בס״ד

INSIGHTS
Into The Weekly Parsha

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This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Avraham ben Kalman. "May his Neshama have an Aliya!"

11 KISLEV | Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig | PARSHAS VAYEITZEI

At Your Convenience

And he encountered the place and spent the night there (28:11).

Rashi (ad loc) cites the Gemara (*Brachos* 26b) which records the opinion that our prayer services were established by our forefathers: Avraham instituted *shacharis* while Yitzchak instituted *mincha*; the Gemara goes on to quote the above *possuk* as the source for Yaakov instituting the *tefillah* of *ma'ariv*.

The Gemara (*Brachos* 27b) records disagreements as to whether or not *ma'ariv* is an obligatory service. Maimonides says to follow the opinion that *ma'ariv* is not obligatory, and even cites that there is no chazzan's repetition by *ma'ariv* (*Yad Hilchos Teffilah* 9:9) as proof. It is important to note that even though Rambam rules that we follow the opinion that *ma'ariv* was not established as obligatory, every Jewish community worldwide now accepts it as obligatory (ibid 1:6).

Yet this notion that *ma'ariv* was established as being "optional" is difficult to understand. First, why should it be so? Second, Yaakov Avinu is referred to by Chazal as the greatest of the forefathers (he is called the — בחיר שבאבות the "chosen one of the forefathers"), and this is borne out by the fact that of the forefathers only Yaakov's children were all righteous. Therefore, it seems incongruous that the prayer service set up by Yaakov should be optional. How are we to understand this?

Imagine for a moment a dean of a school who has two worthy candidates to consider. One student scored perfectly on his entrance exams, brings a 4.0 grade average, and an impressive resume of community service. The second candidate is the son of his college roommate. Which candidate will have an easier time getting an appointment with the dean? Obviously, when his former college roommate calls him about seeing his son, he will make time for him right away.

The *Talmud Yerushalmi* (*Brachos* 1:1) quotes Rav Ami who likens *shemoneh esrei* to knocking on the door of the king. In other words, our forefathers did exactly the same thing as the dean's college roommate; they used the closeness of their relationship with Hashem to establish an "appointment" for their children to speak to Hashem. This is a remarkable opportunity that our *avos* bequeathed us; we can leverage their relationship with Hashem for the opportunity to knock on the door of the king at the appointed time.

Now consider a conversation where the king is asked to set an appointment for someone who might show up or might not show up. Obviously, one has to have a MUCH closer relationship to be able to request an appointment for a child who might not even come at the appointed time. This is why we needed Yaakov Avinu, the greatest of the *avos*, to set up *ma'ariv* — an optional appointment.

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Forefathers or Four Fathers

Rachel said to Leah, 'Please give me some of your son's dudaim.' She responded, 'Was taking my husband not enough for you? Now you also want to take my son's dudaim?' (30:14-15).

Rachel, who had been unable to conceive, pleads with her sister Leah to give her from the *dudaim* (an herb with curative properties for infertility) that Reuven had found. Leah's response should astonish anyone familiar with the history of Rachel and Leah. Her claim that Rachel had somehow "taken" her husband Yaakov seems outrageous. In fact, if it hadn't been for Rachel's modesty and compassion for her sister, Yaakov would never have even married Leah.

A quick recap: Lavan planned to deceive Yaakov, who desired to marry Rachel, by substituting Leah in her place. Yaakov had suspected that Lavan would try some subterfuge and prepared Rachel with a secret code to ensure that he was getting the right bride. Rachel gave the prearranged code to Leah, and this enabled Leah to become Yaakov's wife. Leah's charge in the *possuk*, that Rachel took her husband, seems to be the very definition of *chutzpah*! Shockingly, Rachel even seems to agree with her, and resorts to making a deal to get the *dudaim* in a barter arrangement. What is the basis for Leah's claim?

Furthermore, the Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 69:19) records an interesting exchange between Yaakov and Leah on the morning after their wedding, when Yaakov discovers that he's been deceived. He begins to yell at Leah, "You're a con artist, the daughter of a conman. How is it the whole evening when I called you Rachel you answered (pretending that you were Rachel)?" Leah retorts, "I learned it from you! Did not your father call you Eisav and you responded by pretending to be Eisav?"

Leah's response seems to be; "I can lie if you can lie." While it may sound clever, this isn't a valid argument and Chazal don't just record witty repartee. Moreover, Yaakov had every right to the *brachos* as he had acquired the rights that came with being the firstborn from Eisav. What possible justification did Leah have for deceiving Yaakov?

To understand this story, we must go back to Yitzchak Avinu's reasoning when he desired to give Eisav the *brachos*. After all, Yitzchak knew very well that Eisav had a propensity for evil and deception; when he asked Eisav to prepare food for him he implored him not to steal or bring something to him that wasn't kosher (see Rashi 27:4-5). So why did he wish to give Eisav the *brachos*?

Yitzchak had a plan for the Jewish nation; he foresaw a nation built on a partnership between Yaakov and Eisav. Yaakov would be the inside person handling Torah matters, society laws, and infrastructure, while Eisav would be the "outside" person; the one to handles wars, national prosperity, etc. Presumably, he felt that Yaakov would have enough influence on Eisav to keep him in line with the national mission. His plan was further apparent in their supposed brides to be; Eisav was to marry Leah and Yaakov was to marry Rachel (see 29:17 and Rashi ad loc).

Did you ever wonder about the incongruity of why the Jewish people have four foremothers but only three forefathers? Eisav was supposed to be one of the forefathers, but he rejected his birthright and the responsibility that came with it, and Yaakov assumed both the responsibility and the role that came with it. Hence, Eisav drops out and we only have three forefathers.

Once Yitzchak heard that Eisav had rejected his role in the Jewish people by selling the birthright, Yitzchak confirmed that Yaakov was legally entitled to the *brachos*. In essence, Yaakov didn't just pretend to be Eisav, he actually took on the role that Eisav would have had within the Jewish people.

This is exactly what Leah says to him on the morning after the wedding; "I pretended to be Rachel just as you pretended to be Eisav." In other words, once Yaakov took the role of Eisav within the Jewish people he **had** to marry Eisav's intended soul mate, Leah, as well. Leah is therefore justified in deceiving Yaakov in **exactly the same way** that Yaakov deceived his father.

Remarkably, Leah even compared her first child to Eisav (see Rashi on 29:32). Clearly, she was trying to channel whatever qualities Eisav was supposed to contribute to the Jewish people through her children, however, she was attempting to do it in a rectified state. Yaakov chastised his sons Shimon and Levi when they attacked Shechem (see Rashi on 49:5) for displaying the character trait of their uncle Eisav.

This is also why Leah could claim Yaakov as her husband and be upset that Rachel had literally monopolized all of his time. Once he took on Eisav's role, Yaakov also had the responsibility of being a proper husband to Leah in place of Eisav, but Leah felt that she was being mistreated and not getting the proper attention due to a wife.

Leah felt that Yaakov was her proper husband, not because he was duped into marrying her, but because he replaced Eisav as her true soulmate. Therefore, Leah felt that it was Rachel's fault that she was unjustifiably ignored as a wife. This is the reason she refused to give her the *dudaim*.

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