



# TorahActionLife

## COMMUNITY PARASHA SHEET

This week's edition is sponsored by the Stanmore Sephardi Minyan in honour of their Shabbaton featuring guest speaker Rabbi Joseph Dweck (See "back" page)

### VAYEITZEI

9<sup>th</sup> Kislev 5776  
Shabbat begins: 15:50  
Shabbat ends: 16:55



**RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL**  
DIRECTOR, TAL

### There Is More Than Meets The Eye

After seven years of working hard for Lavan in order to marry his daughter Rachel, and eager to build the next block in Am Yisrael, Yaakov awakens in the morning and is stunned to find out that he has been tricked and instead married Leah!

Our Sages (Midrash Rabah, Bereishit) bring an interesting dialogue that ensued shortly after Yaakov realised what had *really* happened.

Understandingly upset, he reproached Leah. How could she do such a thing?

Leah's response was so sound it seems that Yaakov accepted it never going back on this marriage.

Leah cleverly replied that she was put in a very awkward situation. Her father had asked her to marry Yaakov and surely she had to obey her father.

Even though the circumstances were not correct or just, she told Yaakov that she looked to none other than Yaakov himself as an example.

As if to say, "I said what would Yaakov do if his father told him to go to the Chupa?"

I heard that you were put in a similar dilemma! Your mother told you to go and get the Beracha (before Eisav) from your father. You entered your father's presence and announced that you were Eisav.

If that is what *you* did given the circumstances, then I justified my actions through yours. Surely what I did was correct!?" From then on, Yaakov accepted her as his wife and proceeded with the wedding

celebrations for seven days, only after which he married his second wife Rachel (for a further seven years work).

These two wives of Yaakov became the forbearers of our nation.

Rather than cast aside, Leah is there together with Rachel and we merited to have four great women as builders of Am Yisrael, all Imahot – Sarah, Rivka, Rachel and Leah.

But why did we end up with three Avot and four Imahot? Normally we would expect it all to equal out?

Let us explain.

When the Torah introduces Rachel and Leah to us (29:16) we are told, "And Lavan had *two* daughters: the name of the elder was



Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.

Our sages are perplexed as to why the Torah needs to tell us that Lavan had two daughters and then proceed to name the two daughters.

The Torah could have merely stated that Lavan's daughters were called Leah and Rachel and we would have known that he had two. Why mention the number two?

There are similar occurrences where the Torah mentions the number two, and where we would have known there were two from the pursuing Pesukim (e.g. in relation to the two Seirim (goats) on Yom Kippur and the two Chatsotrot (trumpets) in the temple). There, our Sages explain that the reason is to teach us that they were exactly the same. Similar in height, look and value.

This would imply that here too, Rachel and Leah were similar.

How were they similar?

When Avraham was in doubt as to who would continue his legacy, he put forth his son Yishmael as a good candidate. Hashem informed him otherwise. Yishmael would not be the one to continue the legacy; rather it would be through Yitzchak that the great future nation would be established. (21.12) Ki B'Yitzchak Yikareh Lecha Zara – because through Yitzchak will your seed be called.

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 59b) learns out – B'Yitzchak – from *some* of Yitzchak, "but not all of Yitzchak". Yitzchak had two children, Yakov and Eisav.

Only part of Yitzchak, i.e. Yaakov would continue the legacy. Eisav, like Yishmael, is not considered a descendent and heir of Avraham.

On closer inspection, destiny could have taken a different turn.

Eisav was the first born, he was blessed with great physical strength, and could



1. How could Yaakov marry two sisters, something that the Torah forbids?

2. How many daughters did Yaakov have?

3. Where is the source of Sheva Brachot from Parashat Vayeitzei?

4. Who named the Shvatim?

5. Who were the parents of Bilha and Zilpa?

Answers On Page 3

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have been a wonderful partner to Yaakov. What could have transpired could have been – B'Yitzchak – Bet Yitzchak – through the two children of Yitzchak – will your seed continue. However Eisav forgave his rights, choosing instead to use his strength and power for the pursuit of worldly matters. Yaakov on the other hand concentrated on the Torah, eventually masterminding even worldly matters. He took on the spiritual and physical role of his brother. Rashi (29:17) teaches that Leah was originally destined to marry Eisav, and Rachel, Yaakov. That's right there could have been four Avot! However that prestige was forgone.

Yaakov listened to his mother, dressed as Eisav and entered towards his father to receive the eternal blessing. Of all the Avot only Yaakov had two eternal names – Yaakov and Yisrael. The Michtav Me'Eliyahu (Parshat Vayeishev) explains that Yaakov connects to Rachel and Yisrael to Leah. Yaakov filled the void created by Eisav, functioning as two Avot. He was therefore given a second name, Yisrael. Originally Leah was destined to marry Eisav. When Leah saw that Yaakov took over the mantle of Eisav, Leah realized that Yaakov became her soul mate. This is what she alluded to when she told Yaakov, "It is from you I learned"; since you substituted for Eisav,

taking his blessings and birth right, you have become my soul mate.

Everything is written from above, but there are many different ways of interpreting life's challenges.

Leah learnt from the best, and proactively yearned to be a founding mother of our nation. What seemed like a simple story has now taken on a completely new meaning. Shabbat Shalom



**RABBI BENJAMIN STONE**  
**MI K'AMCHO**

## True Value - The Fire & The Flame

As I stood outside the bombed out crematoria three in Auschwitz - Birkenau earlier this week I heard how the cries of shema yisroel were so routinely heard from the gas chambers that Adolph Eichmann, the prominent director of the final solution was want to show his Israeli captors how he was able to recite the first verse of the shema himself. I also learned that it was not just the orthodox who would recite this verse on meeting their end, but that totally assimilated Jews also made this last gasp declaration.

What is it about extreme suffering which causes even the most disconnected Jew to apparently proclaim his faith?

Yaakov suggests to Lavan that it is time that he stopped working to build his father in law's fortune. It is time that he had the opportunity to build his own future.

"And it was when Rachel bore Yosef and Yaakov said to Lavan "send me off so that I may go to my birthplace and my country" (Bereishit 30:25)

There is a clear indication in the pasuk that it was only after Yosef was born that Yaakov decided to push for freedom. What is the connection between the birth of Yosef and Yaakov's request to leave?

The medrash explains that Yaakov knew that it was only after Yosef was born that Eisav could truly be defeated. In the words

of the medrash: "And the house of Yaakov will be fire and the house of Yosef a flame - and the house of Eisav straw (Ovadia 1,18): Fire without a flame cannot have influence from afar - when Yosef was born Yaakov trusted in Hashem and wanted to return" (Bereishit Rabbah, 73)

This medrash requires explanation. Surely Yaakov had been blessed by his father with eternal domination over his older brother (Bereishit 27:29). Why should he need assistance in his battle with Eisav from his son Yosef?

Rav Yitzchak Hutner zts"l, the legendary Rosh Yeshiva and thinker explains as follows: It is well documented that the defining characteristic of Yaakov, as the last of the avot was the fact that he was

However this hereditary, unbreakable bond between a Jew and his people did not quite cover all bases. Although one who was born Jewish was guaranteed his Jewish identity, there was the prospect of a Jew being enticed into a relationship with a non-Jewess with the possible outcome being a non-Jewish child. Yaakov's legacy guaranteed that once a Jew you remained a Jew. It did not guarantee that one's offspring would be born Jewish.

This is where Yosef came into the picture. Yosef's defining characteristic came to the fore was when he "ran outside" when enticed by the wife of Potiphar. At that moment of separation, of self control, Yosef introduced into the fabric of Klal Yisroel a degree of protection from intermarriage, an ability to resist the forming of relationships which could result in non- Jewish offspring. This is the meaning of the medrash when it tells us that "the house of Yaakov will be fire and the house of Yosef a flame - Fire without a flame cannot have influence from afar". The "fire" refers to one who is born Jewish ("the house of Yaakov"). The fire within every Jew can never be extinguished, however far they stray from the path. That is what Yaakov guaranteed.

However what about the flame - the "offspring" of the fire? Are klal Yisroel guaranteed that their future offspring will always be Jews or will there be an irresistible temptation to intermarry?

Through his exhibition of restraint in the face of continued temptation, Yosef injected into Klal Yisroel the possibility for self - control to help to ensure not just that a Jew would remain a Jew, but that their offspring could also be Jewish. The flame as well as the fire would be protected.

But surely there is another point to add. When compared to his father, Yosef lived in relative isolation. Although Yaakov was forced to observe the Torah in the face of

**"the house of Yaakov  
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house of Yosef a flame.  
Fire without a flame  
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from afar"**

astoundingly successful in educating all twelve of his sons with Torah values (Vayikra Rabah 36:5). Accordingly, and based on the principle of "masseh avot siman levanim", Yaakov was responsible for injecting into the foundations of Klal Yisroel the idea and power of Jewish continuity. One who is born a Jew will always remain Jew; however a Jew deviates from the Torah he cannot lose his inherent kedusha.



much abuse and struggle, he had had the chance to learn Torah for fourteen years and was under the influence of his great father. Yosef, on the other hand lived in an environment which was the antithesis of everything in which he believed – and he was required to face this challenge alone. Nevertheless he managed to maintain his strength and emunah and experience incredible siyata dishmaya (divine assistance) in becoming a leader of the land against which he had stood steadfast. Perhaps this is the meaning of the medrash when it refers to the house of Yaakov as fire and the house of Yosef as a flame. Yosef introduced the idea of maintaining one's focus even when one finds oneself far away from one's source. The house of Yosef is not simply a fire which impacts only on its

immediate environment, but a flame which can burn brightly even at great distance. Once a Jew leaves shul after shacharit in the morning and travels into the outside world, he finds himself up against it. He sees a world where everyone appears to be having a great time, publicising their every emotion via social media. Life is one big party with where Torah is seen as irrelevant. Yosef taught us that one should face the world with the Torah in hand, even if one feels isolated from time to time – and that the fruits of such loyalty will be unimaginable siyata dishmaya and success. Yosef saw the value of Torah in spite of the fact that his neighbours did not. He saw that once all is said and done there

is nothing more precious than Torah and that Torah certainly sits above anything that the world has to offer. When the Jew, stripped bare, stood facing death in the gas chamber it may well have occurred to him that the world was a cursed place. It may well have occurred to him that he was about to be defeated in the most comprehensive way by the most vivid incarnation of evil. In the battle of wills on this earth, the Nazi had clearly triumphed over the Jew. At that point he turns round to the world and says "victory and success on this world means absolutely nothing. The fact that the Nazi has managed to defeat me on this world carries no significance. There is only one thing on this world of true value and which makes all endeavour on this world pale into insignificance – and that is Torah. Torah is the only truly precious thing in existence" *Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad.*

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## Mazal Tov!

- Yoni and Aurelie Conway on the birth of their baby boy
- Jessica Shinder and Dovie Schochet on their engagement
- Ben Moses and Roy Melamed on their engagement
- Eyal and Miri Shalom on their son Gavriel's Barmitzvah



1. The Ramban answers that they only kept the whole Torah in Eretz Yisrael while he remained married to two sisters only outside of Eretz Yisrael (as Rachel died on the way). The Maharal says that before the Torah was given the Avot could decide to do prohibited things based on spiritual calculations and this was no longer allowed after the Torah was given.
2. From what is stated explicitly in the pasuk it appears Yaakov only had one daughter, Dina (30:21). However, the pasuk says (37:35) that when Yaakov saw Yosef's torn turncoat he refused to be comforted by his daughters (plural) implying he had more daughters. Rashi brings that according to R' Yehuda with each of the twelve tribes a twin girl was born whom they married. Rashi (35:17) brings that with the birth of Binyamin another twin girl was born. According to all this Yaakov had fourteen daughters!
3. (29:28) When Yaakov got married to Leah and was told he would also be given Rachel to marry, he first waited seven days of sheva brachot for Leah before marrying Rachel.
4. The pesukim imply that the mothers got to name their sons with the exception of Levi (29:34) and (the renamed) Binyamin named by Yaakov (35:18).
5. They were also the daughters of Lavan from a different wife making them half sisters of Rachel and Leah.

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The Stanmore Sephardi Minyan are delighted to be hosting the second Sephardi Shabbaton at Stanmore United Synagogue at which guest of honour and keynote speaker is Rabbi Joseph Dweck, Senior Rabbi of the Spanish and Portuguese Communities.

Rabbi Dweck is a dynamic and charismatic speaker. On Shabbat there will be a Sephardi Service in the Beit Mordecai, Beit Hamdirash followed by a Sephardi Style Kiddush and Lunch.

TAL hosts a dynamic variety of shiurim during the week, here is a taste!



Tuesday evening 121 Learning programme. Last week it was followed by inspirational guest speaker Rabbi Chaplain Major Avrohom Horovitz



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