

"And in the morning, (he saw) she was Leah." (29:25)

At night Yaakov was not aware that it was Leah with whom he had been united in marriage. Indeed, as *Rashi* comments, Yaakov had prearranged signals with Rachel for their wedding night. When Rachel saw, however, that Leah was being substituted for her, she told her sister the signs - out of concern for Leah's potential humiliation. Rachel's supreme act of abrogation is considered of such import that it serves as eternal merit for her descendants.

Chazal relate that when the first *Bais Ha'Mikdash* was destroyed and the Jewish people were taken into captivity, the Patriarchs and Moshe intervened from beyond the grave. They implored Hashem to spare His nation, to show them kindness, to overlook their iniquity and forgive their behavior. They each came forth with their own merits based upon their exemplary acts of service to Hashem in an attempt to extract Divine clemency for *Klal Yisrael*. They were not successful as their supplications were unheeded. Along came Rachel who cried out, "*Ribono Shel Olam*, You know that Yaakov loved me with boundless love. He labored for my father for seven years to secure me as his bride. Yet, on my wedding night, my father decided to substitute my sister, Leah, in my place. I was not jealous of her, as I ceded my position to her. If I, who are mere dust and ashes, was not envious of my rival, how could You, Master of the Universe, be jealous of idols worshipped by the Jews, which are nothing?" Hashem's compassion was aroused as a result of Rachel's entreaty.

Let us analyze Rachel's act. She suffered as her sister took her place. Indeed, she answered Yaakov's questions, so as not to divulge Leah's identity. The man for whom she had waited and with whom she had hoped to build *Klal Yisrael*, was with another woman. She was present, ensuring that the substitution was not exposed! This is abrogation to the extreme, but should the act of one person be sufficient to obtain clemency for *Klal Yisrael's* years of invidious rebellion?

We suggest that Rachel's act was truly remarkable. To be willing to relinquish everything, and remain in the room assisting while everything for which she had prayed was assigned to a rival, is truly an amazingly giving act. It is still not enough, however. We feel it was the reason that she behaved in this manner that renders the act so noteworthy. She was willing to give everything up, so that her sister/rival would not be humiliated! How often do we encounter such *middos* in a person? We certainly know people who give readily of themselves to serve others. We even know individuals who compromise their own security to help others. They endure pain and suffering. How many do this just to spare their friend - or even rival - embarrassment?

It is a supreme sacrifice to give up so much in order to spare someone humiliation. This is the character trait that Rachel inspired in her descendants, sensitivity to another person's feelings. She cared about others to the point of ultimate self-sacrifice. She was overtly concerned with the plight of others; she was extremely aware never to humiliate another person. This *middah* gave Rachel the *zechus* of saving her descendants. The good that one performs for others is truly important, but equally significant is the reason for the action. The supporting attitude can transform the deed,

giving greater positive meaning to the deed.