

IV - Rachel, Lacob, and Leah: Dignity and the Third Wheel

1. Sanhedrin 22b

<p>It is taught in a <i>baraita</i>: A man dies only to his wife, i.e., it is primarily she who suffers the pain and sadness resulting from his death, and a woman dies only to her husband. A man dies only to his wife, as it is stated: “And Elimelech, Naomi’s husband, died” (Ruth 1:3), and a woman dies only to her husband, as it is stated in Jacob’s parting words to Joseph: “And as for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died on me” (Genesis 48:7).</p>	<p>תנא אין איש מת אלא לאשתו ואין אשה מתה אלא לבעלה אין איש מת אלא לאשתו שנאמר (רות א, ג) וימת אלימלך איש נעמי ואין אשה מתה אלא לבעלה שנאמר (בראשית מח, ז) ואני בבאי מפקדן מתה עלי רחל:</p>
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2. Megillah 13(a)-b

<p>...as it is written: “Esther had not yet made known her kindred nor her people” (Esther 2:20).</p> <p>§ Rabbi Elazar said: What is the meaning of that which is written: [13b] “He withdraws not His eyes from the righteous; but with kings upon the throne He establishes them forever, and they are exalted” (Job 36:7)? This teaches that in reward for the modesty shown by Rachel she merited that Saul, who was also modest, should descend from her, and in reward for the modesty shown by Saul, he merited that Esther should descend from him.</p> <p>What was the modesty shown by Rachel? It is as it is written: “And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father’s brother, and that he was Rebecca’s son” (Genesis 29:12). Was he in fact her father’s brother? But wasn’t he the son of her father’s sister?</p> <p>Rather, it must be understood that when Jacob met Rachel, he said to her: Will you marry me? She said to him: Yes, but my father, Laban, is a swindler, and you will not be able to outwit him. He said to her: I am his brother in deception. She said to him: But is it really permitted for the righteous to be involved in deception? He said to her: Yes, it is permitted when dealing with deceptive individuals, as the verse states: “With the pure you will show yourself pure, and with the perverse you will show yourself subtle” (II Samuel 22:27), indicating that one should deal</p>	<p>... דכתיב אין אסתר מגדת מולדתה וגו'</p> <p>אמר רבי אלעזר מאי דכתיב [יג:] (איוב לו, ז) לא יגרע מצדיק עיניו בשכר צניעות שהית' בה ברחל זכתה ויצא ממנה שאול ובשכר צניעות שהיה בו בשאול זכה ויצאת ממנו אסתר</p> <p>ומאי צניעות היתה בה ברחל דכתיב (בראשית כט, יב) ויגד יעקב לרחל כי אחי אביה הוא וכי אחי אביה הוא והלא בן אחות אביה הוא</p> <p>אלא אמר לה מינסבא לי אמרה ליה אין מיהו אבא רמאה הוא ולא יכלת ליה אמר לה אחיו אנא ברמאות אמרה ליה ומי שרי לצדיקי לסגויי ברמיותא אמר לה אין (שמואל ב כב, כז) עם נבר</p>
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<p>with others in the manner appropriate for their personality.</p> <p>Jacob then said to her: What is the deception that he will plan to carry out and I should be prepared for? Rachel said to him: I have a sister who is older than I, and he will not marry me off before her, and will try to give you her in my place. So Jacob gave her certain distinguishing signs that she should use to indicate to him that she was actually Rachel and not her sister.</p> <p>When the wedding night arrived, and Laban planned to switch the sisters, Rachel said to herself: Now my sister will be embarrassed, for Jacob will ask her for the signs and she will not know them. So she gave them to her. And this is as it is written: "And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah" (Genesis 29:25). Does this imply by inference that until now she was not Leah? Rather, due to the distinguishing signs that Rachel had given to Leah, he did not know until now, when it was light outside, that she was Leah. Therefore, Rachel merited that Saul should descend from her, due to her act of modesty in not revealing to Jacob that she had shown the signs to Leah.</p> <p>And what was the modesty shown by Saul? As it is written: "But of the matter of the kingdom, of which Samuel spoke, he did not tell him" (I Samuel 10:16). Saul expressed his modesty by not revealing Samuel's promise that he would be king, and thereby merited that Esther would descend from him. Similarly, Rabbi Elazar said: When the Holy One, Blessed be He, assigns greatness to a person, He assigns it to his sons and to his son's sons for all generations, as it is stated: "He withdraws not his eyes from the righteous; but with kings upon the throne He establishes them forever, and they are exalted" (Job 36:7). And if he becomes arrogant due to this, the Holy One, Blessed be He, lowers him in order to humble him, as it is stated in the next verse: "And if they are bound in chains, and are held in cords of affliction, then He declares unto them their work, and their transgressions, that they have behaved proudly" (Job 36:8–9).</p>	<p>תתבר ועם עקש תתפל אמר לה ומאי רמיותא אמרה ליה אית לי אחתא דקשישא מינאי ולא מנסיב לי מקמה מסר לה סימנים</p> <p>כי מטא ליליא אמרה השתא מינספא אחתאי מסרתינהו ניהלה והיינו דכתיב (בראשית כט, כה) ויהי בבקר והנה היא לאה מכלל דעד השתא לאו לאה היא אלא מתוך סימנין שמסרה רחל ללאה לא הוה ידע עד השתא לפיכך זכתה ויצא ממנה שאול</p> <p>ומה צניעות היתה בשאול דכתיב (שמואל א י, טז) ואת דבר המלוכה לא הגיד לו אשר אמר שמואל זכה ויצאת ממנו אסתר ואמר רבי אלעזר כשהקב"ה פוסק גדולה לאדם פוסק לבניו ולבני בניו עד סוף כל הדורות שנאמר (איוב לו, ז) וישיבם לנצח ויגבהו (וגו') ואם הגיס דעתו הקב"ה משפילו שנאמר (איוב לו, ח) ואם אסורים בזקים וגו'</p>
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3. SheLa”H, Aseret HaDibrot, Shevuot, Torah Ohr, chapter 2

<p>The KBH commanded that the oral Torah not be written. And the reason is that the KBH gave in it signs to Israel, almost as if it were like the way Jacob gave signs to Rachel so that they would not trick him</p>	<p>והקדוש ברוך הוא צוה תורה שבעל פה לא תכתוב הגה"ה, והטעם, כי הקדוש ברוך הוא נתן בזה סימנים לישראל להבדיל כדרך שנתן יעקב סימנים לרחל כדי שלא</p>
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(Megillah 13b). And so it is written about the Torah, "For endowing the simple with shrewdness. . . ." (Proverbs 1:4). The idea is so that the nations of the world should not copy it. Because it was clear to Him, blessed, that they would copy the written torah and say "it's ours." But in the future the KBH will ask and he will say, "in whose hands are the signs that I gave over from mouth to mouth? That is the one of mine." And then Israel will come with their signs.

ירמאו אותו (מגילה יג, ב). וכן כתיב אצל התורה (משלי א, ד), לתת לפתאים ערמה. והענין, בשביל אומות העולם שלא יעתיקו אותה, כי גלוי וידוע לפניו יתברך שיעתיקו תורה שבכתב ויאמרו שלנו הוא. אבל לעתיד ישאל הקדוש ברוך הוא ויאמר ביד מי הם הסימנים שמסרתי מפה אל פה, זהו משלי. ואז יבואו ישראל בסימניהם.

4. Kallah Rabbati chapter 3

BARAITHA. Subordinate your will to the will of your neighbour, for so Rachel acted towards Leah and David towards Saul.

GEMARA. As it is written, *And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother, and that he was Rebekah's son.*¹¹³ Gen. 29, 12. But was he not the son of her father's sister? What it means is this: He said to her, 'Will you marry me?' She replied, 'I have a sister who is older than I and [my father] will marry her to you because he is a trickster'. He said, 'I am a trickster like him'; as it is stated, *With the merciful Thou dost show Thyself merciful ... and with the crooked Thou dost show Thyself subtle.*¹¹⁴ Ps. 18, 26f. So he gave her a token.¹¹⁵ *By which Laban's fraud would be exposed.* When [Laban] brought Leah [to the bridal chamber], Rachel said, 'Now she will be put to shame'. What did she do? She handed the tokens to her, and consequently [it is written], *And it came to pass in the morning that, behold, it was Leah.*¹¹⁶ Gen. 29, 25. Was she then Rachel until then? Because of the tokens that were between them he did not recognize her [as Leah].¹¹⁷ *The source of this passage is Meg. 13b (Sonc. ed., p. 77).* As for David's [subordination] to Saul, we have a tradition:¹¹⁸ *Cf. ibid. 14a (Sonc. ed., p. 83).* Whoever is anointed from a cruse of oil,¹¹⁹ *The cruse, being fragile, is a symbol of a short reign; the horn, being of durable substance, is a symbol of a long reign.* his royalty will not be prolonged, but whosoever is anointed from a horn, his royalty will be prolonged. Although [David] knew that eventually he would become king, he would not tell [Saul for fear of] pushing him aside.

ברייאתא העבר רצונך מפני רצון חברך שכך עשתה רחל ללאה ודוד לשאול:

[גמ'] דכתיב ויגד יעקב לרחל כי אחי אביה הוא וכי בן רבקה הוא והלא בן אחות אביה [הוא אלא] אמר לה תתקדש לי אמרה ליה אית לי אחתא דקשישא מינאי ומנסיב לה ניהלך משום דרמאי הוא אי"ל אנא רמאי כוותיה עם חסיד תתחסד [וגו'] ועם עקש תתפתל מסר לה סימן כיון דעיילא ללאה אמרה השתא מיכספא מה עשתה מסרה לה סימנין ומתוך כך ויהי בבקר והנה היא לאה אטו עד השתא רחל היא. אלא מתוך סימנין שהיו ביניהן לא הכיר בה. ודוד לשאול גמירי כל הנמשח בכף מלכותו פוסקת וכל הנמשח בקרן מלכותו קיימת והוא ידע דסופיה למימלך ולא אמר למדחיה:

5. Bava Batra 123a

§ Rabbi Ḥelbo asked Rabbi Shmuel bar Naḥmani: **What did Jacob see that he took the status as firstborn from Reuben and gave it to Joseph?** The Gemara wonders: What does he mean, **what did he see?** The matter is **written** explicitly: **“But, inasmuch as he defiled his father’s couch,** his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph” (I Chronicles 5:1). **Rather,** Rabbi Ḥelbo’s question was: **What did he see that he gave it specifically to Joseph?**

Rabbi Shmuel bar Naḥmani answered Rabbi Ḥelbo: **I will tell you a parable. To what is this matter comparable? To a homeowner who raised an orphan in his home. Eventually, that orphan became wealthy and said: I will provide benefit to the homeowner from my property.** Similarly, since Joseph sustained Jacob in Egypt for a number of years, Jacob saw fit to repay the kindness. Rabbi Ḥelbo **said to him: And if Reuben did not sin,** would Jacob **not have provided any benefit to Joseph?** It cannot be that Jacob repaid Joseph only as a result of Reuben’s sin.

Rather, doesn’t your teacher Rabbi Yonatan say like this: It was appropriate for the child receiving the status of firstborn to emerge from Rachel, as it is written: “These are the generations of Jacob, Joseph” (Genesis 37:2), indicating that Joseph was Jacob’s primary progeny. **But Leah advanced** ahead of Rachel **with** appeals for **mercy,** i.e., with prayer, and thereby earned the status as firstborn for her firstborn. **But because of the modesty that Rachel possessed, the Holy One, Blessed be He, returned** the status as firstborn **to her.** This is why Jacob gave the status as firstborn to Joseph.

The Gemara explains this answer: **What** does it mean that **Leah advanced** ahead of Rachel **with mercy?** **As it is written: “And Leah’s eyes were weak [rakkof]”** (Genesis 29:17). **What** is the meaning of **“rakkof”?** **If we say** that her eyes were **literally weak,** is it **possible** that the verse would say that? **The verse there did not speak to the disparagement of even a non-kosher animal, as it is written: “From the pure animals and from the animals that are lacking purity”** (Genesis 7:8). The verse states: “That are lacking purity” rather than stating explicitly and disparagingly: That are impure. If that is so with regard to animals, **did the verse speak here to the disparagement of the righteous? Rather, Rabbi Elazar says:** The term alludes to the fact **that her gifts,** i.e., the gifts given to her descendants, e.g., the priesthood and the monarchy, **were long-lasting [arukkof],** as they were passed

בעא מיניה ר' חלבו מרבי שמואל בר נחמני מה ראה יעקב שנטל בכורה מראובן ונתנה ליוסף מה ראה ובחללו יצועי אביו כתיב אלא מה ראה שנתנה ליוסף

אמשול לך משל למה הדבר דומה לבעל הבית שגדל יתום בתוך ביתו לימים העשיר אותו יתום ואמר אהניו לבעל הבית מנכסי א"ל ואי לאו דחטא ראובן לא מהני ליה ליוסף ולא מדעם

אלא ר' יונתן רבך לא כך אמר ראוייה היתה בכורה לצאת מרחל דכתיב (בראשית לז, ב) אלה תולדות יעקב יוסף אלא שקדמתה לאה ברחמים ומתוך צניעות שהיתה בה ברחל החזירה הקב"ה לה

מאי קדמתה לאה ברחמים דכתיב (בראשית כט, יז) ועיני לאה רכות מאי רכות אילימא רכות ממש אפשר בגנות בהמה טמאה לא דבר הכתוב דכתיב (בראשית ז, ח) מן הבהמה הטהורה ומן הבהמה אשר איננה טהורה בגנות צדיקים דבר הכתוב אלא א"ר אלעזר שמתנותיה ארוכות

down from generation to generation.

Rav says that there is a different explanation of the verse: **Actually**, the verse means that her eyes **were literally weak**, and this is **not a denigration of her but a praise of her**. **As she would hear people at the crossroads**, coming from the land of Canaan, **who would say: Rebecca has two sons**, and her brother **Laban has two daughters**; the **older** daughter will be married to the **older** son, and the **younger** daughter will be married to the **younger** son.

Rav continues: **And she would sit at the crossroads and ask: What are the deeds of the older son?** The passersby would answer: **He is an evil man**, and he **robs people**. She would ask: **What are the deeds of the younger son?** They would answer: He is **“a quiet man, dwelling in tents”** (Genesis 25:27). **And** because she was so distraught at the prospect of marrying the evil brother, **she would cry** and pray for mercy **until her eyelashes fell out**. Since the weakness of her eyes was due to this cause, characterizing her eyes as weak constitutes praise. This is Leah's prayer for mercy to which Rabbi Yonatan referred.

The Gemara comments: **And** her desire not to marry Esau is the basis of that **which is written: “And the Lord saw that Leah was hated**, and He opened her womb” (Genesis 29:31). **What** is the meaning of **“hated”**? **If we say** that she was **literally hated**, is it **possible?** The verse there **did not speak to the disparagement of even a non-kosher animal**, so **did the verse here speak to the disparagement of the righteous?** Rather, the Holy One, **Blessed be He, saw that the behavior of Esau was hated by her**, and therefore: **“And He opened her womb.”**

The Gemara now explains the second part of Rabbi Yonatan's explanation: **And what** was a demonstration of the **modesty that Rachel possessed?** **As it is written: “And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother, and that he was Rebecca's son”** (Genesis 29:12). The Gemara asks: **But isn't he the son of her father's sister?** Why did he say that he was her father's brother? **Rather**, Jacob and Rachel had the following exchange: Jacob **said to Rachel: Will you marry me?** Rachel **said to him: Yes, but my father is a deceitful person, and you cannot defeat him.**

Jacob **said to her: What is his method of deceit** of which I need be aware? Rachel **said to him: I have a sister who is older than me, and he will not marry me off before he marries her off**, even

רב אמר לעולם רכות ממש ולא גנאי הוא לה אלא שבח הוא לה שהיתה שומעת על פרשת דרכים בני אדם שהיו אומרים שני בנים יש לה לרבקה שתי בנות יש לו ללבן גדולה לגדול וקטנה לקטן והיתה יושבת על פרשת דרכים ומשאלת גדול מה מעשיו איש רע הוא מלסטם בריות קטן מה מעשיו (בראשית כה, כז) איש תם יושב אוהלים והיתה בוכה עד שנשרו ריסי עיניה

והיינו דכתיב (בראשית כט, לא) וירא ה' כי שנאה לאה מאי שנאה אילימא שנאה ממש אפשר בגנות בהמה טמאה לא דבר הכתוב בגנות צדיקים דבר הכתוב אלא ראה הקב"ה ששנואין מעשה עשו בפניה ויפתח את רחמה

ומאי צניעות היתה בה ברחל דכתיב (בראשית כט, יב) ויגד יעקב לרחל כי אחי אביה הוא וכי בן רבקה הוא והלא בן אחות אביה הוא אלא אמר לה מינסבת לי אמרה ליה אין מיהו אבא רמאה הוא ולא יכלת ליה

אמר לה מאי רמאותיה אמרה ליה אית לי אחתא דקשישא מינאי ולא מנסבא לי מקמה אמר לה אחיו אני ברמאות [א"ל] ומי שרי להו לצדיקי לסגויי ברמאותא אין

if he promises that he will do so. Jacob **said to her: I am his brother**, i.e., equal, **in deceit**, and he will not be able to deceive me. That is why Jacob said that he was “her father’s brother.” Rachel **said to him: But is it permitted for the righteous to act deceitfully?** Jacob answered her: **Yes**, in certain circumstances. As the verse states concerning God: **“With the pure You show Yourself pure; and with the crooked You show Yourself subtle”** (II Samuel 22:27). Therefore, to counter Laban’s deceit, Jacob **gave** Rachel secret **signs** to prove to him that she was the one marrying him.

Laban did in fact attempt to have Jacob marry Leah instead of marrying Rachel. **When** Laban’s associates **were bringing Leah up** to the wedding canopy to marry Jacob, Rachel **thought: Now my sister will be humiliated** when Jacob discovers that she is the one marrying him. Therefore, Rachel **gave** the signs **to Leah**. **And this is as it is written: “And it came to pass in the morning that, behold, it was Leah”** (Genesis 29:25). This verse is difficult, as **by inference**, should one derive **that until now she was not Leah?** Rather, **through the signs that Jacob gave to Rachel and that she gave to Leah, he did not know it was she until that moment**. This is the modesty of Rachel to which Rabbi Yonatan was referring.

(שמואל ב כב, כז) עם נבר
תתבר ועם עקש תתפל מסר
לה סימנין

כי קא מעיילי לה ללאה
סברה השתא מיכספא
אחתאי מסרתינהו ניהלה
והיינו דכתיב (בראשית כט,
כה) ויהי בבקר והנה היא
לאה מכלל דעד השתא לאו
לאה היא אלא מתוך סימנים
שמסר לה יעקב לרחל
ומסרתה ללאה לא הוה ידע
לה עד ההיא שעתא