

## And it was in the evening that he took Leah, his daughter, and brought her to him. (29:23)

True to his reputation as a swindler, Lavan did not keep his word to give Rachel *Imeinu* to Yaakov *Avinu*. He substituted Leah *Imeinu* for Rachel. This ruse would not have worked had Rachel not given over to her sister the designated signs that Yaakov had arranged with her. The Patriarch knew what kind of thief his prospective father-in-law was. He did not, however, count on the extraordinary love that Rachel harbored for Leah. The relationship between siblings should serve as a paradigm for the relationship between friends. When we speak of a relationship between two friends, the friendship between Dovid *Hamelech* and Yehonasan ben Shaul *Hamelech* comes to mind. Yehonasan was acutely aware that his friendship with David meant forfeiting his right to the throne. Nonetheless, he said to David, *V'atah timloch al Yisrael v'anochi eheyeh lecha l'mishnah*, "You will become the king over *Yisrael*, and I will be your second man" (*Shmuel I* 23:17). Yehonasan relinquished the throne as a result of his love for David.

From whom/where did Yehonasan derive this extreme level of love and devotion? The *Rema m'Panu* (cited by *Horav Elimelech Biderman, Shlita*) teaches that he gleaned this from the actions of Rachel *Imeinu* and Leah *Imeinu*. He saw the love that permeated the relationship between these two Matriarchs, their devotion to one another to the point of self-sacrifice, and he was determined to emulate them and act accordingly.

Indeed, when David *Hamelech* eulogized his best friend, Yehonasan, he declared, "*Nifleisah ahavascha li mei'ahavas nashim*, which translates as, "Your love to me is greater than the love of women" (*Shmuel II* 1:26). The *Rema m'Panu* explains this *pasuk* quite differently than its loose translation, "Your wonderful love to me – you learned to have it – *mei ahavas nashim* – from the love (manifest) by the two women (sisters), Rachel and Leah." From them, from their devotion to one another, you derived how one should love his/her fellow.

Yet, we find family members who sever ties with one another (usually) over the most infantile and inane issues. Siblings have a connection to one another that is unlike any other bond. They are two (or more) parts of a whole. The *Arizal* writes that the older sibling is a link in the connection to the souls of their parents and, through them, to Hashem. Thus, we have the obligation to respect our older siblings. When a family connection is severed, we become shaken to the core, leaving a void in our lives, because our siblings are a part of our identity, a part of us.

No one purposely, maliciously, seeks to create disunity within a family. It is usually the result of petty jealousy, which is either the result of – or leads to – insecurity and low self-esteem. What comes first depends on the individual situation and family dynamic. One thing is for certain: One who views life through the lens of envy has a distorted perspective and has lost a sense of reality. As a noted psychologist observed, "There are three sides to every story: the two who are in disagreement – and the truth." Sadly, time inevitably solves the discord when one's time is up, and

there is no longer anyone with whom to quarrel.