be more beautiful than that?