



Rachel's Tsnius

"Abba, I have a question on the first verse of the parasha."

"Go ahead Yitzy."

"The verse states that Yaakov departed from Beer-sheva and went toward Haran (Bereshis 28:10). The first part of the verse seems superfluous. In order for Yaakov Avinu to go toward Haran, he had to leave Beer-sheva. Why does the verse need to mention it?"

"That is a very good question, Yitzy. I see that you read the Chumash very carefully. Rashi was meticulous in his reading of the Chumash. He answers your question. A tsaddik's departure from a place makes an impression. While he is in the city, he constitutes its glory, its splendor, and its beauty. When he leaves the city, the glory, splendor, and the beauty depart with him. Now, let us think about this for a moment, Yitzy. A person's accomplishments are felt by those around him. The greater his deeds, the greater his influence."

"Does this apply to us, Abba?"

"It certainly does, Yitzy. Our actions are very important. They not only make an impression on ourselves, they also influence our friends, family, and neighbors. We should keep this in mind with everything that we do. We can have an impact. We can make a difference. Yaakov Avinu made an impression on an entire city."

"Amazing."

"There is another episode in the parasha which takes this point even farther. It is the wedding scene. Seven years earlier, Yaakov had asked Rachel to marry him. She knew that her father Lavan, the trickster, would try to fool Yaakov into marrying her older sister Leah. Therefore, she made up secret signs with Yaakov. Sure enough, seven years later, when it came to the wedding night, Lavan substituted Leah for Rachel. If Rachel did not give the secret signs to Leah, Yaakov would discover her identity and reveal Lavan's underhanded trick. However, Leah would be put to great shame. She would be an unwanted bride, spurned forever. Rachel could not allow this to happen to her dear sister; therefore, she gave Leah the secret signs. This alone is an act of total self-sacrifice. Rachel did not know if she would ever marry Yaakov. She may have been left to marry his wicked brother Eisav. She was

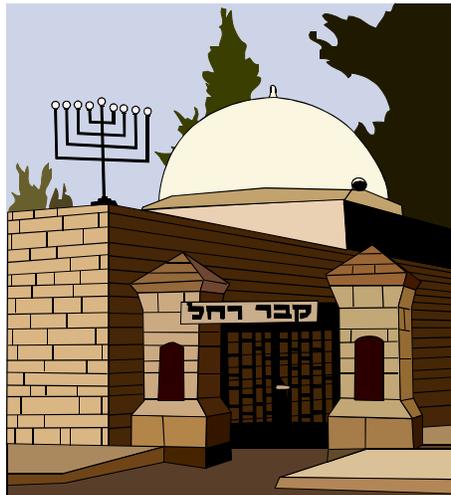
prepared to give up everything to avoid embarrassing her sister."

"What a tsadekes!"

"Yes, Yitzy. The deeds of our holy ancestors are exemplary. The Gemora (Megilla 13a and b) reveals another of Rachel's righteous acts that had an impact on future generations. She acted modestly and did not reveal the matter of the secret signs. This ability to keep quiet, thus keeping private matters private, is a foundation of *tsnius* (unassuming dignity). Rachel *tsnius* was passed down through the generations to her descendants."

"How, Abba?"

"Shaul HaMelech was from the tribe of Binyomin, one of the sons of Rachel. He went looking for his father's lost donkeys. Hashem arranged the events so that he



met Shmuel HaNovi, who subsequently anointed him as king of Israel. Later on, Shaul met his uncle who asked him where he had been. Shaul replied that he had gone to look for lost donkeys. When he could not find them, he went to seek advice from Shmuel. Shaul's uncle asked him what Shmuel had told him. He replied that Shmuel informed him that the donkeys had already been found. Shaul was *tsnuah* in not revealing to his uncle that he had been anointed king of Israel (Shmuel I 10:16)."

"I would have been plotting to tell everyone such wonderful news."

"Yes, Yitzy. That is Shaul's greatness. That is the splendor of the middah of *tsnius*. This exemplary character trait was passed through the generations to another descendant of Rachel – the tsadekes Esther. Her family history was a mystery to everyone. The Gemora (Megilla 13a and b)

relates four different ploys that Achashverous implemented in order to get Esther to reveal her nationality. He made a great banquet in her honor, he refunded the head tax in her name, he sent gifts to important people in her name, and he gathered the maidens together a second time (in order to make Esther jealous). Still, Esther followed Mordechai's instructions and kept silent. She did not reveal her origins (Megillas Esther 2:20)."

"That is unbelievable, Abba!"

"The Gemora praises the *tsnius* of Shaul and Esther and ascribes them to Rachel. 'He (Hashem) does not withdraw His eyes from a righteous person' (Iyov 36:7). Rashi explains that Hashem pays attention to the deeds of the tsaddikim. He rewards them measure for measure, even though it may take a long time."

"Abba, thank you for teaching me two important lessons. One – that my actions make an impression. Two – that the *middah* of *tsnius* is expressed by keeping quiet and guarding private information."

"Hashem should help you excel in this area."

"Amen."

Kinderlach . . .

How do you keep a secret? By keeping quiet. This is one of the traits of a tsnuah person. The essence of tsnius is to not draw attention to yourself. Tsnuah people dress unassumingly. Their actions are all done in a quiet, dignified manner. They way that they walk, sit, stand, eat, and drink all reflect their reverence to the Almighty. From Rachel, Shaul, and Esther we learn that tsnius expresses itself in speech also. There is a tremendous desire to reveal a secret. It will draw attention to the speaker and make him feel very important. However, a tsnuah person realizes that this is just a ploy of the yetzer hora to drag him down. He fights that yetzer hora and keeps quiet. Hashem takes note of his act of heroism and rewards it. He has an influence on himself, his surroundings, and his future generations. He walks in the path of the great tsaddikim.

Parasha Questions:

- Why did Hashem tell Yaakov to return to the land of his fathers? (Rashi 31:3)
- How many times did Lavan change Yaakov's wages? (Rashi 31:7)
- How did Lavan conduct himself towards his daughters? (31:15 and Rashi)