



Dear Parents,

The incredible joy with which *Rachel Imeinu* must have greeted the arrival of her son *Yosef*, is presented by the Torah in what seems to be a very puzzling manner. The *pasuk* tells us that *Rachel* says (*Bereishis 30:23*) “...*Hashem* has taken away my disgrace.” So much is she focused on this point, that the name she gave to her child is based upon this consideration! Understanding what is meant by that statement and how it is central to the name she gave, is a source of much discussion among the *Mefarshim* – commentators.

Perhaps the most difficult to understand, is *Rashi*, in his second explanation on what *Rachel's* disgrace was and what its removal implies. He quotes the *Medrash (Bereishis Rabba 73:5)* that states as follows: “All the while that a woman has no son, she has no one upon whom to hang (the blame for) her misdeeds. Once she has a son, she hangs them upon him. (For example, if her husband should ask) “Who broke this vessel?” she answers – your son. “Who ate these figs?” she answers – your son.”

It seems inconceivable that the great *Yaakov Avinu* would ever express concern over such trivialities, and he would certainly never openly express criticism to *Rachel Imeinu* over such things. All the more so at this time of great joy, the thoughts of both these great people would surely focus on appreciation to *Hashem* and on marveling at the wondrous miracle that had occurred. Furthermore, how could relief from these nonessential critiques be so central to the situation that it would inspire the very name she gave to her son?

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz zt'l, (Sichos Mussar 32:6) mentions many of these same questions, and explains as follows: We might feel

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these issues are of no significance, because our estimation of appropriate *Shalom Bayis* is the absence of major issues. Everyone expects the ‘little’ issues to be present in even the best of marriages, and therefore don’t pay much heed to them. *Rav Shmuelevitz* says that for *Rachel and Yaakov*, the bar was set much higher. Their unity and relationship was so strong and so close, that even a seemingly trivial matter such as a broken dish that to others would not even register, to them was a measurable impediment to that near perfect relationship. It was worthwhile to eliminate even such a minor irritant.

What *Rachel Imeinu* is teaching us with her focus on the slightest of bumps in her marriage relationship, is that we can always strive to do better. The absence of major contention between husband and wife cannot be the end goal of a marriage relationship. There can always be more connection, more harmony and more peace.

The same approach applies to parents and children. It is true that having a relatively peaceful relationship with one’s children is not always easy to achieve, and it takes much work. Nevertheless, as the children of *Yaakov* and *Rachel* we need to keep in mind, we can always strive for more and better. With a growth mindset focused on family relations, we will realize we can always improve. Treading water may suffice for short term survival, but to flourish and live fully we need forward motion. So too in our relationships, we cannot survive for long without investment and cannot flourish without improvement and focusing even on the small stuff.

The *madreigos* (lofty spiritual levels) of *Yaakov Avinu* and *Rachel Imeinu* may be beyond our reach, but we can and should internalize the lesson of always strengthening our bonds with and becoming more sensitive to the needs of our loved ones. The greatest gift we can give our children is a home with *Shalom Bayis*.

Best wishes for a wonderful, harmonious Shabbos,

Erev Shabbos Parashas Vayetzei 5780

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