

And he raised his voice and wept. (29:11)

Yaakov *Avinu* wept when he met Rachel *Imeinu*. He meets the girl that he is going to marry, the wife with whom he is destined to build *Klal Yisrael*, and he cries. One would expect a somewhat different reaction. *Rashi* offers two reasons for our Patriarch's anomalous reaction. First, Yaakov saw *b'Ruach ha'Kodesh*, through Divine Inspiration, that Rachel would not be buried near him. Why was Yaakov Divinely inspired at this moment? Was there no other time for Yaakov to see *b'ruach ha'kodesh* that he would not be buried with Rachel? Second, *Rashi* offers a reason for Rachel's loss of her rightful place in the *Meoras HaMachpeilah*. *Rashi* comments (ibid 30:15), *l'fi she'zilzelah b'mishkav tzaddik*, "Because she belittled the lying of the righteous one" (i.e. being with Yaakov, she traded away the opportunity, thus belittling the value of Yaakov's companionship). Yaakov obviously was troubled over the fact that Rachel was denied burial in the *Meoras HaMachpeilah*. Otherwise, why would he have cried?

Horav Aryeh Leib Heyman, zl, suggests that Yaakov's weeping is connected to the previous weeping of his brother, the wicked Eisav. Hashem overlooks nothing. When Yaakov received the blessings which had originally been designated for Eisav, Eisav returned from the field to discover that Yaakov had preceded him in receiving the blessings. As a result, he emitted a *tzaakah gedolah umarah*, a loud, bitter cry" (ibid 27:34). Hashem "repaid" Eisav when Mordechai *ha'Yehudi*, upon hearing of Achashveirosh's evil decree to murder all of the Jews in Shushan, also emitted a mournful cry. When Eisav came demanding the blessings, he had conveniently forgotten his earlier disdain of the blessings.

The Torah is meticulous in its demands of a *tzaddik*, righteous person, *k'chut ha'saarah*, like a hair breadth. As a result of Yaakov's "purchase" of the *bechorah*, birthright of the firstborn, from Eisav, Leah, who had previously been destined to marry Eisav, was transferred to Yaakov. Thus, the original place in the *Meoras HaMachpeilah* that had been set aside for Rachel was transferred to Leah. Yaakov caused pain to Eisav, a pain which spurred Eisav to weep. As a result, Yaakov had to experience "pay back." It was now his turn to weep. Since he was the *bechor*, firstborn, by purchase, Rachel could no longer be buried next to him. Thus, he wept.

Rashi offers a second reason for Yaakov crying: "He came empty handed." Apparently, when Yitzchak came for Rivkah, he came carrying jewelry and other material gifts. Yaakov, on the other hand, had nothing. This caused him pain, which he expressed by weeping. Let us analyze this. Where did Lavan get the utter *chutzpah* to exchange Leah for Rachel? Knowing Lavan's character, it could have been only because Yaakov was defenseless, since he was poor. No one challenges or pulls one over on a powerfully rich man. If Yaakov would have arrived laden with jewelry, Lavan would have bent over backward to give him Rachel. His *chutzpah* was the direct result of Yaakov's indigence.

This is why Yaakov cried. He realized that, as a result of his poverty level, he was no longer a "player." Lavan could do to him whatever he wanted. As a result, he lost Rachel. Therefore, he

wept.

On the other hand, we know that Yaakov lost his money to Elifaz, Eisav's son/agent, who was sent to kill Yaakov. The Patriarch convinced Elifaz that poor is as good as dead, so he told Elifaz, "Take my money!" Had Eisav not sent Elifaz, Yaakov would have arrived with an abundant sum of money. Rachel would have surely been given to Yaakov – to live happily ever after. Leah would have ended up as Eisav's wife, probably turning him around and saving him. Ultimately, whom did Eisav harm the most? Himself!

This is the story of life. We make plans, thinking that we do what we want. We forget that there is "Some One" in charge, that there is a Divine Plan. Who loses out in the end? We do.

In his "Illuminations of the Maggid," Rabbi Paysach Krohn cites a quote (which I believe he heard from *Rebbetzin* Chavi Wagshal of Manchester, England): *"Any fool can count the seeds in one apple, but only the Highest Power can count the apples in one seed."* Only Hashem knows the potential that lies in each and every seed. He knows what it can produce and the many offshoots that can be derived from it. As Rabbi Krohn observes, a seed can be anything. Any action that we perform can generate awesome, far-reaching ramifications that can go on earning incredible spiritual reward for us. One can only imagine the effect that a "good morning" with a smile has on someone who is unsure of himself. Curing a person from depression often means making him feel good about himself, preserving and encouraging his self-esteem. It could be listening to someone. One kind word, one good deed, one smile is all that is necessary. In some instances, it could be a game-changer in a person's life.

As the seed germinates, we are unaware of its growth. In fact, we are often not even cognizant of the planting of the seed. It is only much later, when we introspect, that we realize, "Hey! I planted that seed!" Things happen whose meaning eludes us, but Hashem has a plan. He is preserving the seed that someone else has planted. He is nurturing it and allowing it room to grow. We do; we act; but, at the end of the day, we are all spectators. Hashem controls the world. We can only hope to plant the seeds.

As spectators, we are most often relegated to seeing and analyzing the big picture in retrospect. When "things" happen, whether they are "bad things happening to good people" or just occurrences and events which, to our small minds, are inexplicable, we wonder, we question, we accept, but we might have to wait a lifetime to be able to see how everything fits into its proper place. In his "Living Emunah," Rabbi David Ashear cites a powerful explanation rendered by *Horav Shlomo Kluger*, *zl*, to the well-known *Chazal* which depicts Rabbi Akiva's martyrdom at the hands of the Romans.

After such cruel torture, which the mind can hardly imagine, Rabbi Akiva's soul finally ascended to its rightful place in Heaven. The Angels had great difficulty understanding the "reward" that this preeminent sage had received for his extreme dedication to Torah. Hashem's response was

straightforward: If the Angels will not remain silent, Hashem would return the world to its pre-Creation state – complete nothingness. Why could Hashem not have simply countered, “You do not understand My ways.” Why was it necessary to threaten to destroy the world?

Rav Shlomo Kluger answers by drawing a powerful analogy to a king who commissioned a master tailor to make a magnificent robe for him. The king provided the tailor with sufficient gold and silver from which to make the threads to be used for this exquisite garment. It took some time, but the tailor devoted himself to his work, and, in the end, he provided an outstanding piece of work. The king was bowled over by the beauty of the robe. The king’s officers, however, were quite upset and jealous that the king was gushing over the tailor at their expense. Jealousy always leads to no good, and this instance was no different. The officers spread a rumor that the tailor had pocketed some of the gold and silver. The king believed his officers, despite the tailor’s strong protests that he would never lie. The king’s response was what the officers figured would end the entire problem, “Prove it!”

The tailor replied, “My king, there is only one way in which I can prove my innocence: by taking apart every thread of the robe and weighing it, in order to show his highness that I used everything that I received to make the robe. Otherwise, I have no way of proving my innocence.” The king understood that this was impossible. He believed the tailor.

This was Hashem’s answer to the Angels. If they would want to understand the “reward” received by Rabbi Akiva, Hashem would have to unravel the entire world to show how every single event that ever occurred fits into place as part of His Divine Plan. Every event, from the beginning of time until the end, is interconnected. It is beyond the scope of our limited abilities to understand this – unless each and every event is placed before us and scrutinized. Hashem, however, has it all before Him at all times; thus, He is able to see the entire garment all at once.

One last story demonstrates how little we see and how much less we are aware of everything that comprises any single event. A rabbi and his wife lived in a small town in France that, alas, had no functioning *mikvah*. The nearest *mikvah* was a few hours away by car. They decided to do something about it. Their fundraising efforts received no success. It was not a project that interested the small Jewish population. Not being people to give up easily, they decided to fund the project from their own savings, which meant subsisting on bread and water to save sufficient funds, so that they could transform one room in their modest home into a *mikvah*. It took six years of saving and living frugally, but they did it. Can one imagine the pain and devastation that enveloped them when their two-year old son crawled into the room, fell into the *mikvah* and tragically drowned? All of the sacrifice, everything that they had given up - for what? To lose their only child? They were inconsolable.

One night the soul of their little boy appeared to the rabbi in a dream and informed him that the anguish the father was suffering over the tragic death of the son was causing his soul pain. “You do not understand my background. I had lived 900 years ago as one of the early *Baalei Tosfos*,

early commentators to the *Talmud*. I was murdered during a pogrom against the Jews of France. I did not undergo purification in a *mikvah*, thus, my soul was unable to reach the highest level it could attain. For all these years, my soul waited for the purest *mikvah*. Your *mikvah*, which was built on the foundation of pure sacrifice, was the perfect place. I was able to come back as your young son, and, after drowning, I was buried according to the strictest standards of *halachah*. To demonstrate the veracity of my words, within the coming year, you and mommy will be blessed with a little girl, all because of mommy's strict adherence to the *mitzvah* of *challah*!"

The next morning, the rabbi's wife woke up and told her husband that she had dreamt about *challah*. "Can you imagine?" she asked. "Yes," her husband said, and he told her the "rest of the story." And now – we too know the rest of the story. We experience so many occurrences that we do not understand, but, rest assured, Heaven has an explanation for everything.