

And he (Yaakov) rolled the stone from the mouth of the well. (29:10)

Yaakov *Avinu* exhibited brute force when he rolled the heavy stone off the well. Was Yaakov attempting to impress Rachel *Imeinu* with his strength? Clearly, he had a deeper message to convey to his future wife than his brawniness. Furthermore, when Yaakov *Avinu* cried following his encounter with Rachel, *Rashi* explains that this weeping was the result of his seeing *b'Ruach HaKodesh*, Divine Inspiration, that Rachel would not be buried near him. If his vision was so penetrating that he could see the future, he obviously saw that Rachel was a righteous and virtuous woman who would certainly not be impressed by his display of physical strength.

The **Arizal** teaches that the *Tanna*, Rabbi Akiva, was a *nitzutz*, holy spark, of Yaakov *Avinu*. Likewise, his wife, Rachel, daughter of Kalba Savua, was a *nitzutz* of Rachel *Imeinu*. The similarities continue: Rabbi Akiva was originally a shepherd, as was Yaakov; our Patriarch was married to two women, as was Rabbi Akiva (Rachel, daughter of Kalba Savua, and the wife of Turnusrufus).

With this in mind, **Horav Pinchas Friedman, Shlita**, observes how Hashem weaves a complex web, a variegated mosaic, so that all the *neshamos*, souls, created by Him will one day find their proper and complete *tikkun*, repair. Rachel *Imeinu* was born to Lavan, who wanted to destroy Yaakov and, by extension, his future descendants. Yaakov was able to extract her from the spiritual dross of Lavan's *klipah*, spiritual husk/shell, thereby facilitating her rise to Matriarchal status. Rabbi Akiva's holy soul was trapped within the shepherd Akiva until his future wife, who was a spark of Rachel *Imeinu*, married him and encouraged his Torah study which, in turn, catalyzed his rise to the pinnacle of Torah eminence and leadership. She somehow knew in her heart that she "owed" something to this man, as reparation for Yaakov saving Rachel. In other words, Yaakov "rescued" Rachel's *nitzutz*; later on, Rachel, daughter of Kalba Savua, returned the favor by rescuing Rabbi Akiva, who was a *nitzutz* of Yaakov *Avinu*. How little we know of Hashem's manipulation of "life."

Chazal reveal another reason that Rabbi Akiva turned to Torah. At an advanced age, after having lived a life of complete illiteracy, he chanced upon a large stone resting upon the top of a well. He asked how the furrows had been carved out in the stone. The response he received was that water was constantly dripping upon the stone. The great sage derived a compelling lesson from this. If water, which is soft, can carve out a stone, Torah, which is strong and hard as steel, would surely penetrate his soft heart. Immediately, he decided to turn to a life of Torah study. The rest is history.

Rav Friedman applies this *Chazal* to the "stone" which our Patriarch encountered upon the well. At the moment that he saw the stone resting upon the well, Yaakov saw that, one day, Rachel, daughter of Kalba Savua, would rescue Rabbi Akiva from the spiritual morass that had overtaken him. In order to allude to this event, which would take place centuries in the future, and to signal to

Rachel that “her” efforts carried out through Rachel, daughter of Kalba Savua, would achieve successful fruition, he “rolled” the stone off the top of the well. The word used to “roll” (the stone), *va’y’gal*, alludes to the word *gilui*, reveal, denoting Yaakov’s revelation to Rachel. This was no ordinary rolling of the stone; it was a portent for the future. This was not an act of chivalry as some might erroneously think. It was Yaakov intimating his and Rachel’s role in Divine Providence.