



Parashat Vayetze



English version

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## HOW TO CONTROL YOUR EGO

A Jew once said to his Rebbe, "I want happiness". The Rebbe said, First remove "I", that's Ego. And then remove "Want", that's Desire. See, now all your left with is Happiness!

Once, someone sent the Lubavitcher Rebbe a letter. "I have no parnassah. I have no shalom bayit. I have no motivation to learn, pray or do kindness. I can't seem to find my life's purpose. I would appreciate if the Rebbe would bless me and let me know what I am doing wrong." When he opened the reply, he saw that the Rebbe had sent him back the same letter, but he circled the first letter – I – of every sentence, in red. *The problem is that "I" is the beginning of every statement in your life.*

Your worst enemy is your ego. How so? The ego is the drive behind perfectionism, and it demands instant success, like expecting that you understand the Gemara 100%, the first time around. It's that voice that says that you'll look silly or that people will think you're strange, if you do something different or new. Ego makes you difficult to deal with in interpersonal relationships and in business. It makes you overconfident and highly sensitive. It makes you ignore your own flaws, while you focus on the flaws of others. Ego will hold you back from validating others and their opinions. In basketball, your ego tries to make you play like James or Jordan, instead of being realistic with yourself and your team. In Baseball, it makes you go for a homerun, a triple or a double, and not just to do your job and get on base. As a writer, your ego makes it hard for you to erase your darling scribbles, the fat of the content that needs

to be trimmed. Ego is what holds you back from letting go of things that don't work. In one sentence, *Ego makes you take up too much space.*

The secret of how to transcend your ego is hidden in this week's Parasha, in a Hassidic twist on the passuk. וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּעַר שְׁבַע וַיְלֶךְ הָרְגֵה: וַיִּפְגַע בַּמְּקוֹם וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּעַר שְׁבַע וַיְלֶךְ הָרְגֵה: וַיִּפְגַע בַּמְּקוֹם וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּעַר שְׁבַע וַיְלֶךְ הָרְגֵה: וַיִּפְגַע בַּמְּקוֹם וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּעַר שְׁבַע וַיְלֶךְ הָרְגֵה: And Yaakov left Beer Sheva, and he went to Charan... Rashi mentions the Talmud that tells us that *when Yaakov reached Charan, Yaakov said to himself, Could it be that I passed over a place where my fathers prayed, and I did not pray there? When he decided to return, the land jumped ahead, and suddenly וַיִּפְגַע בַּמְּקוֹם. He reached "the place", the place of the Akedat Yitzhak, Har Hamoriah. HKBH said, This Tzaddik came to My Hotel, and he will leave without sleeping here? Immediately, G-d had the sun set. (Chullin 91b)*

Yaakov dreamt of a ladder upon which the angels who represent Yaakov's enemy rise for the amount of years that they will be in power, and then, how G-d brings them down. וַיִּיקָץ יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁנֵנתוֹ וַיֵּאמֶר אֲכֹלֵי־גֶשֶׁת׃ וַיִּקָּלַח בַּמְּקוֹם הַהוּא וַאֲנָכִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי וַיִּיקָץ יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁנֵנתוֹ וַיֵּאמֶר אֲכֹלֵי־גֶשֶׁת׃ וַיִּקָּלַח בַּמְּקוֹם הַהוּא וַאֲנָכִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי And Yaakov awoke from his sleep and he said, behold YKVK is in this place, and I did not know it. Rashi explains these words of Yaakov. *Had I known, I would not have slept in this holy place.*

Didn't Yaakov come back from Charan to pray at the place of Akedat Yitzchak? How could he say "I would not have slept here, had I known how holy this place is?" And, another question. Why does it say, וַאֲנָכִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי And I, I did not know? The words וַאֲנָכִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי, alone, mean I did not know. What



is the meaning of the seemingly superfluous word ואנכי? The superfluous “I”?

The Panim Yafot writes an angelic answer, an answer we can learn from the angels of Kedusha in Mussaf. When the angels ask the question אִי־הוּ מְקוֹם כְּבוֹדוֹ, *Where is the place of His Honor?* or, *Where is G-d, so that we can praise Him?* The answer is, *Where is He not?* וְאֵינְהוּ כְּבוֹדוֹ. *The whole world is full of His Honor.* When you look for G-d, you will notice that there is no place that He is not. Only then, you begin to realize אֵינְהוּ לֹא יִדְעָתִי, that there is no place for אנכי, there is no space for ego.

The Midrash Rabba quotes R Yossi Bar Chalafta, *that HKBH sits and makes ladders, lifts this one and lowers the other.* (Vayikra Rabbah 8) G-d is busy all day, מְשַׁפֵּיל גָּאִים עַד־י אֶרֶץ. וּמַגְבִּיהַ שְׁפָלִים עַד. After Yaakov saw the ladder prophecy and realized the ladder philosophy of life, and how G-d raises up the humble and humbles the haughty, he realized that there is no place in the world for “I”, because everything is G-d. When you realize how the whole world is בֵּית אֱלֹהִים G-d’s House, then egocentricity vanishes like smoke. וְכֵן הִרְשָׁעָה בְּלֵהָ כַעֲשׂוֹן תְּכֵלֵהָ as if it had never been there to begin with.

What happens when we adopt this mindset? What happens when you realize that you have no idea on which "ladder" you are on, where you are on the ladder, and if G-d is going to flip your ladder at any moment? You stop being so defensive. You begin to realize how it’s not about you. You stop taking yourself too seriously. You become someone that everyone wants to work with. You begin to build real relationships.

Once you have reached the emotional plateau of אֵינְהוּ לֹא יִדְעָתִי, you are in total control of your emotions. Once you recognize כְּבוֹדוֹ מְלֵא כְּלֵי־הָאָרֶץ, even when you have the right to get angry, you will be in control of how you respond. Our Rabbis tell

us that one of the things that was so great about Yaakov was that even when he had the right to get angry, he was totally in control of what he said, felt and did. The first mindboggling incident was when Lavan led Leah to the chuppa instead of Rachel. Yaakov did not even get angry at Lavan! He just asked Lavan why he had tricked him!! He got angry at Lavan for suspecting that he took his idols and for running after him, but instead of getting into a fist fight with him, he only explained his position with logic and conciliation. (See Bereshit Rabbah 74) He got angry at Rachel for cursing herself and for talking in a way as if Yaakov was G-d, and as if he could provide her with children. He got angry at his 13-year-old sons Shimon and Levi for shrewdly killing out the city of Shechem, and putting Yaakov and the rest of the family in danger, but held on to his rebuke until his last day. And he kept his rebuke of Reuven until his last day. One of the hardest moments of Yaakov’s life was holding back his anger at Yosef for carrying out his plan to have Yaakov come to Egypt to bow down to him, so that Yosef can fulfill his prophetic dream. The only way that Yaakov was able to hold on to this anger was by saying Kriat Shema. (See He’Emek Davar) That was how he was able to overcome his אנכי.

Fighting your ego is so confusing; it is like trying to think about nothing. The harder you try, the further you get from your goal. Even a desire to be spiritual can be self-centered. Even if you are fighting your ego, it's still all about you. As long as you are taking yourself too seriously, you are feeding and playing into your ego's hands. The only way for us to balance the ego is through stepping up to a higher plateau via prayer and understanding what we are saying. Through prayer, you realize that the whole world is G-d. And through prayer you realize that there is no room for אנכי, for ego, to exist.

Here are the Selfie Steps- the Torah based Self Help steps that will help you control your ego.

- 1- Be grateful for the little things you have, and compliment others for the little things they do.
- 2- Acknowledge and accept all your mistakes.
- 3- See the big picture. We're all on this planet for a purpose, and we all have a different purpose.

- 4- Stop bragging! According to Einstein, “More the knowledge lesser the ego, lesser the knowledge more the ego.”
- 5- Look at ego as if it is a voice inside of you, but not you.

### Swimming in Silence

*Rachel acquired the skill of silence, so that even when her father was giving her shower gifts to Leah, she kept quiet. Therefore, her descendants all mastered silence. Binyamin knew that the tribes sold his only brother as a slave. And he kept his mouth shut. This is why her son Binyamin's stone on the High Priest's breastplate was Yashpeh. Yesh – there is; Peh – a mouth. This is why her descendant Shaul became king, for his modesty in not telling his uncle that he became king. This is where her descendent, Esther, had the power to keep from revealing to Achashverosh that she was a Jewess. Leah, on the other hand, took the skill of praise and admitting. She praised G-d for giving her Yehuda, so her descendants followed. Yehuda admitted his embarrassing act. King David praised G-d in Tehillim. (See Rabenu Bachye)*

Silence is referred to as a skill elsewhere. *What skill does a person need to learn? To make himself like a mute. (Chullin 89a)* This brings to mind the four monks. *Four monks decided to meditate, silently, without speaking for two weeks. By nightfall on the first day, the candle began to flicker and then went out. The first monk said, “Oh, no! The candle is out.” The second monk said, “Aren't we not supposed to talk?” The third monk said, “Why must you two break the silence?” The fourth monk laughed and said, “Ha! I'm the only one who didn't speak.”* Isn't silence a path to pain and self-affliction? How is it referred to in the Midrash as a skill?

Judaism maintains that when silence is balanced in a healthy way, silence can also be a path to wisdom and self-introspection. As Albert Einstein once said, *I think 99 times and find nothing. I stop thinking, swim in silence, and the truth comes to me.*

Let us replay that. How does one find the truth? By swimming in silence. How does one swim in silence? By stopping to think. How does one stop

thinking? By thinking 99 times and finding nothing. Silence is needed when you realize that your speech, your inner dialogue, is not getting you anywhere. When words are not doing their job. Of clarification. Of communication. Of persuasion. Of appreciation. Of praise. That is when it is time to swim in silence.

My best articles come to me when I give up trying to lay down words to direct my train of thought. I swim in silence. The ideas percolate in my mind... And then I realize the real truth of what I wanted to say and how I want to say it. *סייג לחכמה שתיקה. The fence of wisdom is silence.* And when you want the real truth, the underlying truth, it comes only when you stop talking and thinking.

If we were to make the analogy between communication and driving a car, Silence does not mean that you are in Park. Silence is a Brake to use, to have safe driving. If you do not have the wisdom of how to use your brakes, your life is in danger. Hence, the words of King David *החיים והמוות ביד הלשון (Mishlei 18;21): Two representatives stood in front of Andrinus, the Ceasar. One was of speech. The other was of silence. The king said to Speech, “Say why you are so important!” He said, “Because without Speech, Kings won't be able to rule. Ships won't be able to sail. Brides won't be able to be praised. Without speech, commerce would be impossible”. The king said, “Good points! Now, Silence, it is your turn.”*

*Before Silence even got a chance to open its mouth to speak, Speech slapped his face... “King, Speech can use speech to praise speech. But how can Silence use speech to praise silence!?! To that, Silence said, “Silence that is praised is not total silence. It is the wisdom of how to be careful when speaking. As King Solomon said, “קרב דברים לא יחדל-פֿשע והשד שפתי מֿשפיל (Mishle 10; 19) (Orchot Tzaddikim).*

This balance between speech and silence is something that we see throughout Rachel's life and the life of her descendants. All of Rachel's struggles in life, and the struggles of her children, were related to balancing silence with speech. Between not saying something, to speaking up. Between hiding identity and knowing when to reveal it. Knowing when to admit, or when to rebuke. I would need another whole article just to go through all the cases of Rachel, Binyamin, Yosef, Shaul, Yehonatan, Michal, Mordechai and Esther.

The times that silence is important are listed by the Orchot Tzaddikim. Here are the Stop Signs. 1. *Accepting G-d's Judgement.* 2. *When being degraded by others.* 3. *In Shul during prayers-Silence there is the ultimate modesty, for it brings focus to prayers.* 4. *When sitting amongst wiser people. This way you can learn from them.* 5. *When there is no one around you than can correct you... When in doubt, and you can ask someone wiser than you, do not keep silence.*

It is interesting to see how, in all the episodes that silence was dealt with in the frame of these 5 Golden Silence Rules, the outcome was always very successful. But whenever these rules were broken, the price was too heavy. This is why winning in the game of silence is an art.

The belief of the Rasha is Lavan's belief – *My power lies in my hands* – יְשִׁילְאֵל יָדַי (Rabbenu Bachye.) But Rachel's way, the way to swim in silence, the way to stop thinking, is by believing that any power that I have or don't have is fine, because it is all from G-d. King David said, לָךְ הַמְלִיכָה תְהַלֵּלָהּ (Tehillim 65:2) *To you, G-d, silence is praise.* How so? There is no greater praise to G-d than accepting Him, even when you cannot comprehend or explain His ways...

It is so interesting how Silence, when accepting G-d's decree, is this art of trust in G-d, this power of humility that is able to make everything turn out

#### A JEW OF ANOTHER LEVEL

Rachel gave her sister, Leah, the Simanim. She taught her the laws of family purity, of challah and of lighting candles. She could not bear to see her sister go through

for the best. *If this is the father G-d gave me, I accept. If my sister Leah is walking down to the Chuppah with my husband and I cannot do anything about it, I accept. If my husband doesn't understand me the one time I said how much I wanted a child, I accept. And, if my G-dly husband decided to bury me on the road, I won't even ask him to be buried in Maarat Hamachpela. I will give my burial spot to my sister.* Rachel accepted her husband's decision to bury her "on the road" and not next to him in prime location, in Maarat Hamachpela. In the end, in 2018 her grave is the Jewish grave that is most visited in the whole world... Why?

When someone has the power of silence, they just open their mouth to pray, and before they even start praying, G-d answers their prayers. מְנַעֵי קוֹלֶךָ מְבַכִּי On the way down to Exile, and during the Exile, every second of prayer is precious. We cannot wait for Leah's eyes to fill with tears. So Rachel is in the right place, in an accessible place, so that if she just has a tremble in her voice, G-d says, *Rachel! Stop! I don't need you to pray! I can read your mind! I'll answer your heart's wishes, even before a tear wells up...*

And this is the way we can become true Tzaddikim. As Ralph Mahana once taught me in the name of R' Levi Yitzchak Berdichever – פ ע ס ז. If you want to become a Tzaddik (letter Tzaddik), you need to learn how to close (letter Samech is a closed letter – ס) your eyes (Ayin is also Eye) and your mouth (Peh is also Mouth)...

The greatest communicators were masters of silence, knowing when to use it and for how long. The greatest comedians, the greatest musicians and performers, were all masters of silence. G-d, Himself, runs the world in silence. The movement of the sun and moon, all of nature, grass, trees, it is all so silent. That is how G-d communicates with us and the way we connect to nature and G-d. Only after we connect through this silence can we pray to Him a focused prayer.

the embarrassment of Yaakov's discovering that it was Leah, not Rachel, under the chuppah.

We see later in the parasha, in the Dudaim episode, ותאמר לה המעט קחתה את אישי ולקחת גם את דיודאי בגי ותאמר



רַחֵל לָבַן יִשְׁקֶב עִמָּו הַלַּיְלָה תַּחַת דִּוְדָאֵי בְגָדֵי (30; 15) Reuven brought home “dudaim”, mandrakes, a plant whose root resembles the form of a child. (see Ibn Ezra. I saw a picture of it. It’s actually very cool.) It is a Segulah for having children. Rachel asked Leah for this Segulah, and Leah said to her sister Rachel, the sister who gave her the signs that Yaakov was waiting for, “*Not only did you take my husband, you also want to take my son’s dudaim? And Rachel said, That is why Yaakov will sleep with you tonight, in exchange for your son’s dudaim/mandrakes.* Why didn’t Rachel answer back – Excuse me!!! **I took YOUR husband?!?!!**

R’ Shwadron explains that at the wedding, Rachel never told Leah that she had already agreed on giving certain signs – simanim – to Yaakov to assure him of her identity, and that these laws were the simanim. She just told her, if you are marrying him, you have to know these Jewish laws. For all the years they were married together, Rachel never let Leah feel, even for a minute, that she, herself, was Yaakov’s first choice!!!

This explains why, at that point, *G-d remembered Rachel’s good deed for her sister, and G-d opened her womb.* What? What happened now? What about the last 6 years of Rachel’s self sacrifice? The answer is that only now, Rachel’s self sacrifice and G-dliness reached a new level: not only did she give her sister her intended, not only did she hide her relationship with him from her, but even when her sister Leah told her, *Not only do you want to take my husband....* She just accepted what Leah was saying and went along with the conversation!!!

After learning this explanation of the story, Rachel Imenu, in my eyes, is a totally different Rachel. A whole new perspective of our Matriarch. Her self sacrifice was not a one timer, a one off. Her Avodah was a constant. We can learn from this, perfecting the good deeds we do, and taking them to a new level of serving G-d. And ultimately become the Jew we want to be.

We are all here to serve G-d in some way or another. And we all need merits. And so much goodness that is in store for us, is dependent on those good things that we do. And sometimes, it is just a drop more effort, a drop more perfection of serving G-d, that tips the scales in our favor. It is sometimes just that one thing that makes the whole difference.

Sometimes when attempting to take my service to G-d to a new level, I get this feeling. “Yosef, you gave up so much already! How much more self sacrifice do you need?” The answer is, that what we think we are sacrificing is actually not so much of a sacrifice. When we do the right thing, we are not really giving anything

up, losing out on anything, or sacrificing. Allow me to explain.

Rav Zev Getzel points to something mindboggling. Imagine that Rachel would not have told Leah the simanim. Yaakov would discover Lavan’s scam at the wedding, and tell her that this is obviously some sort of misunderstanding, and take Rachel instead. And then what? Then, Rachel would not have the merit of self sacrifice, the merit for which G-d would open her womb!!! Now, fast forward. So, they would stay married for 10 years, and then Yaakov would see that they are not having children. He would end up divorcing Rachel and marrying Leah!!! And then, *Rachel* would end up marrying Esav!

It turns out that Rachel’s self sacrifice was actually her saving grace. This is so powerful, so transforming, in so many ways!

The everlasting, ironic, and sometimes annoying truth is, that the only choice we have in life is between doing the right or the wrong thing. Whatever is going to happen, is going to happen anyway. So we are not sacrificing those things that are important to us when we give them up for doing the right thing, because whatever our destiny is, is going to be our destiny anyway. We can only make our destiny better, when we do the right thing.

The Chafetz Chaim says that it can’t be, that a person who sits in Kollel, or another year or two in Yeshiva, trusting G-d and lasting as long as his Rabbis recommend him to stay in learning, will end up losing out because he did the right thing. This is because, we are so dependent on G-d’s Plan. And when G-d sees that we are moser nefesh, that we give up things that are important to us for His sake, He “gives up” things for us. He is, so to speak, moser nefesh for us. And when we are moser nefesh, we will find that not only did we not lose, but the very thing that we thought we lost, what we thought we sacrificed, turned out to be our greatest asset!

In the area of coaching, this is of key importance. The 6 P rule, Proper prior planning prevents poor performance, is only true for performance, not for destiny. All we can plan for in life is personal performance, aiming to be the best people we can be. But our destiny, the outcome, is entirely in G-d’s Hands. All we have to do in this world is to ask ourselves what it is that G-d wants from us, according to His Torah. Not to live with long term plans, unless they are plans for our own performance. Planning is good for me when I use it to clarify what my expectations are from myself. It is not effective when it builds inside me expectations of G-d. This is a fine line, and a very important one to remember.

## GLOOM

I've been trying to keep to the Segula of R Chaim Palachi for the month of Kislev. If you don't complain from Rosh Chodesh Kislev until the 8<sup>th</sup> day of Chanukah, you are promised to have a miracle happen to you that year. I believe that the reason why the month of Kislev is the month not to complain is because the essence of the month of Kislev is about being a K'sil, a simpleton. Believing in G-d, accepting that we totally do not understand what is happening in our lives, and why. We are just too simple to understand G-d's unfathomably wise plans. If we complain about our situation, it is because we don't want to accept consciously or subconsciously G-d's ultimate plan over our plan. Recently, a friend pointed out to me that we spend more time in life planning how we want to live than we do enjoying and appreciating the life that G-d has given us. Because we are busy "outsmarting" G-d.

Imagine that you get a tap on your shoulder. You turn around, and no one is there. And then, you hear a booming, Heavenly voice, that says, "It's Me, G-d. Make no mistakes about your life. You will never be rich. You will never be famous. Your life will be full of the regular struggles that the regular people go through." How would you feel? Would you feel calm, knowing that it is not worth trying so hard to change your fate and make more money than you will ever need, or trying to impress other people, to receive their validation?

You see, so many times in life, we want to outsmart G-d, and not accept the life that G-d has given us. We think that the difficulties that we have to deal with – the "dirt" – are a result of our life's being "messed up". We don't see the good in the gloom. But the truth is that part of growth is to accept the dirt, because that dirt, that fertilizer, is what we need to grow to become the better person we are meant to be. And the only way we can really grow from the gloom is by accepting that G-d gave us this gloom so that we will be able to grow in some way.

R Yitzchak Fanger told the following parable: There was once a mouse that was being chased by a cat. The mouse shrieked, as he ran for his life. Elephant's big ears picked up the squeal of the mouse, and, with his big heart, he came to the rescue. With his long trunk, He snorted up a big blob of mud and shot the mud over Mouse, burying him, hiding him from sight. Cat ran right over Mouse, not knowing where Mouse disappeared.

Lesson no. 1. When you are covered in mud, many times it's for your best.

Then, Mouse started to move around; he was able to get one foot out, and his tail poked a hole out of the mud that covered his body. He started wiggling, and then... Cat spotted him. Cat came over, pulled Mouse out of the mud and ate him alive.

Lesson 2. Not always when someone pulls you out of the mud is it for your best.

A lot of times in life, we find ourselves covered in darkness. We have a hard time figuring out why things are not going as expected, everything looking confusing. We are similar to that mouse that – all of a sudden – got a blob of mud thrown at him, not knowing where it came from and why. We try to escape the gloom, but things don't get better.

Yaakov's life was a life of hardships. A life of darkness. G-d brought the darkness on Yaakov on that first night after his having learned for fourteen years without sleep. Suddenly. Because the tests a person has in life, the darkness one has to go through, are always a sudden change. We are never really ready for the gloomy days. So, what can we do, instead of complaining? At that moment when darkness came upon Yaakov, he set up the Arvit prayer. Because in the darkness, things that look bad can actually be your greatest benefit. Arvit, the prayer of Erev, has hidden in the root, the word Arev, or sweet. Because many of the sweet things in life come from the darkest places.

*להגיז בבוקר הסדך ואמונתך בלילות*, *To say over your kindness in the morning, and your faith at night.* Our Rabbis refer to Night time as a time of faith, a time when a staff and a snake can be confused. Why do the Rabbis use staff and snake as an example? Because the staff is something that can help you, something you can lean on, and snake is something that can kill you. The things that look to us like they are great for us, might be the worst things for us, and the things that look like they are the worst things for us, can be our salvation. Night time, when times are bleak, is the opportunity to thank G-d, to display your trust that the dirt that you need to deal with, is (even more than) okay.

Moshe asked G-d the age-old question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" *הראני נא את דרכך*. And G-d answered him, *וראית אחרתי לפני לא יראו*, "You can see Me from My back". G-d told Moshe that if he ever wanted to see Him and understand Him, that he should

look back, **גִּזְאוֹר**— by looking into the past, one can now understand things that, a few years ago, made no sense. Yaakov's life, as he was going through it, looked so dark. But if we reexamine it from the end to the beginning, he needed to run away from Esav, he needed to be tricked with Leah, he needed to deal with Lavan, and Yosef needed to be kidnapped.

It is interesting how the month of Kislev, the month of being simple and accepting G-d, always comes out during the time of Yaakov's life. Yaakov was the

epitome of simplicity. **אִישׁ תָּם יוֹשֵׁב אֹהֶלִים**. *A man that was simple, who sat in the tents of Torah and Tefillah.* If one wants to stay in learning, the only way is by mastering simplicity. It does not say that Yaakov was a **תָּם**, a simpleton. It says that Yaakov was an **אִישׁ תָּם**, a man that controlled his simplicity. He bowed down to Esav, instead of trying to fight him. He accepted his father-in-law as a trickster, and just dealt with the situation, mastering his simplicity.

## HOW TO ATTRACT YOUR SOULMATE

Prayer. It can be the most emotionally intense part of your day, or just something that you need to get over in order to get on to the next thing. It all depends on your approach to prayer, how much you believe in it, and your state of mind.

If I would advertise a course, "Lessons from Leah on how to attract your soul mate", I would have a full crowd. If I would advertise a course, "Lessons from Leah on how to pray your eyes out", I would have less of a crowd. But that is how you attract your soul mate. By praying your eyes out.

My students asked me, "Rabbi, how will I know that the girl I want to marry is actually my soul mate?" I asked them, "What's the difference if she is or she is not? If you love her and have the same goals in life, why do you need to know that she is your soul mate?" They have no response. I do not understand how a person will ever know if his soul mate is his soul mate.

The yeshiva guys laugh about Beit Yaakov seminary girls. When you ask a Beit Yaakov girl who she wants to marry, the answer is always 'Reb Chaim'. "While she is in seminary, all pumped up by her teachers to marry a Torah Scholar on a high level of learning, from the best yeshivah, she wants R' Chaim Brisker, who learnt in the Brisker Yeshiva. From Shidduchim until the first child, she wants to marry R' Chaim Na'eh. She wants him to be **נָאֵה**, good looking for the pictures. And after she has her first child, she wants to be married to R' Chaim Ozer, the one who knows how to help out (**עוֹזֵר**) when she needs him."

Life has different stages. Each stage has its needs and desires. And in some way, each stage has its soul mate. If you want your spouse to fit the needs and desires of your present stage, you need to pray that your spouse be your soul mate, today. You need to pray that as of and for today, your spouse will be compatible.

One of the common questions about prayer is, *Why do I need to pray if G-d can read my mind and knows what I want from Him? He knows what we are going to say even before we know what we are going to say!* The answer is the law of Cause and Effect. G-d did not bring rain, or let things grow, until Adam was created and prayed for it. Even though grass and trees were "supposed to" appear, G-d did not bring the rain until the creation of Adam, a creature that was a **רוּחַ מְלֵלָא**, one that could pray to G-d. G-d might not let you enjoy that life that you are "supposed to" have, until you pray for it. True, G-d does not need our prayer, for He knows what we are going to say before we even say it. But we need G-d, we need his generosity, so we need to beg. We need to show appreciation when our prayers are answered. This law of prayer in creation is the law of Cause and Effect. People think that a soul mate is a set thing. But just because you are supposed to get something in life, or you are supposed to get married to a specific person, it does not mean it is going to happen. You need to pray to bring down the Shefa, the abundance, from Above.

But, in this week's parasha, we find something even more amazing. Yaakov and Esav were twins born to Rivka. Rachel and Leah were both twins born to Rivka's brother, Lavan. Leah was born a few moments before Rachel. Rachel and Leah were told about their first cousins, and that the first born is destined to the first born, and the younger one destined to the younger one. Leah, who was older than Rachel, sat at the crossroads asking about Esav's deeds, and was very disturbed about her findings. She cried, she fasted. She would cry so much that, the Torah tells us, her eyes were weary. She prayed so hard that the tears in her eyes made her eyes soft.

There is a Sephardic custom for the grandmothers to make some sort of high pitched "Li Li Li" war cry at joyous occasions. This cry originates from the cries made by the townsfolk at Yaakov's wedding, when

Lavan switched Leah for Rachel while the lights were out. The townsfolk tried to inform Yaakov of Lavan's scheme to exchange the sisters, (Li, Li for Leah) but Yaakov had his Simanim, the laws of Family Purity that he had taught Rachel, on which he would test his Bride the night of the wedding. Rachel taught those laws to Leah, to prevent her older sister from being embarrassed. The morning after the wedding, Yaakov found that he had actually married Leah, not Rachel. What do you think Leah's excuse was?

Leah responded, "I learnt from you! When your father asked, "Who are you?", you said "I am Esav!" You lied to get the Berachot! So did I! I lied in order to have a chance to be a Mother of the Jewish Nation!" What type of "excuse" was that, for doing such a thing to Yaakov, tricking him the night of the wedding?

When Leah had her firstborn, she called him Reuven. The Torah tells us why. כי ראה ה' בעניי *Because G-d saw my suffering.* But our Rabbis tell us another reason why she called him Reuven. ראו מה בין בני לבין בן המי *Look at the difference between my son and the son of my father-in-law,* Esav. "Esav sold his firstborn rights, and still he stalked Yaakov, intending to kill him. My son Reuven's firstborn rights will be taken from him for something he will do with good intention (for moving his father's bed), and still, he will save his younger brother Yosef's life, despite Yosef's getting a double portion of the inheritance." How do we reconcile this Midrash with the reason the Torah gives us?

The answer is phenomenal. Leah prayed so hard that it says in the Tanhuma, בדין – she *deserved* Yaakov. How is that so? Even though her soul mate was Esav, for she and he were both first born, she prayed so hard that Esav ended up selling his firstborn rights to Yaakov! So, it turns out that now, Yaakov is her soul mate, not Esav!

That is why she mentioned Esav's selling his firstborn rights. And this is why she explained her actions, the morning after the wedding, to Yaakov, saying that by having taken the rights of the firstborn, he got the blessings, and he said that he was in Esav's place. If so, explained Leah, I am supposed to be married to you, and now YOU are my soul mate. On the other hand, the Tanhuma teaches that Rachel did not feel a need to pray; she felt that Yaakov was meant to be hers, so her marriage ended up being not such smooth sailing. (See M. Tanchuma)

It all boils down to realizing that without prayer, we have nothing. With it, we have the whole world. I remember a certain bachur that I got to know when I was learning here in Israel as a yeshiva student. This boy had no tact. He made unintelligent comments, got into your life, and did not know how to let people alone. The guys said that "he was like bubble gum stuck in your hair". He ended up realizing what people thought about him and decided to pray for forty days, in a row, at the Kotel and ask G-d "for a brain". After the 40 days, he started learning, for the first time in his life. He finished Massechet Megillah within a month and a half, and his family flew in to join him for the first siyum he ever made in his life. For that matter, it was the first achievement he had ever made in his life. He moved up and up; he got to the top shiur, got a top shidduch and lived happily ever after. From praying at the Kotel forty days for a brain.

G-d wants our prayers. He wants us to pray, so that He can give us what we are "supposed to" have. And prayer is so powerful that it forces things our way in life, not out of mercy, but out of cause and effect! בדין!

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**AND**

**L'ilui nishmas Yosef Meir ben Avraham Simcha Binam**

