

## דרכים בפרשה ויצא

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### ואחר ילדה בת ותקרא את שמה דינה

*And afterwards she gave birth to a daughter and she called her Dina.*

Rashi famously explains the name *Dina*: Leah was *dan* herself. She took stock of the situation. With only twelve shevatim destined to emerge, if this unborn child would be a seventh son of hers, that would leave Rachel with only one — fewer than even the two sons granted to each of the maidservants. Leah therefore davened that the child should be a girl, sparing her sister any humiliation.

Still, the choice of name seems puzzling. If the essence of Leah's greatness is that she was *mevater*, willingly giving up the *zechus* of another *shevet* out of sensitivity to her sister — why not call her *Vitra*, expressing that self-sacrifice? That was the real *nisayon*: relinquishing the possibility of another *shevet* bearing her name.

R' Yaakov Nekritz explains that Leah, in fact, captured the most profound point with the name *Dina*. Human nature is that when we see someone in distress, we instinctively offer help. All the more so when it is a sister's honor at stake — a sister who had once given up the *simanim* at her own wedding to spare Leah embarrassment. Of course Leah would be *mevater*. The refusal to take that extra *shevet* was almost obvious.

What was extraordinary — what defined her *gadlus* — is that Leah *judged herself*. She placed herself inside Rachel's world. She imagined the shame, felt the pain, and made the *cheshbon* as if she were Rachel: "If I have another son, where will that leave her?" That inner *din*, that ability to shift perspectives and genuinely stand in another's place, is what made the *tefillah* natural and almost inevitable.

Rav Nissan Kaplan explained this with a *mashal*. When a father comes to visit his sons, each one naturally wants the father to stay with him. Hearing that Tatty is staying by the other brother can genuinely hurt. Yet if one pauses and places himself in his brother's *matzav* — realizing that the brother is going through a difficult period and could truly benefit from having the father close — the sting disappears. Once you stand in the other's shoes, doing the right thing becomes simple; the real challenge is the inner shift, not the outward act.

This, too, was Leah's greatness. She stepped into Rachel's reality, understood her pain, and from there the rest flowed. The name *Dina* reflects that inner judgment — the ability to see through another's eyes — which ultimately led her to daven that the child be a daughter, preserving Rachel's honor.

Reflecting further on this *middah*, we can now turn to Rachel. She, too, displayed a life of extraordinary self-sacrifice. Rachel went above and beyond for Leah, giving her the secret *simanim* of marriage so as not to embarrass her. But why did Leah comply with Lavan's scheme, effectively causing Rachel to lose Yaakov?

One explanation is that Leah, through *nevuah*, knew she was destined to be one of the *Imahos*. She had davened for Yaakov's protection and trusted that Hashem's plan would unfold correctly. She understood that Hashem would care for Rachel as well and accepted the situation without question.

Another approach — not based on the Midrash — is that Leah may have been unaware of the entire scheme. Yaakov had arranged to marry Rachel, but Lavan intervened. Rachel, realizing that Lavan would swap the *kallah* and that Leah could be embarrassed, gave Leah the identifying signs. For seven years Yaakov worked for Rachel — years that felt to him like only a few days — sending gifts and tokens along the way. Rachel discreetly handed these to Leah, saying each time, "Your *chassan* sent this for you." Only at the end did she give Leah the signs, explaining that Yaakov wanted to confirm it was truly Leah and not a mistake, and Leah may never have realized that Rachel was making a sacrifice.

This also clarifies Leah's reaction to the *duda'im*: "Is it not enough that you took my husband, and now you also want my flowers?" How could she protest? Rachel had ceded everything to protect her; of course, if Leah had been unaware of Rachel's selflessness, her reaction is understandable.

The Gemara in Kesubos (33b) states: **אמר רב: אי למלי נגדו — לחנניה, מישאל ועזריה — פלחו לצלמא** had Chananyah, Misha'el, and Azarya been beaten instead of cast into the furnace, they would have succumbed and worshiped the image. It is far harder to **live** a life of *Kiddush Hashem* than to **die** for *Kiddush Hashem*. Rachel exemplified this principle: for seven years, she lived with extraordinary dedication, giving up her intended husband indefinitely to protect Leah from embarrassment. Hers was not a momentary act; but rather a daily practice of thinking of how Leah would be hurt if the truth emerged.

Leah and Rachel together teach us something profound. Their *middos* were not occasional flashes of greatness — they were lived realities. The capacity to see through another's eyes, to act with sensitivity and self-sacrifice, to live a higher life consistently — this is the DNA of our *Imahos*. **מעשה אבות סימן לבנים** - we have it within ourselves to live this way as well!

**מרדכי אפפול, Good Shabbos,**