

Rachel became jealous of her sister. (30:1)

Horav Shabsi Yudelewitz, zl (grandfather and namesake of the famous *maggid*), knew that his days on this world were numbered. He was not a well man to begin with, and the physical travail which he sustained emigrating to *Eretz Yisrael* during the turn of the century, followed by the poverty and hunger he experienced in Yerushalayim, had taken its toll on him. He knew that would soon go the way of all men. He and his wife had been assured early in their marriage by a great *tzaddik*, righteous person, that “In the future, you will give birth to a son who will grow up to be a *gadol*, a *tzaddik*, and a holy man.” *Rav Shmuel Ahron, zl*, author of *Meilo Shel Shmuel*, and son-in-law of *Horav Aryeh Levin, zl*, was that child. *Rav Shabsi* was well aware that his young son was special. He did not waste a minute of his day, understanding that time is a gift from Hashem and thus sacrosanct. He was constantly learning. When everyone in his class in Yeshivah Eitz Chaim would go outside to play during recess, he remained behind learning, reciting *Tehillim*, anything that brought him closer to Hashem.

Rav Shabsi wanted to share a life lesson with his young son – one that would accompany him throughout his life’s journey. He used the medium of a *d’var Torah* to convey his message. He quoted the *pasuk*, “Rachel became jealous of her sister” (30:1). Immediately, *Shmuel Ahron* started the rest of the *pasuk*, “She said to Yaakov, ‘Give me children for if not, I am (as good) as dead.’” His father complimented him for remembering the *pasuk*. “When did Rachel *Imeinu* become jealous?” *Reb Shabsi* asked his son. “When Yehudah was born,” was his immediate response. *Rav Shabsi* then began by enumerating Leah *Imeinu*’s first sons: “Reuven, Shimon, Levi, and, although Rachel had not yet given birth, she did not indicate that she was in any way envious of her sister’s good fortune. What was it about Yehudah’s birth that provoked Rachel’s jealousy to manifest itself, to the point that she told Yaakov *Avinu*, ‘Give me children, for if not, I am (as good as) dead?’ What was different about Yehudah’s birth that engendered such a negative reaction?”

Shmuel Ahron sat patiently, waiting for his father’s explanation. He sensed that his father had something important to say. “Listen carefully to what I will tell you,” his father began. “When Reuven was born, the Patriarchal home naturally became filled with joy. This was the beginning of the *Shivtei Kah*. It was truly a special moment. Leah declared, ‘Hashem has seen my troubles’ (Ibid. 29:3,2). When her second child, Shimon, was born, Leah declared, ‘Hashem has heard... and He also gave me this son’ (Ibid. 29:33). Rachel was still without child, but we have no indication that she was anything but happy for her sister. She felt no jealousy. This emotion continued through Leah’s third child, Levi, after which Rachel joined together with Leah in her hopes for a better future filled with joy. Still, she manifested no jealousy.

“It was when Yehudah was born that things changed – not because of Leah giving birth to another child, but because of how Leah expressed herself at his birth. *Atah odeh Hashem*; ‘This time let me praise /thank Hashem.’ The Torah then adds, ‘Therefore, she named the child Yehudah’ (Ibid 29:35). This was the only time that we find Rachel showing any resentment concerning her sister’s

good fortune. Was it the fourth child that finally made her upset? No! She was jealous that her sister had given birth to a child who would serve as a vehicle for praising Hashem, a tool to serve the Almighty. When Rachel realized that this child (because he was a medium for *hakoras hatov*, gratitude) would elevate Leah spiritually, she cried out in pain, because she, too, wanted to be spiritually elevated.”

Rav Shabsi placed his hand on young *Shmuel Ahron's* head and said, “My son, I do not expect you to understand the depth of what I am saying to you. However, I sense that you grasp the basic idea. Prior to your birth, we were promised that you would become a true servant of Hashem. I am certain that you have the acumen to become a great scholar, but so did *Eisav*. We know what happened to him. You must make sure that as you grow older, that you direct all of your strengths, talents and skills toward one goal: spiritual growth, so that you serve Hashem on the loftiest level of your ability.” Indeed, *Rav Shmuel Ahron's* life was a symphony of service to Hashem.