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# DAF KESHER

SHAPPELL'S / YESHIVA DARCHE NOAM · MIDRESHET RACHEL V'CHAYA · JACK E. GINDI Z" L PATHWAYS ISRAEL &amp; PATHWAYS PLUS

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## DVAR TORAH RESTORING LIFE TO THE POOR

When Yaakov Avinu met Rachel Imenu he raised his voice and cried (Bereishit 29:11). This seems to be a strange reaction at that momentous occasion. Why did Yaakov cry?

Rashi, in his comments on that verse, answers that Yaakov cried because he came empty-handed. Avraham's servant came and met Rivkah with jewelry and presents, whereas Yaakov met Rachel with nothing. But why did he come empty-handed?

Rashi, quoting the Midrash, tells us that Elifaz, Esav's son, was sent by his father to kill Yaakov. Because he grew up "on Yitzchak's lap," Elifaz couldn't bring himself to murder Yaakov. However, Elifaz also had to reckon with the Esavic zeal for honoring parents; so he asked Yaakov, "What will I do about my father's command?" Yaakov answered, "Take my possessions, for a poor person is considered as if he was dead." But why is a living and breathing poor person considered dead?

The Maharal (Harav Yehudah Loewe, זצ"ל, 1525-1609 – in his Gur Aryeh commentary on this verse) explains that because the poor person is dependent on others he is not "alive." "Life" means **independent** life.

Another example of this use of the word "life" is the Torah's expression for a spring. The Torah calls spring water "מים חיים – living waters" because it is an independent source of water. As opposed to a cistern or mikveh, that it always dependent on the rain, a spring flows by itself.

The value of financial independence was espoused by the Tanna Rabbi Yehudah, who taught others the value of work by bringing to the beit midrash a container that he used for his occupation. The same Rabbi Yehudah did not even want to accept Rabban Gamliel's gift of a coat (Nedarim 49b). This value is also expressed by the verse that praises the G-d fearing person saying, "יגיע כפיך כי תאכל אשריך וטוב לך – You eat the works of your own hands; you are fortunate and it is good for you" (Tehillim 128:2). This use of the word חיים as not just life but as independent life is very likely behind the expression "ושונא מתנות יחיה" – ... And one who hates gifts will live" (Mishlei 15:27). Not being dependent on other people underscores our sole dependence on Hashem.

Based on the Maharal's explanation we can certainly understand why, according to the Rambam, the highest level of tzedakah is to help someone to become financially independent: "The highest level of tzedakah is to ... strengthen the poor person's hand so he should not need support from others. Concerning this the verse says, 'וְהִחֲזַקְתָּ בּוֹ גֵר וְתוֹשֵׁב וְחֵי עִמָּךְ' – You should strengthen him, the stranger and dweller, so he should live with you' – That is to say, strengthen him so he will not fall and be needy" (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Matnot Ani'im 10:7).

"וְחֵי עִמָּךְ – He will **live** with you": By helping him get back on his feet and support himself he will truly be able to **live** with you.

## SOURCE GUIDE: LEAH AND RACHEL: THANKS AND SILENCE

The Midrash contrasts Leah and Rachel: “Leah grasped the distaff (a tool used for spinning thread) of “hodayah” (thanks or admission) ... Rachel grasped the distaff of silence. The Midrash shows how this contrast reverberated through their descendants. Harav Shlomo Wolbe, זצ”ל, published a pamphlet based on this Midrash, and Harav Avigdor Nebenzahl, שליט”א, wove this Midrash into one of his talks on Purim. This Midrash and those talks are the basis of this source guide.

### A. Leah and Rachel and Their Descendants

The Midrash contrasts Rachel and Leah:

<p><b>1. Bereishit Rabbah 71:5</b>  <b>Leah grasped the distaff of הודיה (thanks and admission)</b> and “masters of thanks” were descended from her: Yehudah – “Yehudah recognized (his signet ring, cloak, and staff that Tamar secretly sent him) and said, ‘She is right; it is from me’” (Bereishit 38:26); David said, “Thank Hashem for He is good” (Tehillim 107:1); Daniel said, “To you, G-d of my fathers, I thank and praise” (Daniel 2:23).</p> <p><b>Rachel grasped the distaff of silence</b> and all of her descendants are “masters of secrecy”: Binyamin – “Yashfeh” (Shemot 28:20, the stone on the Choshen, the breastplate worn by the Kohen Gadol, that corresponds to the tribe of Binyamin) hints at ‘yeish peh,’ there is a mouth (but he doesn’t speak with it); Shaul – “The matter of royalty he did not tell him” (I Shmuel 10:16); Esther – “Esther did not tell her birthplace or her nation” (Esther 2:20).</p>	<p><b>בראשית רבה עא:ה</b>  <b>לאה תפסה פלך הודיה ועמדו הימנה בעלי הודיה: יהודה – “ויכר יהודה ויאמר צדקה ממני” (בראשית לח:כ); דוד אמר “הודו לה’ כי טוב” (תהלים קז:א); דניאל אמר “לך אלהא אבהתי מהודא ומשבח אנה” (דניאל ב:כג).</b></p> <p><b>רחל תפסה פלך שתיקה ועמדו כל בניה בעלי מסטירין: בנימין – “יִשְׁפֹּה” (שמות כח:כ), יִשְׁפֹּה, יודע במכירתו של יוסף ואינו מגיד; שאול – “ואת דבר המלוכה לא הגיד לך” (שמואל א’ י:טז); אסתר – “אין אסתר מגדת מולדתה ואת עמה” (אסתר ב:כ).</b></p>
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Leah, when her son Yehudah was born, said, “הפעם אודה את ה’ – This time I will thank Hashem” (Bereishit 29:35). She is praised for this in the Talmud:

<p><b>2. Berachot 7b</b>          Rabbi Yochanan quoted Rabbi Shimon son of Yochai, who said: From the day the Holy One, blessed be He, created His world, there was no person who thanked the Holy One, blessed be He, until Leah came and thanked Him, as it says, “This time I will thank Hashem” (Bereishit 29:35).</p>	<p><b>ברכות ז:</b>          ואמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי שמעון בן יוחי: מיום שברא הקדוש ברוך הוא את עולמו לא היה אדם שהודה להקדוש ברוך הוא עד שבאתה לאה והודתו שנאמר הפעם אודה את ה’.</p>
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The same Hebrew word, הודיה, is used for both thanking and admitting, for they are related activities. Only one with the humility to admit the truth can really feel gratitude. Yehudah, Leah’s son, when secretly confronted by Tamar, who showed him, through his signet ring, cloak, and staff, that he is the father of the children within her, admitted. His descendant David, the “master of thanks” and praise to Hashem, authored Tehillim and said, “Thank Hashem for He is good.” Daniel, a descendant of David (see Malbim on Daniel 1:6), was known not only for his visions, but also for his prayers, where he thanks and praises Hashem.

Rachel is known for her silence, for she was silent in order to avoid embarrassing her sister Leah when Lavan secretly switched the brides at the wedding of Yaakov and Rachel (see Rashi on Bereishit 29:25). Her son Binyamin’s stone on the Choshen was the “yashfeh,” expressing his silence – he knew about the selling of Yosef but chose not to reveal it (as commentators on this Midrash explain). Out of his modesty, Shaul, from the tribe of Binyamin, when asked by his uncle what the prophet Shmuel had told him, did not mention that Shmuel anointed him king over Israel. Finally, Esther, descended from Shaul, followed her uncle Mordechai’s instructions and was silent about her origin and nation. Her silence led to the salvation for it enabled her to dramatically bring down Haman at the Feast of Esther.

## B. The Two Distaffs

In Elul 5739 (1979), Harav Shlomo Wolbe, זצ"ל (1914-2005, Mashgiach of Yeshivat Beer Yaakov and author of Alei Shur), gave a series of talks he later published and titled "פלך השתיקה ופלך ההודיה – The Distaff of Silence and the Distaff of Thanks: Talks Given in the Yeshivah in Beer Yaakov During the Month of Mercy in 5739, with the Help of Hashem, May He Be Blessed."

He asks why the Midrash doesn't just say that Leah thanked and that Rachel was silent, but instead that Leah "grasped the distaff of thanks" and that Rachel "grasped the distaff of silence." He answers that the Midrash wants to teach us that silence and thanks are crafts. Just as the distaff is a utensil used for spinning thread, silence and thanks must be used properly as we spin the thread of our lives. He quotes the following passage:

<b>3. Berachot 7b</b> Rav Papa said: The reward of the house of mourning is silence ... Rav Ashi said: The reward of the house of marriage is words.	<b>ברכות ו:</b> אמר רב פפא: אגרא דבי טמיה שתיקותא ... אמר רב אשי אגרא דבי הלולי מילי.
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The "reward," the key aspect (see Rashi), of the house of mourning is silence. The key aspect of the encounter with death is silence, as Aharon reacted to the death of Nadav and Avihu – "Aharon was silent" (Vayikra 10:3). Silence is a choice, not just the absence of words. It is appropriate when encountering the Midat Hadin (Divine Justice).

But words are appropriate at the wedding. "The power of speech connects people and brings them close to each other," says Rav Wolbe. Words and communication characterize the human being and bring together the chatan and kallah, the bride and the groom. At a wedding we praise the chatan and kallah (see Ketubot 16b).

Expressing thanks cultivates the connection between us and Hashem. Silence shows our submission to Hashem's Judgement. Leah and Rachel each taught us to learn and teach these two necessary crafts.

## C. The Holiday of Thanks and the Holiday of Silence

Harav Avigdor Nebenzahl, שליט"א, the Rov of Yerushalayim's Old City, observes that Chanukah is associated with Leah, and Purim with Rachel (פורים – במועדיה – פורים, pp. 172-174).

**The Characters:** The miracles Hashem did for us on Chanukah came about through Matityahu Hakohen and his sons, the Makabim, who were Kohanim from the tribe of Levi, the son of Leah. Mordechai and Esther, were both from the tribe of Binyamin (see Esther 2:5 and Megillah 12b), the son of Rachel; they were Hashem's agents as He orchestrated the Purim miracle.

**The Themes:** Not only the characters of Chanukah and Purim were connected with Leah and Rachel, but each of the two holidays draws its theme from one of the two distaffs – thanks and silence.

Chanukah, Leah's holiday, is characterized by praise and thanks:

<b>4. Shabbat 21b</b> ... A miracle happened and they lit from it (the one cruze) for eight days. The next year they set and made them (those eight days) holidays with praise and thanks.	<b>שבת כא:</b> ... נעשה בו נס והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים לשנה אחרת קבעום ועשאוים ימים טובים בהלל והודאה.
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Purim, Rachel's holiday, is about silence. The Purim miracle came about through Esther's silence:

<b>5. Yerushalayim B'Moadeha – Purim, p, 174, note 4</b> The reason that the Purim miracle came about specifically through someone who grasps the distaff of silence is, perhaps, because the whole process of the Purim miracle happened in a way of [Divine] secrecy and hiddenness ...	<b>ירושלים במועדיה – פורים עמ' קעד, הע' 4</b> והטעם שנס פורים נעשה דוקא על ידי מי שאוחז פלך השתיקה, אולי הוא מפני שכל המהלך של נס פורים היה בדרך של הסתר והעלמה, כידוע ...
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## THE TIME TO LEARN? BY RABBI YITZCHAK LERNER

Rashi, at the beginning of this week's Parshah (in his comments on Bereishit 28:11) tells us that Yaakov spent fourteen years learning in the yeshiva of Shem and Ever ("buried in the house of Ever"). Spending that time in yeshiva seems to be considered praiseworthy, for Rashi also tells us (in his comments on Bereishit 28:9) that even though Yaakov received Divine judgement for being away from his parents for twenty-two years – the amount of time that Yosef was separated from his father Yaakov – the fourteen years Yaakov spent in yeshiva were not included in that calculation. Those fourteen years seemed to be sanctioned by G-d. In fact, we even learn from this that the mitzvah of learning Torah can sometimes supersede the mitzvah of honoring one's parents.

Harav Yaakov Kamenetsky, זצ"ל, (1891-1986, in Emet L'Yaakov on Bereishit 28:11) asks a powerful question: Wasn't Yaakov told by his parents to go to Lavan's house to get married? Why was it proper to take a fourteen year break from his parents' command? As important as learning in yeshiva is, was that the time for Yaakov to learn? He gives an analogy: A father told his son to go to the store, and right before the son went to the store he stopped to learn in yeshiva. Was that proper? Was that the time for that son to learn?

Rav Yaakov asks another question: Didn't Yaakov also spend years learning Torah with Yitzchak and Avraham? Why did he have to go to the yeshiva of Shem and Ever?


To answer these questions Rav Yaakov suggests that the Torah Yaakov learned from Shem and Ever was different than the Torah that he learned from Yitzchak and Avraham. The Torah that he learned from Yitzchak and Avraham was insulated from the outside world; it was a pure Torah. But the Torah that he learned from Shem and Ever was a Torah that was a throwback to earlier eras. Shem and Ever lived through the Flood; they lived through the actions of the Tower of Bavel. With their experience and their special Torah they were able to prepare Yaakov to live with Lavan the רשע (the evil one).

Because of his fourteen years of learning at the yeshiva of Shem and Ever, Yaakov was able to exclaim (in next week's Parshah), "וְתָרִיג מִצְוֹת שְׁמֵרָתִי" – 'עַם לְבָן גֵּרְתִּי' – 'With Lavan I dwelled' – and all six-hundred and thirteen commandments I kept" (Rashi's comments on Bereishit 32:5).

Rav Yaakov suggests that the correct analogy to Yaakov's fourteen years in yeshiva is as follows: A father told his son to go buy a lulav and esrog. And the son, on the way to buy a lulav and esrog, decided to stop off in a yeshiva to learn the laws of lulav and esrog. That time in yeshiva was not considered to be an interruption of his father's commandment.

There are two types of yeshiva learning. One is the pure Torah of Avraham and Yitzchak – simply learning about Hashem's Will, His mitzvot. But another, no less important type of learning, is that of the yeshiva of Shem and Ever. That type of learning prepares us for meeting the challenges that we encounter outside the beautiful world of the yeshiva.

### שבת שלום ומבורך

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The following digital Torah resources have been extremely helpful in researching and preparing the Shapell's Daf Keshet:  
DBS – Hataklitor Hatorani, Otzar Hachochmah, the Bar Ilan Responsa Project, Hebrewbooks.org, and the Tanach section of Chabad.org.

**We continue to pray for a refuah shleimah, a complete healing, for all those wounded in the attacks against our People.**