

Parshat Vayitzei- Reuven's Reality

Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

When Reuven was born, the Torah tells us "[Leah] called his name Reuven, as she had declared, 'Because Hashem has discerned my humiliation, for now my husband will love me.' "

At face value, this name seems to immortalize Leah's pain. Asks Rav D. Hofstedter, is this what should be the permanent legacy of a son's name? But Rashi cites *chazal* in stating that Leah was pointing out the difference between her son and Esau. Esau sold his birthright of his own free will, nevertheless despised his younger brother and wanted to kill him. In contrast, my son will lose his birthright for a deed he did for my honor. Yet not only did he not despise Yosef, but he even tried to save him from sure death.

Eleh Hadvarim cites the GR"A that when naming the other children, the parent always stated the reason and then gave the name. Only here does Leah first give the name and then state the reason, prompting our sages to suggest that she could not reveal her real reason, but still had to come up with a logical explanation for the name. Our sages fill in the gap that exists before the baby is named with what they believe to be Leah's true motivation. Leah was sensitive to what would be "politically correct" for her to say. Just as Yaakov did not reveal the real reason for his crying when he met Rachel, that she would not be buried with him, but gave a more palatable reason, that he had no gifts to give her, so too did Leah present a more acceptable reason to the public than the one she actually contemplated.

Rabbi D. Hofstedter notes that Leah, by giving

this name, was expressing her gratitude to Hashem Who saw her pain. In giving her son this name, Leah was imbuing Reuven with a sense of gratitude to Hashem for being there with him whenever he would be in pain. This would be the major difference between her son and Esau. The intrinsic meaning of a child's name, as well as the mindset that the parents have when naming the child, will create a dramatic effect in setting the course of that child's life.

Bein Hamishpatayim quotes Targum Yonatan that Leah was asking Hashem to see the afflictions of her descendants, of *Bnei Yisrael*, as He has seen her affliction and responded to her. When one give thanks to Hashem, one opens the gates of heaven, and creates an appropriate time to also make a request for the future. In fact, notes Rabbi Pincus z"l, when Leah thanked Hashem for the birth of Yehudah, she did not ask for more children, and so she stopped conceiving.

Rabbi Schlesinger shows how the two reasons for the name are interconnected. Leah's guilt was exacerbated by assuming that if Yaakov had married Rochel first, Yosef would have been the firstborn biologically and the brothers would not have sold him down to Egypt, precipitating the enslavement. When she saw that this son would try to save Yosef, she realized that she was not responsible for the enslavement. This reassurance gave her comfort.

Rabbi Sorotskin z"l also sees Leah's declaration as one of gratitude. Leah here speaks of her affliction, of her fears that she was destined to marry Esau, and how she married Yaakov and they produced a son such as this.

Reuven's reality is evidence of a closeness to Hashem, not of any emotional difference between husband and wife. Leah was highlighting the difference between her son and Esau, writes Rabbi Levenstein z"l. It is human nature to get angry when something is taken from us. This was the nature of Esau, but not of her son. And where did he get this from? From Yaakov's response when he realized Lavan had duped him into marrying Leah instead of Rochel. Yaakov did not get angry, although he asked for an explanation. Yaakov realized this was Hashem's doing, not Lavan's. Reuven also understood that when things are given to us or taken away from us, it is Hashem's doing, and no human being is to blame. This is a message that must reverberate in our homes, writes Rabbi Frand. Hashem is with us always and takes care of all our needs, even in difficult times. There is no reason to be jealous of someone else.

The Oshorover Rebbe posits that Leah was not reflecting upon herself at all in naming this child. Rather, in an obscure way she was alluding to the relationship Hashem has with others. Kohelet states that Hashem champions the one who is chased. Leah is secretly asking Hashem to come to the aid of *Bnei Yisrael* who are always being pursued by Esau. In the future, our relationship with Hashem will not be as one toward a Master but rather as one toward a Beloved Husband. (Hosea, ch.2) When Hashem will see our affliction and fight our battles, as we recite every morning, "*Re'eh no ve'oniyenu berivah revenu*," it will be obvious that He loves us. We are the underdog, and we, like Leah Imenu before us, ask Hashem to save us from Esau, even when our deeds do not merit such love.

Builder of Her Home: Mutuality Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

In an ideal marriage, the wife acknowledges what she genuinely respects in her husband and validates it. The husband sees this and thinks, this is a person who values what's important within me. They then mirror and identify with each other. Each expresses what they genuinely admire about each other, namely traits of the soul, which are eternal. This leads them to want more connection which leads to love.

Similarly there must be mutual *kavod* between a king and his subjects. The Rambam says, it is appropriate to give great honor to a king so that each of his subjects feels great awe in his heart. His kingship is valid because he carries the burden of his people. He is Yisrael. If he wasn't, there would be no reason to respect him. This is what *chazal* meant when they said, "There is no king without a people." A king is obligated to recognize that his entire

reason for ruling is for the sake of the people. He has no validity without them. Therefore he may not allow his heart to become exalted above the people. He must give *kavod* to the smallest of his subjects. Similarly, a *dayan* (judge) must give *kavod* to the *tzibur* (nation) and the *tzibur* in turn must give *kavod* to the *dayan*. We see that every form of *kavod* within the Jewish people is based on one assumption, mutuality.

We find this kind of connection even in an unequal relationship such as that of a Rav and his student. We learn in Pirkei Avot that a student must value his Rav the way he values Hashem as he draws down *Elokut* (spirituality) to him. The Rambam says, there's no honor greater than the honor one must give one's Rav and no awe that is greater than the awe one should feel for one's Rav because the Torah he teaches is one's ticket to eternity.

This is why one must give *kavod* to a Rav. Logically one would think, the opposite is not true. Why should the Rav give his student *kavod*? But *chazal* tells us otherwise, "The honor of your student should be as dear to you as your own." To be part of the chain of tradition, to earn *olam habah*, the Rav needs the student. He needs the student as much as the student needs him for the same reason, to bring *Elokut* into the world. Without the student, nothing the Rav has will last beyond his lifetime. The student is the Rav's key to eternity. Together they will continue the tradition of *Torah*. Neither one seeks *kavod* for who they are as individuals. Both respect the integral beauty within them which is *Torah*. The student respects the Rav's *Torah*. The Rav respects the student's willingness to receive that *Torah*. Thus we say mutuality is dependent on authentic *kavod*.

Men and Women: The Goal of Humanity Part III

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

"Therefore a man should leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and become one flesh." The Ramban explains that animals have no attachment with their mate. In contrast, humans yearn for connection, to the point that they will leave their parents and become one with their spouse. The relationship of a parent to a child is that the parent gives and the child takes and builds himself. There's no give and take nor equality or mutuality in the relationship. Man's nature is to see his wife as his closest relation. She in turn sees him as her fulfillment. This is what the relationship of a husband and wife is meant to be.

In *Shachrit* we say, "*Hameir la'olam kulo b'kevodo*," Hashem gives us light and illuminates the world with his *kavod*, with a subtle realization of His eternity. All of creation yearns towards that and that is why it resists death. Hashem's *kavod*, our sensitivity

to his divine traits, are what gives life. We resist death because there's something eternal in us that wants to endure. A person's soul, his vitality, stems from Hashem's *kavod*. Fulfillment in life is the expression of the part of oneself that is Hashem's *kavod*. People find actualization in different ways. Some take pleasure in playing the piano because of its spiritual harmony and beauty. Some find fulfillment in earning money which is related to creativity and self-empowerment. It's all spiritual. It's just a matter of shaving off the outside to find it.

A person feels lifeless if he doesn't have *kavod*. When you speak to people who are depressed they say their life has no value, that there's nothing they can do that's important, that all of the doors are closed, that they will never amount to anything. It's all saying, I've lost track of my *kavod*. I don't value or see my integrity or compassion because other voices have outshouted it. A woman has the exclusive

capacity to bring life to her husband's soul. She can take him out of all of these thoughts of death and depression by finding what is authentic within him. Therefore she's called her husband's crown. When she makes him aware of who he really is, when the traits she values are authentic, she is revealing Hashem's *kavod* within him. She becomes like Hashem in bringing illumination to the world. As you light the *Shabbat* candles, think of this relationship of *kavod*, of building something of beauty and eternity. A woman has the ability to bring light to a living soul which is called *kavod*. Just as kindling the *Shabbat* lights fills her home with *kavod*, she can fill her home with Hashem's glory by revealing the aspects of His attributes in her husband and children. When the Ner Hashem nishmat adam is lit once again, the *tikun* (rectification) of having extinguished Adam's soul will come to full fruition.