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Adapted from
Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky zt"l, Emes L'Yaakov

The Torah of Galus: Why Yaakov Needed Fourteen Years in the Yeshiva of Ever

The Torah tells us that when Yaakov stopped for the night on his way to Charan, וישכב במקום ההוא — *he lay down in that place* (Bereishis 28:11). Rashi, citing Chazal, explains that the words במקום ההוא are intended to exclude another place: "באותו מקום שכב, אבל י"ד שנים ששמש בבית עבר לא שכב בלילה שהיה עוסק בתורה." Yaakov slept that night, but during the fourteen years he spent learning in the yeshiva of Ever, he did not lie down to sleep at night because he was occupied with Torah. Chazal further teach that Yaakov was away from his parents for thirty-six years — fourteen years in the yeshiva of Shem and Ever and twenty-two years in the home of Lavan. Yet when Yaakov was punished for neglecting the mitzvah of kibbud av va'em, and Yosef was separated from him for twenty-two years, the fourteen years spent learning Torah were not counted against him.

Why Were Fourteen More Years Necessary?

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, in *Emes L'Yaakov*, raises a fundamental question. Why were those fourteen years so essential that they justified Yaakov's absence from his parents? Yaakov was already sixty-three years old when he left Be'er Sheva. He had learned Torah from his grandfather Avraham until the age of fifteen, and thereafter in the yeshiva of his father Yitzchak. What could he still have needed to learn that required another fourteen years in a different yeshiva, precisely when his parents had instructed him to go to Charan? Moreover, the mitzvah of talmud Torah does not ordinarily exempt a person from a mitzvah that cannot be performed by someone else. Rav Yaakov compares this to a father who sends his son to purchase something for him, and the son instead decides to enter the beis midrash to learn. His desire to learn Torah does not excuse his failure to carry out his father's instructions. Why, then, were Yaakov's fourteen years in the yeshiva of Shem and Ever treated differently?

The Torah of the Avos and the Torah of Shem and Ever

Rav Yaakov answers by drawing a remarkable distinction between the Torah taught in the homes of the Avos and the Torah taught in the yeshiva of Shem and Ever. In the yeshivos of Avraham and Yitzchak, Torah was studied on the highest levels of emunah and avodas Hashem, in an environment protected from the corrupting influences of the outside world. As Rav Yaakov writes, those who learned there were "מחוסנים לגמרי מהסביבה בחוץ ולא מושפעים ממנה כלל" — completely insulated from their surroundings and unaffected by them. Indeed, when Sarah saw that Yishmael was having an adverse influence on Yitzchak, she immediately demanded, גרש האמה הזאת ואת בנה (Bereishis 21:10). Such influences could not be permitted to remain in the environment in which Yitzchak was being raised, and Hashem agreed with Sarah's judgment.

But the yeshiva of Shem and Ever taught a different dimension of Torah. Shem had lived through the generation of the Mabul, surrounded by people whose corruption had brought destruction upon the world. He had survived not only the waters of the Flood but also the spiritual dangers of his generation. Ever had lived through the Dor Haflagah, the generation that sought to build a tower reaching the heavens in rebellion against Hashem. Both had remained steadfast in their righteousness despite living among people whose conduct and values were entirely opposed to their own. They were therefore uniquely qualified to teach a person how to preserve his spiritual integrity while surrounded by wickedness. This was not a Torah intended only for the protected environment of the beis midrash, but a Torah that would enable a person to remain faithful to Hashem even when living in a hostile and corrupt society.

This, explains Rav Yaakov, was precisely what Yaakov needed before entering the house of Lavan. Until then, he had lived in the spiritually protected surroundings of Yitzchak's home. Now he was about to spend many years in the company of Lavan, a man of deceit and dishonesty. Yaakov needed to prepare himself for an entirely different environment, one in which he would have to confront corruption without allowing it to penetrate his own character. In Rav

Yaakov's words, he needed to learn "איך לשבת בסביבה של רשעים ורמאים ואעפ"כ להחזיק בתום ויושר" — how to live among wicked and deceitful people and nevertheless preserve his integrity and uprightness. For this, the Torah he had learned from Avraham and Yitzchak, indispensable as it was, was not sufficient. He needed the particular Torah of Shem and Ever, the Torah of those who had themselves confronted the wickedness of their generations and remained unaffected.

The fourteen years were therefore not a diversion from Yaakov's obligation to obey his parents. They were the necessary preparation for fulfilling their instructions. His parents had sent him into the world of Lavan, and he could not properly undertake that mission without first acquiring the spiritual strength to survive it. The fourteen years spent in the yeshiva of Shem and Ever were thus an essential part of his journey to Charan. They were not years lost from kibbud av va'em, but years that enabled him to carry out his parents' wishes without compromising the Torah and values they had instilled in him.

Why Yosef Received the Torah of Shem and Ever

Rav Yaakov then uses this insight to explain another difficult passage in the Torah. Regarding Yaakov's special love for Yosef, the Torah states, וישראל אהב את יוסף מכל בניו כי בן זקנים הוא לו (Bereishis 37:3). Rashi explains the words בן זקנים according to Onkelos: "בר חכים הוא ליה, כל מה שלמד משם ועבר מסר לו" — Yosef was Yaakov's wise son, to whom he transmitted everything he had learned from Shem and Ever. Why did Yaakov single out Yosef for this special instruction? Why did he not teach the same Torah to his other sons? And why, indeed, did the brothers resent Yosef for receiving this particular teaching?

Rav Yaakov explains that the answer lies in the approaching galus Mitzrayim. Hashem had already told Avraham at the Bris Bein HaBesarim, ידע תדע כי גר יהיה זרעך בארץ לא להם (Bereishis 15:13). The descendants of Avraham would eventually be forced to live in a foreign land. This knowledge was not merely a prediction of future suffering; it was also a warning that they would have to prepare themselves to withstand the spiritual dangers of exile. Yosef was the one who would ultimately be thrust into the corrupt society of Egypt, forced to confront extraordinary nisayonos while separated from his family and all the spiritual protection of his father's home. He would also be responsible for preparing the way for the rest of the family to descend to Egypt. It was Yosef, therefore, who especially needed the Torah of Shem and Ever — the Torah that Yaakov himself had acquired before entering the house of Lavan.

This also casts a new light on the jealousy of the brothers. Seeing Yaakov teach Yosef a body of Torah that he did not transmit to them, they believed that Yosef was being singled out as the principal heir to their father's spiritual legacy. As Rav Yaakov writes, "דחשבו שרק הוא יזכה לקבלת התורה" — they thought that only Yosef would merit receiving the Torah. But they misunderstood the purpose of the special instruction. The Torah of the Avos was sufficient for the other brothers in their circumstances. Yosef was not being taught the Torah of Shem and Ever because he was more deserving than they were, but because he would face challenges that they would not. What appeared to be a special privilege was, in reality, preparation for an extraordinary responsibility.

A Torah of Galus

Rav Yaakov concludes with a broader observation: just as there is a Torah of Eretz Yisrael, including the mitzvos dependent upon the land, so too there is a Torah of galus, where the circumstances, challenges and practical halachos are different. He points to the Chafetz Chaim, who authored the *Mishnah Berurah* for Klal Yisrael generally, but also wrote *Machaneh Yisrael*, addressing the particular halachic circumstances of Jewish soldiers serving in the army. The Torah is the same Torah, but its application must address the realities in which a Jew finds himself.

The fourteen years in the yeshiva of Shem and Ever were thus not simply additional years of learning. They equipped Yaakov with something that he could not have acquired in the sheltered environment of his father's home: the ability to remain Yaakov even in the house of Lavan. And when Yosef would later be called upon to remain Yosef in the palace of Pharaoh and in the isolation of an Egyptian prison, it was this very Torah that his father had transmitted to him. The greatness of the Torah of Shem and Ever was that it enabled a person not merely to live a life of Torah in a protected environment, but to carry that Torah intact into a world whose values were utterly different from his own.

Translated and Adapted from

Rebbetzin Chiena Kossowsky, *Livyas Chein*

How Rachel's and Leah's Lifelong Aspirations Shaped Their Destinies After Death

Rachel and Leah differed not only in their circumstances, but in their deepest aspirations. The pasuk states רצון יראיו יעשה - Hashem fulfills the desires of those who fear Him. Each of the two mothers longed for something different, and ultimately, each one's destiny reflected the desire that had guided her life.

Leah: Closeness to Her Husband

Leah's greatest longing was to draw closer to her husband, Yaakov. This hope finds expression in the names she gave her children. When Reuven was born, she declared כי עתה יאהבני אישי - Now my husband will love me. When Levi was born, she expressed the same hope: הפעם ילוה אישי אלי - This time my husband will become attached to me. And when Zevulun was born, she declared הפעם יזבלני אישי - This time my husband will dwell with me in honor. For Leah, the greatest happiness was the closeness of her beloved husband. And so, even after her death, she was granted that closeness, buried alongside Yaakov in Me'aras HaMachpelah.

Rachel: An Advocate for Her Children

Rachel's longing was different. Her prayers centered on her children. Without children, she could scarcely imagine life itself, declaring הבה לי בנים ואם אין מתה אנכי - Give me children, and if not, I am as one who is dead. Even after Yosef was born, she was already praying יוסף ה' לי בן אחר - May Hashem grant me another son.

It was therefore Rachel, above all, who became the advocate for her children. She was buried not beside Yaakov, but along the road, where her descendants would pass on their way into exile. Rashi (Bereishis 48:7) explains that Yaakov buried her there by divine command, so that she could pray for her children when they were driven into exile.

Throughout the long and bitter years of galus, Bnei Yisrael would remember Rachel, who wept for her children and refused to be comforted. Through the prophet Yirmiyahu, Hashem promises Rachel that her tears have not been shed in vain: מנעי קולך מבכי ועיניך מדמעה כי יש שכר לפעלתך - Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for there is reward for your efforts.

And the promise continues: ושבו בנים לגבולם - And the children will return to their borders.
Rachel's children, and the assurance of their continued existence, meant more to her than even the closeness of her beloved husband. When those children finally return to their land, they too will remember the devotion and faithfulness of their mother Rachel.

Rachel's Legacy in Yosef

The same quality appears in Rachel's son Yosef. He understood his purpose in life through the words כי למחיה שלחני אלקים לפניכם - Hashem sent me ahead of you to preserve life. Yosef bore no hatred toward the brothers who had taken him from his beloved father's home and sold him into slavery, condemning him to years of suffering. Nor did he become consumed with pride over the honor and power he eventually attained in Egypt. His concern was for his brothers and the survival of his father's family.
Even before his death, Yosef thought not of himself, but of the generations that would follow. He made his brothers swear that they would pass on his assurance to their descendants:
פקד יפקד אלקים אתכם - Hashem will surely remember you.
Generation after generation, Bnei Yisrael would preserve this promise, refusing to despair of redemption despite their suffering. Like Rachel, Yosef taught them to look beyond their present troubles and trust in the future that Hashem had promised.
Thus, the devotion of Rachel lived on in Yosef. Rachel's tears and Yosef's final words carried the same message: The suffering of galus would not be the end of the story. There would be reward for their faithfulness, and the children would return to their land.

Two Desires, Two Destinies

We can now return to the pasuk with which we began, רצון יראיו יעשה. **Each of the Imahos in death received exactly what they had longed for. Leah, who sought closeness to Yaakov, rests beside him in Me'aras HaMachpelah. Rachel, who longed for her children, rests on the road to Beis Lechem,** where she still pleads on their behalf until the promise of ושבו בנים לגבולם is fulfilled.

Adapted from

Rav Asher Weiss (Minchas Asher) on the Parashah

Leah's Retort and the Secret of Yaakov's Two Missions

The Torah relates that after Yaakov Avinu had worked seven years for Rachel, Lavan deceived him and substituted Leah on the wedding night. When Yaakov discovered the deception the following morning, he confronted Lavan: ויהי בבקר והנה היא לאה ויאמר אל לבן מה זאת עשית לי הלא ברחל עבדתי עמך ולמה רמיתני — *Why had Lavan deceived him when he had worked for Rachel?* (Bereishis 29:25).
Rashi explains that Yaakov had anticipated Lavan's dishonesty and had arranged secret signs with Rachel so that he could identify her. When Rachel realized that her father intended to substitute Leah, however, she revealed the signs to her sister rather than allow her to suffer humiliation. As Rashi writes, ומסר לה סימנים וכשראתה רחל שמכניסין לו לאה אמרה עכשיו תכלם אחותי עמדה ומסרה לה אותן סימנים — *Rachel feared that Leah would be humiliated and gave her the signs.*

Leah's Reply to Yaakov

Bereishis Rabbah (70:19) records a remarkable exchange between Yaakov and Leah. Throughout the night, Yaakov had called her Rachel, and she had answered him. When morning came, he confronted her, calling her רמייתא בת רמאה — *a deceiver, the daughter of a deceiver.*
Leah replied: ואית ספר דלית ליה תלמידין לא כן הוה אבוך צווח לך עשו ואת עני ליה — *Does a teacher have no students? Did your father not call you Esav, and did you not answer?*
Leah was referring to Yaakov's own conduct when he entered Yitzchak's presence disguised as Esav. When Yitzchak asked מי אתה בני, Yaakov replied אנכי עשו בכרך (Bereishis 27:18–19).
But Leah's answer is difficult to understand. Yaakov had acted at Rivkah's direction to obtain the blessings necessary for the spiritual destiny of Klal Yisrael. Leah, on the other hand, had participated in Lavan's deception, causing Yaakov to marry someone other than the woman for whom he had worked seven years. What comparison could there be between the two incidents? And how could Leah invoke Yaakov's conduct to justify her own?
Rav Asher Weiss, drawing on a profound teaching of the **Kozhnitzer Maggid,** *Rav Yisroel Hopstein (1737-1814)*, explains that Leah was not merely defending herself by pointing to Yaakov's conduct. Her answer revealed the deeper significance of Yaakov's acquisition of Esav's blessings and, ultimately, the reason that Leah herself was destined to become Yaakov's wife.

The Two Missions of Yaakov and Esav

The Torah describes the contrasting personalities of Yaakov and Esav: ויהי עשו איש ידע ציד איש שדה ויעקב איש תם ישב אהלים (Bereishis 25:27). Rashi explains that Yaakov's tents were אהלו של שם ואהלו של עבר, the batei midrash of Shem and Ever. Yaakov devoted himself to Torah, while Esav occupied himself with the physical world.
The Kozhnitzer Maggid explains that this distinction reflected two complementary missions in avodas Hashem. Yaakov was destined to devote himself to the spiritual world, while Esav, endowed with exceptional physical strength and the qualities of an איש שדה, was intended to sanctify the material world.
Esav's role was not necessarily inferior to that of Yaakov. Had he fulfilled his potential, he could have directed his extraordinary physical abilities toward the service of Hashem, elevating the material world and demonstrating that the pursuit of worldly affairs could itself become an expression of avodas Hashem. Yaakov, meanwhile, would devote himself to the study of Torah in the tents of Shem and Ever.
This division of responsibilities explains why Yitzchak intended to confer the blessings of material abundance upon Esav: ויתן לך האלקים מטל השמים ומשמני הארץ ורב דגן ותירש (Bereishis 27:28). These blessings were suited to Esav's intended mission of sanctifying the physical world.
But Esav abandoned that mission. Rather than use his physical abilities to serve Hashem, he pursued his own desires. The very qualities with which he had been endowed for a lofty purpose were diverted toward the pleasures of this world.
Consequently, Yaakov was required to assume not only his own spiritual responsibilities but also the mission originally entrusted to Esav. The blessings of material prosperity therefore had to pass to Yaakov, who would now be responsible for sanctifying both the spiritual and material worlds.
The Kozhnitzer Maggid explains that this transformation was even more profound. When Yaakov entered Yitzchak's presence and declared אנכי עשו בכרך, he was not merely disguising himself as his brother. At that moment, the positive spiritual qualities originally entrusted to Esav passed to Yaakov together with the birthright.

Yaakov now possessed both his own spiritual qualities and those that Esav had forfeited.

Thus, the words אנכי עשו בכרךcontained a deeper truth. Yaakov had, in a spiritual sense, become Esav as well, assuming the role and spiritual potential that his brother had abandoned.

This understanding casts an entirely new light on Leah's remarkable response.

Why Leah Was Destined for Yaakov

When Yaakov arrived in Charan, the Torah introduces Lavan's daughters: וללבן שתי בנות שם הגדלה לאה ושם הקטנה רחל(Bereishis 29:16). The following pasuk describes Leah's eyes as tender: ועיני לאה רכות.

Rashi, citing Bava Basra 123a, explains: שהיתה סבורה לעלות בגורלו של עשו ובכתה שהיו הכל אומרים שני בנים לרבקה ושתי בנות ללבן הגדולה לגדול והקטנה לקטן— *Leah wept because people said that she was destined for Esav.*

The Gemara relates that Leah inquired about Esav and was told איש רע הוא מלסטם ברבות— *he was a wicked man who robbed people.* Upon hearing this, מיד היתה בוכה עד שנשרו ריסי עיניה— *she wept until her eyelashes fell out.*

Yet why would Leah, a righteous woman, have been destined for Esav in the first place?

According to the Kozhnitzer Maggid, the original arrangement was entirely appropriate. Just as Yaakov and Esav had been entrusted with two complementary missions, Rachel and Leah were destined to become their respective partners.

Rachel was suited to Yaakov's spiritual mission, while Leah was destined to accompany Esav in sanctifying the material world. Had Esav fulfilled his responsibilities, Leah would have been his appropriate partner in that endeavor.

But once Esav abandoned his mission and Yaakov assumed it, the destiny of their respective partners changed as well. Since Yaakov had now undertaken Esav's task and acquired the positive qualities originally entrusted to him, Leah too became destined to marry Yaakov.

The Kozhnitzer Maggid explains that this occurred when Yaakov received Esav's blessings. At that moment, the spiritual potential of Esav passed to Yaakov, and Leah became his destined wife.

Did Your Father Not Call You Esav?

We can now appreciate the extraordinary depth of Leah's answer to Yaakov.

When Yaakov accused her of deception, Leah reminded him: לא כן הוה אבוך צווח לך עשו ואת עני ליה— *Did your father not call you Esav, and did you not answer?*

She was not merely arguing that Yaakov had also engaged in deception and therefore had no right to criticize her. Rather, she was explaining why she rightfully belonged to him.

When Yitzchak called Yaakov by Esav's name and Yaakov answered, he was not simply assuming his brother's identity for the purpose of obtaining the blessings. He was acquiring the very spiritual role that Esav had forfeited. And once that role passed to Yaakov, Leah, who had originally been destined to share Esav's mission, became destined for Yaakov.

In effect, Leah was telling Yaakov: When your father called you Esav and you answered him, you became the one to whom I was destined to be married. The very act through which you acquired Esav's blessings also made me your rightful partner.

Thus, the two incidents that appear so similar on the surface were connected in a far more profound way. The acquisition of Esav's blessings and Yaakov's marriage to Leah were not separate events. Both were consequences of Yaakov's assumption of the mission that Esav had abandoned.

Leah and the Concealed World

This understanding also illuminates the teaching of the Zohar (I, 152a) concerning Rachel and Leah.

The Zohar distinguishes between עלמא דאתכסיא ועלמא דאתגליא— *the concealed world and the revealed world*. Leah represented the concealed world, while Rachel represented the revealed world.

The distinction is reflected in the circumstances of their marriages. Rachel's identity was openly known to Yaakov, whereas Leah became his wife under the concealment of night, when her identity remained hidden from him.

The Zohar further teaches that six shevatim emerged from the concealed world, represented by Leah, while two emerged from the revealed world, represented by Rachel. It relates these two dimensions to the two keruvim and the different aspects of the Divine presence that they represent.

Accordingly, the concealment surrounding Leah's marriage was not merely incidental. It reflected the very nature of the spiritual world that Leah represented. Her place in the family of Yaakov was destined to emerge through concealment, just as Rachel's place was associated with revelation.

This explains why Leah's marriage occurred in circumstances that Yaakov himself could not initially understand. Although Lavan's deception was wrongful, the marriage fulfilled a Divine purpose that was concealed from Yaakov at the time.

The Torah's striking words ויהי בבקר והנה היא לאהthus acquire additional significance. What Yaakov discovered in the morning was not merely the identity of the woman whom he had married. He was discovering a dimension of his own destiny that had remained hidden from him.

Yaakov, who had assumed responsibility for both the spiritual and material worlds, required both Rachel and Leah as partners in establishing Klal Yisrael. Each represented a distinct spiritual dimension, and together they would become the mothers of the shevatim.

We can now return to Leah's extraordinary answer.

When Yaakov called her a deceiver, Leah did not simply invoke his own conduct as a precedent. She reminded him of the decisive moment when his destiny had changed. By answering Yitzchak's call of עשו, Yaakov had assumed the spiritual role that Esav had abandoned, and with it the responsibility and destiny originally entrusted to his brother.

Leah's words, לא כן הוה אבוך צווח לך עשו ואת עני ליה, therefore contained the answer to Yaakov's accusation. The very moment Yaakov answered to Esav's name, Leah became part of his destiny.

Women's Obligation in Tefillah – a Series

Part I — Are Women Obligated to Daven?

Summarized by ***Chaim Ozer Shulman*** based on:
Haparshiyos B'Halacha on *Vayeitze*, by **R' Yissocher Frand;**
Jewish Woman in Jewish Law (*1978*), by **R' Moshe Meiselman**;
and **Halichos Bas Yisrael**, by **R' Yitzchok Y. Fuchs.**

Must Women Recite Shemoneh Esrei?

The Mishnah in Berachos (3:3) states that women are obligated in tefillah. Yet this seemingly straightforward halachah raises several questions. Must a woman recite Shemoneh Esrei each day, or may she fulfill her obligation through a brief personal prayer? Must she daven both Shacharis and Minchah? And how do we explain the practice of many women in earlier generations who did not regularly recite the formal daily prayers?

Rav Moshe Meiselman, in *Jewish Woman in Jewish Law* (Chapter 20), examines the different approaches of the Rishonim and Acharonim. Rav Yissocher Frand, in *Haparshiyos B'Halacha* on Vayeitze, discusses the practical consequences of their disagreement, while Rav Yitzchok Yaakov Fuchs, in *Halichos Bas Yisrael*, brings additional rulings concerning women's obligations, particularly those occupied with raising young children.

Why Are Women Obligated in Tefillah?

The Mishnah (Berachos 3:3) teaches, נשים ועבדים וקטנים פטורין מקריאת שמע ומן התפילין, וחייבין בתפילה ובמזוזה ובברכת המזון— women, servants, and minors are exempt from Krias Shema and tefillin, but are obligated in prayer, mezuzah, and Birchas HaMazon. Women are generally exempt from positive commandments that must be performed at a particular time. Since Krias Shema must be recited morning and evening, women are exempt. But why are they obligated in tefillah, which also has fixed times?

The Gemara (Berachos 20b) itself asks this question: וחייבין בתפילה דרחמי נינהו, מהו דתימא הואיל וכתיב בה ערב ובקר וצהרים כמצות עשה שהזמן גרמא דמי, קא משמע לן. Although prayer is a request for Divine mercy, one might have thought that because the pasuk says ערב ובקר וצהרים אשיחה ואהמה וישמע קולי— evening, morning, and afternoon I will speak and cry out, and He will hear my voice (Tehillim 55:18) — prayer is a time-bound mitzvah from which women are exempt. The Mishnah teaches otherwise.

Rashi explains that prayer is fundamentally רחמי, a request for mercy. Tosafos (Berachos 20b, s.v. *B'Tefillah Peshita*) likewise emphasize the significance of this explanation notwithstanding the reference to fixed times. The Yerushalmi (Berachos 3:3) expresses the idea particularly clearly: כדי שיהא כל אחד ואחד מבקש רחמים על עצמו— so that every person should request mercy for himself. Women need Hashem's mercy no less than men, and they are therefore included in the obligation to pray.

But the Gemara does not explain exactly what women must recite. Must they say the established Shemoneh Esrei, or is the obligation satisfied by a less formal prayer? That question depends upon a fundamental disagreement between the Rambam and Ramban.

The Rambam and Ramban: What Does the Torah Require?

The Rambam (Hilchos Tefillah 1:1) writes, מצות עשה להתפלל בכל יום שנאמר ועבדתם את ה' אלקיכם— there is a positive Torah commandment to pray every day, derived from the pasuk *You shall serve Hashem your G-d* (Mishpatim 23:25). However, the Rambam continues, ואין מנין התפלות מן התורה, ואין משנה התפלה הזאת מן התורה, ואין לתפלה זמן קבוע מן התורה— the Torah does not prescribe the number of prayers, their wording, or the times when they must be recited. He therefore concludes, ולפיכך נשים ועבדים חייבין בתפלה לפי שהיא מצות עשה שלא הזמן גרמא— women are obligated in prayer because it is not a time-bound positive commandment.

According to the Rambam, the Torah requires every person to pray each day, but does not prescribe the familiar text of Shemoneh Esrei. Rather, the Rambam explains (1:2), a person begins by praising Hashem, then requests his needs, and concludes with thanksgiving, כל אחד לפי כחו, each according to his ability. The established text of Shemoneh Esrei and the fixed times of the daily prayers were instituted subsequently by Chazal. The Rambam explains (1:4) that Ezra and his Beis Din established a uniform text after many Jews, dispersed among foreign nations, could no longer express themselves adequately in prayer.

The Ramban, in his objections to the Rambam's *Sefer HaMitzvos* (positive commandment 5), disagrees that ordinary daily prayer is a Torah obligation. He maintains that the daily obligation was instituted by Chazal. Although prayer in a time of distress has special significance, the regular daily prayers are fundamentally rabbinic. According to this approach, when Chazal required Shacharis and Minchah, they included women notwithstanding the fixed times, because תפילה דרחמי נינהו— prayer is a request for Divine mercy.

At first glance, this disagreement seems to provide two different approaches to women's obligations. According to the Rambam, the Torah requires a daily prayer without a prescribed text. According to the Ramban, the daily obligation is the prayer instituted by Chazal. But there is an important question: even according to the Rambam, who says the Torah requires only one daily prayer, did Chazal subsequently obligate women to recite the established Shacharis and Minchah? This question is central to the discussion of the Magen Avraham.

The Magen Avraham: May a Brief Prayer Suffice?

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 106:1) rules, ונשים ועבדים שאע"פ שפטורים מקריאת שמע חייבים בתפילה מפני שהיא מצות עשה שלא הזמן גרמא— women are obligated in prayer, notwithstanding their exemption from Krias Shema, because prayer is not a time-bound positive commandment. The Magen Avraham (106:2) observes that many women did not regularly recite Shemoneh Esrei and seeks to explain their practice.

He writes that according to the Rambam, מדאורייתא די בפעם אחד ביום ובכל נוסח שירצה— according to Torah law, one prayer each day, in whatever text a person chooses, is sufficient. He continues that women customarily recited a brief request upon arising in the morning, משום דאומרים מיד בבוקר סמוך לנטילה איזה בקשה ומדאורייתא די בזה. The Magen Avraham then adds the crucial words ואפשר שגם חכמים לא חייבום יותר— perhaps even Chazal did not obligate them to do more.

The Magen Avraham is not suggesting that women have no obligation to pray. Rather, he provides a possible explanation for the practice of women who satisfied their obligation through a brief morning prayer instead of reciting the full Shemoneh Esrei. Since the Torah itself does not prescribe a particular text, such a prayer may be sufficient, provided it fulfills the essential requirements of tefillah. However, Rav Meiselman raises an important difficulty. Even if the Rambam is correct that the Torah requires only one daily prayer, why should women be exempt from the additional prayers instituted by Chazal? The Rambam himself describes the subsequent establishment of the formal prayers, and he does not expressly state that women were excluded. The Magen Avraham anticipates this question with his suggestion that perhaps Chazal did not obligate women beyond the basic Torah requirement. But what is the basis for that suggestion? (*Jewish Woman in Jewish Law*, pp. 131–132.)

The difficulty is heightened by the Ramban's position that the ordinary obligation of prayer is itself rabbinic. If Chazal instituted

Shacharis and Minchah and included women because prayer is a request for mercy, why should the obligation be limited to an informal morning prayer?

Thus, the Magen Avraham provides an explanation for an established practice, but it remains disputed whether this represents the ordinary halachic obligation. The distinction becomes clearer in the ruling of the Mishnah Berurah.

The Mishnah Berurah: Shacharis and Minchah

The Mishnah Berurah (106:4) explains that according to the Ramban and the majority of poskim, the basic obligation of the established daily prayers is rabbinic. Although these prayers must be recited at particular times, אעפ"כ חייבו אותן בתפילת שחרית ומנחה כמו אנשים הואיל ותפילה היא בקשת רחמים— nevertheless, Chazal obligated women in Shacharis and Minchah just as men, because prayer is a request for mercy.

He concludes, וכן עיקר כי כן דעת רוב הפוסקים, and adds, ולכן יש להזהיר לנשים שיתפללו שמונה עשרה— therefore, women should be instructed to recite Shemoneh Esrei. The reference to the majority of poskim concerns their acceptance of the Ramban's position that ordinary daily prayer is rabbinic, from which the Mishnah Berurah draws the conclusion concerning Shacharis and Minchah.

Accordingly, the Mishnah Berurah rules that women are ordinarily obligated in Shemoneh Esrei for both Shacharis and Minchah. Rav Fuchs likewise opens his treatment of women's prayer with the ruling לדעת רוב הפוסקים חייבות הנשים בתפילת שמונה עשרה שחרית ומנחה, בין בחול בין בשבת ויום טוב— according to most poskim, women are obligated in Shacharis and Minchah, both on weekdays and on Shabbos and Yom Tov (*Halichos Bas Yisrael*, ch. 2, §1).

Rav Fuchs's notes also cite Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Igros Moshe*, Orach Chaim IV, §166), who questions the Magen Avraham's suggestion that Chazal may not have obligated women in the formal prayers. If Chazal did obligate women in Shemoneh Esrei, how could the widespread practice of women who did not recite it be justified? This sharpens the question raised by Rav Meiselman, although the two discussions need not be understood as identical.

Thus, while the Magen Avraham provides a basis for women who recite a brief daily prayer, the Mishnah Berurah and other authorities maintain that women are ordinarily required to recite both Shacharis and Minchah.

What Constitutes a Brief Prayer?

Even according to the more lenient approach, a brief prayer must contain the essential elements of tefillah. The Rambam (Hilchos Tefillah 1:2) requires praise of Hashem, a request for one's needs, and thanksgiving. Accordingly, reciting *Modeh Ani* alone does not necessarily satisfy the obligation, since it expresses gratitude but does not contain a request.

Rav Meiselman notes that *HaMa'avir Sheinah*, the concluding blessing of Birchos HaShachar, contains the elements required by the Rambam: it begins with praise, includes ויהי רצון מלפניך ... שתרגילנו בתורתך ודבקנו במצותיך, requesting Hashem's assistance in serving Him, and concludes with thanksgiving (*Jewish Woman in Jewish Law*, p. 132).

Similarly, Rav Fuchs explains that a woman unable to recite Shacharis should at least recite a brief prayer containing שבח בקשה והודאה— praise, petition, and thanksgiving. He cites the practice attributed to Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky of having women unable to recite the formal prayers say Birchos HaShachar together with the *Yehi Ratzon* that follows (*Halichos Bas Yisrael*, ch. 2, §2 and n. 4). The question is therefore not merely how long a prayer must be. Even where a short prayer is sufficient, it must be a genuine act of tefillah, including a request for Hashem's assistance.

Women Caring for Young Children

An important consideration concerns women whose responsibilities toward young children make regular prayer particularly difficult. A mother caring for infants or young children may find it impossible to set aside even a few uninterrupted minutes for Shemoneh Esrei. Feeding, supervising, and attending to their immediate needs cannot always be postponed. The question is whether these responsibilities provide a halachic basis for relying upon a more limited obligation.

Rav Frand addresses this question under the heading אשה המטופלת בילדים, a woman occupied with raising children. He cites Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, who maintained that women caring for young children who find it difficult to recite the formal prayers may rely upon the Magen Avraham's more lenient position. Rav Fuchs similarly cites Rav Yaakov's opinion through *Ko Somar LeBeis Yaakov*, which compares such a mother to one attending a sick person, whose responsibilities may excuse him from prayer (*Halichos Bas Yisrael*, ch. 2, §2, n. 2).

Rav Frand also cites *Sichos Chafetz Chaim* (I, §27), which relates that the Chafetz Chaim's wife did not regularly recite the formal prayers while occupied with raising her children. His son, Rav Aryeh Leib, reports that his mother explained that the Chafetz Chaim had exempted her because she was occupied with caring for the children. This account is particularly significant because the Mishnah Berurah himself rules that women are ordinarily obligated in Shacharis and Minchah. Yet he recognized that a mother occupied with raising young children may be in a different position.

Rav Moshe Sternbuch (*Teshuvos VeHanhagos*, I, §74), cited by Rav Frand, offers an additional explanation based upon העוסק במצוה פטור מן המצוה— one occupied with performing a mitzvah may be exempt from another mitzvah. Raising children and attending to their immediate needs are not merely private activities. They are important responsibilities in their own right, and the performance of one mitzvah may affect the obligation to perform another.

This provides a different reason for leniency from the one offered by the Magen Avraham. Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky permits a mother occupied with young children to rely upon the more limited prayer requirement. Rav Sternbuch's explanation concerns the separate principle that a person occupied with one mitzvah may be exempt from another. Under the first approach, the question is what constitutes sufficient prayer; under the second, it is whether an otherwise applicable obligation must be performed while the person is occupied with another mitzvah.

Rav Fuchs also records the opinion of the Chazon Ish concerning women occupied with children, while noting that Rav Chaim Kanievsky reported that the Chazon Ish maintained that women were obligated in Shemoneh Esrei. Rav Fuchs therefore emphasizes that where a woman is able to find even a few minutes to recite Shacharis and Minchah, she should do so. But where the care of young children genuinely prevents her from davening, she should at least recite a brief prayer containing praise, petition, and thanksgiving (*Halichos Bas Yisrael*, ch. 2, §2, nn. 2–3).

The distinction is important. A woman caring for young children may have grounds for relying upon a more limited practice, but that does not establish a general exemption for all women. Conversely, the ordinary requirement of Shacharis and Minchah does not mean that the immediate needs of children can be ignored. Both obligations must be considered.

Why Maariv Is Different

The obligation of Maariv differs from that of Shacharis and Minchah. The Gemara (Berachos 27b) discusses whether the evening prayer is obligatory or optional. Although Jewish men subsequently accepted Maariv as a regular obligation, women generally did not undertake the same requirement.

The Mishnah Berurah (106:4) therefore explains, אבל תפילת ערבית שהוא רשות ... הנשים לא קבלו עליהם— Maariv was originally optional, and women did not accept it upon themselves as obligatory. Thus, even according to authorities who require women to recite Shacharis and Minchah, women are ordinarily exempt from Maariv.

This distinction also helps explain why the obligation of prayer cannot be determined solely by its spiritual importance. Maariv is certainly an important prayer, and a woman may choose to recite it. Nevertheless, its halachic history differs from that of the two daytime prayers, which Chazal established as obligatory.

A woman who regularly recites Maariv may raise a separate question concerning an established personal practice, but the general exemption remains.

Conclusion

The Mishnah's declaration, **וחייבין בתפילה**, establishes that women are obligated in prayer, and the Gemara explains why: **תפילה דרחמי נינהו** — prayer is a request for Divine mercy. Yet the precise extent of that obligation depends upon how one understands the institution of daily prayer.

The Rambam maintains that the Torah requires daily prayer without prescribing its text or time, while the Ramban regards the ordinary daily obligation as rabbinic. The Magen Avraham draws upon the Rambam's position to explain the practice of women who recite a brief morning prayer, suggesting that perhaps Chazal did not obligate them to do more. The Mishnah Berurah, however, concludes that the principal ruling requires women to recite both Shacharis and Minchah.

Women caring for young children present an additional consideration. Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky permits reliance upon the more limited obligation described by the Magen Avraham, while Rav Moshe Sternbuch invokes **עוסק במצוה פטור מן המצוה** to explain why the immediate responsibilities of raising children may affect the obligation to recite formal prayer.

Underlying these distinctions is the Gemara's teaching that prayer is a request for Divine mercy. The question is not whether women need that mercy, but how halachah requires them to seek it, and how the obligation is fulfilled amid the responsibilities of daily life.

Having examined the basic obligation of tefillah, a further question arises concerning the other portions of davening. Which must women recite, which are recommended, and which may be recited voluntarily? These questions will be addressed in the next installment, based principally upon *Bein HaIsha L'Yotzra* by R' Elyakim Ellinson and *Halichos Bas Yisrael* by R' Yitzchok Yaakov Fuchs.

Yaakov and Rachel: Seven Years That Seemed Like a Few Days

Adapted and based on

אוסף חיד"ת ממרן הג' רבי אהרן קוטלר – ההבנה האמיתית של סיפורי התורה

& **Mishnas Rabi Aharon on Veyeitze**

The Torah tells us that Yaakov worked seven years to marry Rachel: ויעבד יעקב ברחל שבע שנים ויהיו בעיניו כימים אחדים באהבתו אתה - *Yaakov worked seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him like only a few days because of his love for her* (Bereishis 29:20).

Three Questions

But should not the opposite have been true? When a person longs to marry someone he loves, the waiting ordinarily seems longer, not shorter. Why did seven years seem like only a few days, precisely because Yaakov loved Rachel?

There is another difficulty. When Lavan asked Yaakov what wages he wanted, Yaakov himself proposed, אעבדך שבע שנים ברחל בתך הקטנה - *I will work for you seven years for Rachel, your younger daughter* (29:18). Why did Yaakov volunteer seven years? Lavan had not demanded such a lengthy commitment. Why would Yaakov himself propose an arrangement that delayed the marriage for seven years?

And perhaps the most remarkable question concerns Rachel. The Gemara (Megillah 13b; Bava Basra 123a) relates that Yaakov had entrusted Rachel with identifying signs to protect against Lavan's anticipated deception. Yet when Rachel learned that Lavan intended to substitute Leah for her, she gave Leah those signs. Why would Rachel jeopardize the marriage for which she had waited seven years, with no assurance that she would ever marry Yaakov herself?

Building the Future of Klal Yisrael

These questions cannot be fully appreciated without understanding the extraordinary sense of destiny that motivated Yaakov, Rachel, and Leah. They were not simply establishing their own household. They understood that their children would become the twelve Shevatim, the foundations of Klal Yisrael. But their actions did more than influence their descendants. Rav Aharon, drawing on the Ramban, explains that מעשה אבות סימן לבנים means not merely that the Avos' actions foreshadowed the future, but that those actions helped create it. Through their conduct, the Avos and Imahos established spiritual foundations upon which the future of Klal Yisrael would rest.

Indeed, after completing the seven years of labor, Yaakov tells Lavan, הבה את אשתי כי מלאו ימי ואבואה אליה - *Give me my wife, for my days have been fulfilled, and I shall come to her* (29:21). Rashi asks why Yaakov would speak so openly and explains, שהרי אני בן פ"ד שנה ואימתי אעמיד י"ב שבטים - *For I am already eighty-four years old, and when shall I establish the twelve Shevatim?* Rashi adds, והלא קל שבקלים אינו אומר כן אלא להוליד תולדות אמר כך - *Even an ordinary, immodest person would not speak this way; Yaakov spoke because of his need to establish future generations.*

Seven Years of Preparation

But this makes our original question even more difficult. If Yaakov was so conscious of the need to establish the Shevatim, why did he voluntarily delay their birth for another seven years?

Yaakov was already seventy-seven years old when he arrived at Lavan's household. He had left his parents' home at the age of sixty-three and spent fourteen years immersed in Torah study in the beis midrash of Shem and Ever (Megillah 17a). Yet he recognized that the task now before him required further preparation.

As expressed in *Mishnas Rabbi Aharon*, יעקב ידע שעליו לעבור צירוף אחר צירוף וזיכוך אחר זיכוך כדי שיזכה להוליד שבטי ק-ה- *Yaakov understood that he had to undergo successive stages of refinement and purification to become worthy of fathering the Shevatim.*

From the Beis Midrash to Lavan's Household

Yet why should Yaakov require seven years of working for Lavan after fourteen years devoted exclusively to Torah? What could he accomplish as a shepherd in Lavan's household that he had not already achieved in the beis midrash?

The answer lies in the different challenges of these two periods. In the beis midrash, Yaakov could devote himself entirely to Torah. In Lavan's household, he would have to maintain his spiritual standards while immersed in the demands of work, surrounded by dishonesty and corruption. Through his conduct in Lavan's household, Yaakov was establishing the spiritual strength that would enable his descendants to preserve their own standards while living among the nations. The challenge Yaakov faced would eventually become the challenge of Klal Yisrael throughout its history.

Yaakov later described the hardships he endured, הייתי ביום אכלני חרב וקרח בלילה ותדד שנתי מעיני- *By day I was consumed by heat, by night by frost, and sleep fled from my eyes* (31:40). But the significance of his labor went far beyond physical endurance. Even in his work as a shepherd, Yaakov maintained extraordinary standards of integrity and responsibility, going beyond the obligations ordinarily imposed upon a hired worker.

And throughout his years in Lavan's household, Yaakov preserved his commitment to Torah and mitzvos. Later, he would tell Esav, עם לבן גרתי ותרי״ג מצות שמרתי ולא למדתי ממעשיו הרעים- *I lived with Lavan* (32:5). Rashi explains, *I observed the 613 mitzvos and did not learn from Lavan's wicked conduct.*

Why the Years Seemed Like a Few Days

We can now understand the Torah's extraordinary description of the seven years. The crucial point is that Yaakov was not waiting for his mission to begin. As Rav Aharon explains, ובכל יום ויום הוא ממש הקים את בית ישראל בהתנהגותו- *Every single day, through his conduct, Yaakov was actually building the House of Israel.*

Each day in Lavan's household was another stage in establishing the spiritual foundations of Klal Yisrael. And because the years themselves were the accomplishment, rather than merely the delay preceding it, they could seem like only a few days.

Genuine Love

In a related piece in ***אבן מאירה בראשית מהג' רבי אלי' בער וכטפוגל.*** **Rav Elya Ber Wachtfogel**, in *Even Me'irah*, adds another dimension to באהבתו אתה. He cites an illustration distinguishing genuine love from love directed toward one's own gratification. A person declares that he loves fish. But he does not really love the fish; he loves the pleasure he derives from eating it. What he actually loves is himself. When love is directed primarily toward satisfying one's own desires, waiting naturally becomes difficult. But Yaakov's love for Rachel was grounded in his appreciation of her spiritual greatness and the sacred mission they would fulfill together. His love was not merely a desire for immediate personal gratification.

Rav Wachtfogel also draws attention to Rashi's explanation of כימים אחדים. When Rivka sent Yaakov to Lavan, she told him, וישבת עמו ימים אחדים- *Remain with him for a few days* (27:44). Rashi connects these words with Yaakov's seven years of labor, הם ימים אחדים שאמרה לו אמו- *These were the few days of which his mother had spoken.*

This also explains the Torah's emphasis on באהבתו אתה- *because of his love for her*. His love for Rachel was inseparable from his recognition of her role in establishing Klal Yisrael.

Rachel, the Foundation of the Household

But why was Rachel herself so central to Yaakov's mission? Chazal describe Rachel as רחל היתה עיקרו של בית- *Rachel was the principal foundation of the household* (Bereishis Rabbah 71:2). This is striking because Leah became the mother of six of Yaakov's sons, including Levi and Yehudah, from whom would emerge the Kohanim, Leviim, and the Davidic monarchy. Yet Rachel occupied a unique place in Yaakov's household.

When Boaz married Rus, the elders blessed him, יתן ה׳ את האשה הבאה אל ביתך כרחל וכלאה אשר בנו שתיהם את בית ישראל- *May Hashem make the woman entering your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built the House of Israel* (Rus 4:11). Why does the blessing mention Rachel before Leah, when Boaz himself was descended from Yehudah, Leah's son?

The explanation lies in the particular spiritual qualities of Yaakov and Rachel and the manner in which those qualities complemented one another.

Torah and Silence

Yaakov was associated with the attribute of emes, תתן אמת ליעקב- *You will give truth to Yaakov* (Michah 7:20). His principal avodah was Torah, which finds expression through the sanctified power of speech. Through speech, a person studies, teaches, and transmits Torah to others.

But alongside the sanctity of speech stands another essential quality: the ability to remain silent when silence is required. The Gemara (Chullin 89a) teaches, מה אומנותו של אדם בעולם הזה ישים עצמו כאלם- *What is a person's craft in this world? To make himself as though mute.* Yet the Gemara immediately qualifies this principle regarding Torah study, יכול אף לדברי תורה תלמוד לומר צדק תדברון- *Might this apply even to words of Torah? The pasuk teaches that one must speak words of righteousness.*

There is a time to speak and a time to remain silent, and knowing the difference is itself a spiritual accomplishment.

The Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 71:5) teaches, רחל תפשה פלך שתיקה ועמדו כל בניה בעלי מסטירין- *Rachel adopted the practice of silence, and her descendants became keepers of secrets.*

Rachel's Silence on the Wedding Night

The Gemara (Megillah 13b) explains that Yaakov had anticipated Lavan's deception and entrusted Rachel with identifying signs. When Rachel learned that Leah would be brought to Yaakov in her place, she realized that Leah would be unable to provide those signs and would suffer terrible humiliation.

What was Rachel to do? She had waited seven years to marry Yaakov. She understood the importance of the marriage and the role she hoped to play in establishing Klal Yisrael. Yet she could not bear the thought of her sister's embarrassment.

Rachel's desire to marry Yaakov was bound up with her yearning to become one of the mothers of the twelve Shevatim. She was not merely risking her personal happiness. She was risking what she understood to be her own sacred mission in the establishment of Klal Yisrael.

The Gemara relates Rachel's decision, השתא מיכספא אחתאי מסרתינהו לניהלה- *Now my sister will be humiliated; I will give her the signs.* Rashi (Bereishis 29:25) explains, אמרה עכשיו תכלם אחותי עמדה ומסרה לה

אותן סימנין- *Rachel said that her sister would now be humiliated, so she arose and gave Leah the signs.*

Precisely because Rachel understood the extraordinary destiny of the family she hoped to establish, her decision assumes such significance. She would not allow even her aspirations to become the mother of the Shevatim to justify humiliating her sister.

We can now appreciate the spiritual relationship between Yaakov and Rachel. Yaakov embodied Torah and emes, expressed through the sanctified power of speech. Rachel demonstrated the complementary sanctity of silence, the ability to exercise restraint even when her deepest aspirations were at stake.

As expressed in *Mishnas Rabbi Aharon*, יעקב עמוד התורה ורחל יסוד השתיקה היו מתאימים ביותר זה לזה- *Yaakov, the pillar of Torah, and Rachel, the foundation of silence, were particularly suited to one another.*

Leah's Parallel Sacrifice: The Birth of Dinah

Rav Wachtfogel points to a remarkable parallel later in Vayeitzei. The Gemara (Berachos 60a), commenting on ואחר ילדה בת ותקרא את שמה דינה- *Afterwards, Leah gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah* (Bereishis 30:21), explains that Leah considered the destiny of Yaakov's family: י״ב שבטים עתידין לצאת מיעקב- *Twelve Shevatim were destined to descend from Yaakov.* Six sons had already been born to Leah and four to the shfachos. If Leah bore another son, Rachel would be left with only one, fewer than either shifchah. Leah therefore reasoned, אם זה זכר לא תהא אחותי רחל כאחת השפחות- *If this child is a boy, my sister Rachel will not even be equal to one of the shfachos.* The Gemara concludes, מיד נהפכה לבת- *Immediately, the child became a girl*, Dinah.

The parallel is striking. Rachel had risked her marriage to spare Leah humiliation. Now Leah, fully aware that she was participating in establishing the twelve Shevatim, was prepared to relinquish the possibility of bearing another Shevet rather than see Rachel humiliated. Neither sister allowed her own place in the destiny of Klal Yisrael to override her concern for the dignity of the other.

Rachel's Silence in Her Descendants

But Rachel's extraordinary restraint did not end with her own life. It became part of the spiritual inheritance she established for her descendants.

Binyamin, Rachel's son, possessed this same capacity for silence. His stone in the Choshen was ישפה, which the Midrash associates with יש פה- *he has a mouth*. Bereishis Rabbah (71:5) explains, יודע במכירתו של יוסף ואינו מגיד- *He knew of Yosef's sale but did not reveal it.*

Although the Torah does not expressly tell us that Binyamin knew of the sale, the Midrash identifies his silence as an expression of the middah inherited from Rachel.

Generations later, Shaul HaMelech, a descendant of Binyamin, demonstrated the same quality. After Shmuel informed him that he had been chosen to become king, Shaul did not disclose the news to his uncle: ואת דבר המלוכה לא הגיד לו- *He did not reveal the matter of the kingship* (Shmuel I 10:16).

And generations later, the same characteristic appeared in Esther, also descended from Binyamin. The Megillah tells us, לא הגידה אסתר את עמה ואת מולדתה כי מרדכי צוה עליה אשר לא תגיד- *Esther did not disclose her people or her birthplace because Mordechai had instructed her not to reveal them* (Esther 2:10). And later, אין אסתר מגדת מולדתה ואת עמה כאשר צוה עליה מרדכי- *Esther continued not to reveal her birthplace or her people, as Mordechai had instructed her* (2:20).

Esther's silence was not an incidental detail. Her concealed identity became a crucial element in the events through which Hashem brought salvation to Klal Yisrael.

Indeed, the Gemara (Megillah 13b) explicitly connects these generations: בשכר צניעות שהיתה בה ברחל זכתה ויצא ממנה שאול ובשכר צניעות שהיה בו בשאול זכה ויצאת ממנו אסתר- *In the merit of Rachel's modesty and restraint, she merited that Shaul would descend from her; and in the merit of Shaul's modesty and restraint, Esther descended from him.*

This is the deeper meaning of מעשה אבות סימן לבנים- *The actions of the Avos are a sign for their descendants*. Their actions did not merely provide examples for later generations to imitate. Their spiritual accomplishments helped establish qualities that would continue to find expression in the lives of their descendants.

It is also a remarkable illustration of מדה כנגד מדה. We ordinarily think of middah k'neged middah as a consequence corresponding to an individual's conduct. But its operation can extend across generations, with the spiritual consequences of an action emerging under circumstances far removed from the original event.

Answering the Questions

Why did Yaakov voluntarily commit himself to seven years of labor? Because establishing the twelve Shevatim required spiritual preparation commensurate with that extraordinary responsibility.

Why did those seven years seem like only a few days? Because Yaakov was not merely waiting to establish Klal Yisrael. With every passing day, through his own conduct, he was already building its foundations.

And why did Rachel surrender the identifying signs to Leah, risking the very marriage for which she had waited? Because Rachel possessed an extraordinary capacity to subordinate even her deepest personal aspirations to the dignity of another person.

Yaakov spent seven years building the spiritual foundations of the Jewish people through his daily conduct. Rachel made one extraordinary decision to remain silent. The consequences of both would extend far beyond their own lives. What appeared to be seven years of waiting and one moment of personal sacrifice were, in fact, part of the formation of Klal Yisrael itself.

Adapted from **Rav Avraham Rivlin, *Iyunei Parsha,*** Parshas Vayeitzei, pp. 178–183

Yaakov Avinu and the Price of Truth

When Yaakov Avinu fled from Be'er Sheva, he was escaping more than Eisav's anger. He was also beginning a long period of suffering that would stand in striking contrast to the blessings he had just received from Yitzchak. The Torah tells us, "ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע וילך חרנה" — Yaakov left Be'er Sheva and traveled to Charan (Vayeitzei 28:10). According to Chazal, his journey was marked by hardship, and the years that followed would bring repeated deception and humiliation at the hands of Lavan. Yet these experiences raise a fundamental question. Yaakov had obtained his father's blessings at Rivka's direction, in fulfillment of the Divine intention that those blessings belong to him rather than Eisav. Why, then, did he suffer so terribly? The answer lies in the extraordinary demands of *middas ha'emes*. For Yaakov, whose defining attribute was truth, even a

departure from truth undertaken for the sake of a mitzvah could leave a spiritual consequence requiring correction.

Blessings Followed by Suffering

The contrast between the blessings and Yaakov's subsequent life is remarkable. Yitzchak had promised him prosperity and dominion: "יעבדוך עמים וישתחוו לך לאמים הוה גביר לאחיך" — nations would serve him, peoples would bow before him, and he would be master over his brothers (Toldos 27:29). Yet Yaakov spent twenty years serving Lavan, enduring the exploitation of a man who repeatedly changed his wages. As Yaakov later protested, "ואביכן התל בי והחלף את משכרתי עשרת מנים" — "Your father deceived me and changed my wages ten times" (Vayeitzei 31:7). Even after leaving Lavan, Yaakov approached Eisav with extraordinary humility, repeatedly addressing him as "אדני" and referring to himself as "עבדך יעקב" (Vayishlach 32:5). The man blessed with mastery became a servant; the man promised abundance endured years of exploitation; and the man who obtained the blessings by deceiving his father became the victim of deception himself. We must understand why the blessings of Yitzchak were accompanied by so much suffering.

Why Yaakov Did Not Recognize Leah

The most striking example was Lavan's substitution of Leah for Rachel. Yaakov had worked seven years for Rachel, and the Torah tells us, "ויהיו בעיניו כימים אחדים באהבתו אתה" — those years seemed like only a few days because of his love for her (Vayeitzei 29:20). Knowing Lavan's character, Yaakov anticipated the possibility of deception and gave Rachel identifying signs by which he would recognize her. But when Lavan substituted Leah, Rachel surrendered the signs to her sister to spare her humiliation. The following morning Yaakov discovered what had happened: "ויהי בבקר והנה היא לאה" — "And in the morning, behold, she was Leah" (29:25). The Gemara (Megillah 13b) describes Rachel's extraordinary sacrifice, but the incident raises another question. Yaakov had lived in Lavan's household for seven years and was well acquainted with Leah. Why was he unable to recognize her voice? Why did he not simply ask her whether she was Rachel? Indeed, the [Midrash Rabbah] relates that Yaakov spoke with Leah during the night, yet discovered her identity only in the morning.

We may understand this in light of Yaakov's extraordinary sensitivity to falsehood. Had he questioned Leah directly, he might have placed her in a position in which she would have to tell an outright lie. Yaakov was unwilling to create such a situation. He therefore relied upon the identifying signs rather than compel Leah to answer a question that would expose Lavan's scheme or require her to deny it. His concern for *emes* extended beyond his own conduct. He was unwilling even to cause another person to speak falsely. And precisely because of this sensitivity, the precautions he had taken proved inadequate. Rachel's surrender of the signs left him defenseless against Lavan's deception.

Leah's Rebuke

The Midrash records Yaakov's confrontation with Leah the following morning. He protested, "רמייתא בת רמאה" — a deceiver, daughter of a deceiver. Leah responded, "ומי לא קרו לך אבוך עשו ואמרת ליה אנא עשו בכורך?" — Did your father not call you Eisav, and did you not answer that you were Eisav, his firstborn? [Bereishis Rabbah 70:19]. Leah's response placed Yaakov's own conduct before him. He had obtained Yitzchak's blessings by presenting himself as Eisav, and now he had been deceived by a woman presenting herself as Rachel. Yet the two episodes were not equivalent. Yaakov's deception had been undertaken at Rivka's instruction, while Lavan's deception was motivated by his own interests. The question is therefore not whether Yaakov had acted improperly in obeying his mother. Rather, it is whether even a justified deception might carry a spiritual cost for someone whose essential character was *emes*.

A Justified Act That Still Requires a Tikkun

Chazal teach us that an act can be permitted, and even necessary, while nevertheless requiring a subsequent *tikkun*. We find an illuminating example in the halachos of *ta'anis chalom*. A person who has experienced a disturbing dream may be permitted to fast on Shabbos, notwithstanding the general prohibition against fasting on that day. Yet the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 288:4) rules that he must subsequently fast to atone for having diminished the enjoyment of Shabbos. The first fast was justified, but this did not eliminate the spiritual consequence of having departed from the ordinary obligation of *oneg Shabbos*. The same principle applies to Yaakov. He was obligated to obey Rivka and secure the blessings, but obtaining them required conduct fundamentally at odds with his defining attribute. His actions were justified by the circumstances; nevertheless, the departure from *middas ha'emes* required correction.

This distinction becomes particularly apparent when we examine Yaakov's words to Yitzchak. The Torah records his declaration, "אנכי עשו בכרך" — "I am Eisav, your firstborn" (Toldos 27:19). Rashi explains that the words could be understood separately: "אנכי המביא לך, ועשו הוא בכורך" — I am the one bringing you the food, and Eisav is your firstborn. Nevertheless, the words were intended to lead Yitzchak to believe that Eisav stood before him. When Yitzchak questioned how the food had been prepared so quickly, Yaakov answered, "כי הקרה ה' אלקיך לפני" — Hashem your G-d arranged it before me (27:20). The Midrash notes that Yitzchak was suspicious precisely because Yaakov invoked Hashem's Name, something Eisav was not accustomed to doing. Even when Yaakov avoided an explicit false statement, he was deliberately creating a false impression. That was the nature of the task Rivka had imposed upon him. But for a person whose spiritual identity was rooted in truth, even this justified departure from *emes* required a profound spiritual reckoning.

We must appreciate how exacting this standard is. The Gemara recognizes circumstances in which a departure from the literal truth is permissible, and Chazal teach that certain higher considerations may justify such conduct. But permission does not make falsehood itself desirable. A person devoted to truth must distinguish between an exceptional act demanded by necessity and the ordinary standard governing his life. Yaakov's deception of Yitzchak was an exception undertaken in obedience to Rivka. It could not become the model for his subsequent dealings with others. On the contrary, Yaakov's years with Lavan would demonstrate how profoundly he rejected falsehood, even when it would have been convenient to employ it himself.

Suffering Through Deception

This also helps explain why Yaakov's suffering was so closely connected with deception. Avraham and Yitzchak likewise experienced great trials, but Yaakov's suffering repeatedly arose from the dishonesty of those around him. Lavan deceived him in marriage and wages, and later his own sons concealed Yosef's fate from him. These experiences struck at the very attribute that defined him. A person whose life is devoted to *emes* experiences falsehood not

merely as an injustice but as a violation of the spiritual order by which he lives. Through these trials, Yaakov came to experience the full consequences of deception, while remaining steadfast in his own commitment to truth.

Grant Truth to Yaakov

The prophet describes Yaakov's defining quality in the words "תתן אמת ליעקב" — "Grant truth to Yaakov" (Michah 7:20). This does not mean that Yaakov never faced circumstances in which truth and duty appeared to conflict. On the contrary, his life demonstrates that even the greatest person may be required to act in a manner contrary to his natural spiritual character. But when such an exception becomes necessary, it must remain an exception. It cannot diminish one's reverence for the ideal itself. Yaakov obeyed Rivka because he was obligated to do so, but he did not thereby surrender his attachment to *emes*. His subsequent suffering was part of the correction through which that attachment was brought to its fullest expression.

We can now appreciate the significance of Yaakov's conduct toward Leah. He had once been required to create a false impression in order to fulfill his mother's instructions. Yet when confronted with the possibility of protecting himself by placing Leah in a position where she might have to lie, he refrained. He was unwilling to secure his own interests at the expense of another person's truthfulness. Even the painful experience of having been deceived by others did not weaken his standards. The one who had suffered so much from falsehood remained unwilling to employ it merely for his own protection.

The measure of *middas ha'emes*, therefore, is not simply whether a person refrains from lying when honesty is easy. It is whether his commitment to truth remains intact when truth becomes costly, when deception appears advantageous, and even when circumstances have previously required an exceptional departure from the ideal.

Yaakov's greatness lay in his understanding that the necessity of one act of deception did not justify making deception part of his character. **The blessings he received through a justified departure from truth became the occasion for a lifetime of suffering through which his absolute commitment to truth was revealed.** This is the deeper meaning of "תתן אמת ליעקב": Yaakov became the embodiment of *emes* not because truth was never tested in his life, but because even the most painful trials could not dislodge it from his character.

Adapted from a shiur given by my brother:

***Rabbi Moshe Shulman** on* **David's Deafening Silence (a Postscript to the Haftarah of Chayei Sarah)**

*This **shiur on Melakhim Alef just started** on zoom. For those who want to join this shiur or the zoom shiur on Yehoshua, **email Rabbi Shulman at moshe.shulman@gmail.com***

The haftarah of Chayei Sarah opens with the same description used of Avraham in the parashah — "זקן בא בימים" — but the story that follows raises a troubling question about David HaMelech's conduct in his final years.

Adoniyahu's Rebellion and David's Silence

Adoniyahu, one of David's sons, publicly declares, "אני אמלך" (Melachim I 1:5). He assembles chariots, horsemen, and fifty men to run before him, gathers influential supporters, including Yoav and Evyatar HaKohen, and arranges a public celebration at which he is proclaimed king. He invites the other royal princes but deliberately excludes Shlomo and those loyal to him.

Yet David says nothing.

Indeed, the Navi offers the remarkable observation, "ולא עצבו אביו מימיו לאמר מדוע ככה עשית" (1:6). Throughout Adoniyahu's life, David had never even challenged him by asking why he had acted as he did. His failure to confront his son was not simply the weakness of an elderly king. It reflected a longstanding reluctance to discipline him.

What happened to the David who had confronted Golyat, led Israel's armies, and established the kingdom? Why does he remain silent when his own son attempts to seize his throne?

The Shadow of Batsheva

Rabbi Moshe Shulman suggests that the answer may lie in the shadow cast over David's later years by the episode involving Uriah and Batsheva.

Consider the unusual opening of the haftarah. David's servants, concerned that the aging king cannot keep warm, arrange for Avishag HaShunamit to attend to him. Yet the Navi concludes, "והמלך לא ידעה" (1:4). David refuses to have an intimate relationship with her.

This need not be understood merely as evidence of David's physical decline. It can also be understood as an expression of his profound teshuva for the episode involving Batsheva. The king who had once succumbed to temptation now deliberately exercises restraint.

But the consequences of that earlier episode extended far beyond David's personal conduct. Following his sin, Natan HaNavi had declared, "ועתה לא תסור חרב מביתך עד עולם" (Shmuel II 12:10), and even more explicitly, "הנני מקים עליך רעה מביתך" (12:11). The sword would not depart from David's household, and adversity would arise from within his own family.

Avshalom's Rebellion

David subsequently experienced precisely such a calamity when his son Avshalom rebelled against him. Avshalom gathered supporters, entered Yerushalayim, and attempted to take the throne from his father.

David's initial response was extraordinary. Rather than immediately resist the rebellion, he fled Yerushalayim. When Tzadok sought to accompany him with the Aron, David instructed him to return it to the city, declaring, "אם אמצא חן בעיני ה' והשבני ... ואם כה יאמר לא חפצתי בך הנני יעשה לי כאשר טוב בעיניו" (Shmuel II 15:25–26).

If Hashem wished to restore him to the throne, David would return. But if Hashem no longer desired him as king, David was prepared to accept that judgment.

This was an extraordinary expression of *kabbalat hadin*. David understood that the rebellion within his family might be the fulfillment of Natan's prophecy. Having sinned, he was prepared to accept the consequences, even if those consequences meant surrendering his kingdom.

A Second Rebellion

And now, only a few years after Avshalom's rebellion and [very soon] after David's return to Yerushalayim, another son attempts to seize the throne.

The parallels are unmistakable. Like Avshalom, Adoniyahu surrounds himself with chariots, horsemen, and fifty runners. Like Avshalom, he attempts to establish his own kingship while his father is still alive. And once again, David remains silent.

Rabbi Shulman suggests that David may have understood Adoniyahu's rebellion in much the same way he had understood Avshalom's. Perhaps he saw this second rebellion as yet another consequence of his sin involving Uriah and Batsheva, another fulfillment of Natan's prophecy that adversity would arise from within his own household.

If so, **David's silence may have reflected not indifference or incapacity, but the very depth of his teshuva and his willingness to accept Divine judgment.**

This also helps explain why the Navi's portrait of David is so puzzling. Although Melachim describes an aging and seemingly passive king, Divrei HaYamim portrays David actively preparing for the Beit HaMikdash, organizing its future administration, and instructing Shlomo. David had not simply lost the capacity to lead. His silence in the face of Adoniyahu's rebellion demands another explanation.

Yet there was something profoundly troubling about that silence. Indeed, Natan and Batsheva seem unable to comprehend David's failure to respond. Natan tells Batsheva, "ואדנינו דוד לא ידע" (Melachim I 1:11), and Batsheva subsequently tells David himself, "ואתה אדני המלך לא ידעת" (1:18). Both assume that David must be unaware of Adoniyahu's actions. For how could David know that his son was openly attempting to seize the throne, in defiance of his promise concerning Shlomo, and nevertheless do nothing? Yet perhaps their assumption was mistaken. David may have known what was happening but remained silent because he understood it as another manifestation of Divine judgment.

Natan and Batsheva Intervene

Natan understood that Adoniyahu's attempted seizure of power threatened more than Shlomo's succession. He warned Batsheva, "ומלטי את נפשך ואת נפש בנך שלמה" (Melachim I 1:12). If Adoniyahu succeeded, Batsheva and Shlomo might lose their lives.

Natan therefore devised a carefully coordinated intervention. Batsheva would approach David first, reminding him of his oath that Shlomo would succeed him. Natan would then enter separately and confirm the seriousness of the situation.

Their appeals were deliberately different. Batsheva invoked David's personal promise: "אתה נשבעת בה' אלקיך לאמתך כי שלמה בנך ימלך אחרי" (1:17). Natan, however, did not mention the oath. Instead, he asked whether David had authorized Adoniyahu's succession without informing his trusted Navi: "אם מאת אדני המלך נהיה הדבר הזה ולא הודעת את עבדך מי ישב על כסא אדני המלך אחריו" (1:27).

Batsheva appealed to David's obligation to his family, while Natan confronted him with his responsibility as king.

David Speaks

And then, for the first time in the entire chapter, David speaks. "קראו לי לבת שבע" (1:28).

He summons Batsheva, reaffirms his oath concerning Shlomo, and declares, "כי כן אעשה היום הזה" (1:30). He will act that very day.

But what follows is even more remarkable.

Natan and Batsheva had sought David's intervention to establish Shlomo as his successor. David goes considerably further. He recognizes that merely announcing a successor may not stop a rebellion already underway. Adoniyahu has gathered powerful supporters and proclaimed himself king. Another declaration might simply leave two rival claimants to the throne.

David therefore orders Shlomo's immediate anointing and enthronement, while David himself is still alive. He commands, "והוא ישב על כסאי תחתי" (1:35). Shlomo will occupy David's throne in his place, not after David's death, but now.

It is an extraordinary decision, one that Natan and Batsheva apparently had not anticipated. David does not merely reaffirm his promise. He takes decisive action to ensure that it is fulfilled.

The king who had remained silent throughout the crisis suddenly assumes complete command.

And therein lies the deeper lesson of the haftarah.

Accepting Judgment Without Abandoning Responsibility

David's willingness to accept Divine judgment was an extraordinary expression of humility and teshuva. But accepting punishment does not mean surrendering one's responsibilities. There is a difference between accepting what Hashem has decreed for oneself and allowing others to suffer because one has failed to act.

Perhaps David's initial silence arose from his conviction that he must accept whatever consequences followed from his earlier sin. But when Natan and Batsheva confronted him with his obligations to Shlomo, his family, and the future of the kingdom, David recognized that *kabbalat hadin* did not require passivity.

His greatness lay not only in his willingness to accept Divine judgment, but in recognizing that even while accepting that judgment, he still had a responsibility to act.