

# Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Vayeitzei

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## Did Yaakov Hate Leah?

R' Meir Lipschitz

Did Yaakov actually hate Leah?

When Leah names her second son, Shimon, she explains his name by saying, "כי שמע ה' כי שנואה אנכי"—For HaShem has heard that I am hated." The Torah itself attests to the same fact, saying, "וירא ה' כי שנואה לאה—And HaShem saw that Leah was hated." It is apparent to us from these two pesukim that Leah was hated by Yaakov. However, standing in direct opposition to this notion is the immediately preceding pasuk: "ויאהב ויאהב—And [Yaakov] loved Rachel more than Leah." This pasuk makes clear that Yaakov did in fact love Leah, just not as much as he loved Rachel. If that is the case, why did the Torah say that he hated Leah?

Additionally, the whole concept of Yaakov hating Leah is troubling. We are expressly commanded not to hate a fellow Jew, "לא תשנא את אחיך בלבבך—Do not hate your brother in your heart." How could Yaakov, one of our holy forefathers, violate this commandment? (Of course, this question assumes that a) our ancestors were considered Jews and "fellow Jews" at this point, and that b) we

accept as law the midrash that our ancestors kept the Torah even before it was given.)

Rav Shimon Schwab, noting these difficulties in his sefer Ma'ayan Beit HaShoeivah, suggests that it is possible to redefine the word שנואה, hate, as it is used in a marriage. While this word normally refers to the animosity felt by enemies, "hate" in a marriage refers to showing love to a rival of one's spouse, which is what Yaakov had done. Yaakov didn't violate the prohibition of hating someone, and there is no contradiction between the pesukim: Yaakov loved Rachel more than Leah, and HaShem saw and heard that she was hated.

Rav Schwab extends this line of thinking to a person's relationship with HaShem. Given that the relationship between the Jewish people and G-d is compared to a marriage, one need not go so far as to *hate* HaShem in order to be deemed a שנוא ה'. Simply loving something more than G-d would already put one in that category. Man's pursuit of physical pleasure, though motivated by a strong love for physicality rather than disdain for G-d,

would label him a שנוא.

As an alternative to Rav Schwab's approach, we might suggest that "hatred," in this segment, is a matter of perspective. Leah names her son Shimon, citing as her reason that "HaShem heard that she was hated," because she felt hated. On the other hand, Yaakov certainly did not hate Leah; Yaakov merely loved Leah less than he loved Rachel. The Torah's narrative observation, "And HaShem saw that Leah was hated," speaks from Leah's point of view: Because Leah *felt* hated, the Torah says that she *was* hated. Embedded in this reading is a critical lesson in marriage and all human relationships: Perception, not facts, defines reality.

This approach leaves the question of Yaakov's adherence to the laws of hatred unanswered, because the primacy of perspective yields an alternative definition of the mitzvah of not hating your fellow. Is it enough to not hate one another, or are we charged to avoid causing others to feel hated? If we accept the first, more straightforward, reading of the command, then Yaakov did not violate this mitzvah, since he did not hate Leah. However, in the second reading Yaakov did transgress: His actions led to her feelings of being hated.

Whatever the correct reading — redefining the word "hate" or understanding the "hatred" as a matter of perspective — the lessons ring true. We are commanded to abolish hatred, both real and perceived, from our marriages and from all of our relationships, be they with our fellow man or with G-d.

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### Parshah Questions

R' Meir Lipschitz

Answers are provided on the back page.

- How wide was the ladder in Yaakov's dream? (Chulin 91b)
- What halachot can be learned from the words מלא שבע זאת, (Ibn Ezra, Ramban and Rashbam to Bereishit 29:27, Bereishit Rabbah 70:19, Yerushalmi Moed Katan 1:7)
- What is the significance, or meaning, of the name of Leah's fourth son? (Targum Yonatan, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Daat Zekeinim MiBaalei HaTosafot, Seforno, Recanati to Bereishit 29:35, Abarbanel 29:31, Rashi to Berachot 7b)
- For children: In what way were Leah's eyes unusual? (Rashi Bereishit 29:17)

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*This shiur was delivered as part a series:  
You Are What You Write:  
Landmark Halachic Responsa.*

*The series is given on Thursdays at 8 pm  
at Congregation Bnai Torah by  
Rabbi Netanel Javasky.*

In previous shiurim we discussed the atmosphere surrounding many of the *teshuvot* of Rabbi Moshe Sofer, known as "Chatam Sofer". Living at a time when the Reform movement was making inroads in the large cities of Eastern Europe, the Chatam Sofer was often called upon to defend the traditional practices. Here we look at the debate surrounding the position of the *bimah* in the synagogue. Those associated with the Reform Movement were moving the *bimah* from the middle of the shul, where it had been traditionally, towards the front of the synagogue, directly in front of the *Aron Kodesh*.

The gemara in Sukkah (51b) discusses the grand synagogue in Alexandria, Egypt. The gemara discusses the great beauty and enormous size of the structure and explains the system established to enable the congregation to respond appropriately to the

inaudible words of the Chazan. "There was a wooden *bimah* in the centre of the synagogue, which the *gabbai* would stand upon holding flags. When the time came to answer Amen, he would wave the flag and everyone would know to answer Amen." While it is true that the gemara mentions that the *bimah* was placed in the centre of the shul, the question is: Is this merely a historical factoid, or was there halachic significance to the placement of the *bimah*?

The Rambam (Tefilah 11:3) records the law of the gemara, mentioning that the *bimah* should be centred within the shul. Seemingly, this would support the traditionalist approach and their insistence on keeping the *bimah* in the centre of the synagogue. However, analyzing the context of the Rambam shows that we may have misunderstood the Rambam's intent.

ומעמידין בימה באמצע הבית כדי שיעלה עליה הקורא בתורה או מי אשר אומר לעם דברי כבושין כדי שישמעו כולם, וכשמעמידין התיבה שיש בה ספר תורה מעמידין אותה באמצע ואחורי התיבה כלפי ההיכל ופניה כלפי העם.

We erect a *bimah* in the centre of the house (of worship) for the person called to the Torah or the one speaking words of rebuke, so that everyone will hear. The ark should be centred... with its front facing the people.

The Rambam considers the centring of the *bimah* crucial for two reasons: So that everyone will properly hear the person called to the Torah, and so that everyone will hear the sermon or words of rebuke from the speaker. It is most difficult to imagine that the fact that the words of the orator should be heard by all, is a halachic imperative as opposed to a practical consideration. It would appear that the Rambam assumes the entire concept of the placement of the *bimah* is merely a sensible recommendation to enable maximum audibility in the shul. This approach is taken by R' Yosef Karo (1488-1575) in his commentary Kesef Mishnah. He notes that in his day it was common that the *bimah* would be placed at the front of the shul, and due to the smaller size of shuls in his day, this would not pose any risk of inaudible *tefilah*. All of this would seem to support the ability to move the *bimah* for aesthetic or practical reasons.

The Chatam Sofer (1:28) adamantly rejects this possibility. He quotes the gemara and Rambam as proof positive that the *bimah* must be centred, with no possibility of external considerations. He then develops the idea that we read about the *korbanot* from our *bimah* and dance around it on Simchat Torah and therefore it has the status of the *mizbeich*, the altar in the Temple, which was located centrally. He concludes with his mantra, a play on the words of the Mishna discussing the new crop of grains, חֲדָשׁ אֲסוּר מִן הַתּוֹרָה, any new change is Biblically forbidden.

We noted in the shiur that although many of the other responsa of the Chatam Sofer, which were clearly written in a very tense and hostile environment towards the Reform Movement in its infancy, have been accepted as normative halachah for the generations, this ruling is seen by many as specific to the time and place, and not to be viewed as *psak* for future generations. (For example, see Igrot Moshe Orach Chaim 2:41-42 and Shut Yabia Omer Orach Chaim 8:17.)

## 613 Mitzvot: Mitzvah 62, 255, 256: Sorcery

Mitzvot 62, 255 and 256 prohibit the practice of witchcraft, magic and sorcery, and prescribe harsh punishments for their practice. Why does the Torah mandate tough penalties for these transgressions

- The Rambam wrote (Peirush haMishnayot Avodah Zarah 4, Moreh haNevuchim 3:37) that these practices are not inherently powerful; some of them promise false results, and others rely on subterfuge and slight of hand for their apparent success. The danger is that these practices lead directly to worship of false gods.
- Ramban (Bereishit 17:1) argued that these practices are real and

potent, but his conclusion is similar to that of the Rambam: The Torah expects a Jew to place his faith in HaShem alone, and not in other entities.

- The Sefer haChinuch (Mitzvah 62) took a different tack: HaShem created the world's entities with certain positive uses and powers, and He also created the possibility for those entities to be combined inappropriately, which would cause harm. The prohibitions against sorcery are meant to prevent those inappropriate combinations, because they are destructive to the Divine plan.

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# Ha'Am V'Ha'Aretz

**R' Binyamin ben Mattityahu**

**Russell Levy**

**Bnei Brak**

## Must a woman have her apostate brother-in-law perform chalitzah?

Responsa Binyamin Zeev 75

On the ruling that has come before us regarding Conversos [who returned to Judaism RL] who passed on without children, whose brothers have converted and assimilated with the non-Jews: Can the widows who have returned to the true faith remarry [without one of the apostate brothers performing chalitzah RL]?

The evidence we have seen shows that they are indeed permitted to remarry, as it is written in the responsa of the Geonim regarding a woman whose prospective partner for yibbum is an apostate: "She is permitted to marry [anyone], and she does not require chalitzah from the apostate." That responsum's potential distinction between cases is irrelevant here. Further: Even those who would be more stringent, requiring chalitzah from an apostate, agree with regard to conversos who passed on without children, whose brothers have assimilated with the non-Jews, that their wives are permitted to remarry.

Regarding those who are hurting the heart of the re-married widow in Avalon, telling her that her husband has an assimilated brother: These are agents of idolatry! Their thought is only to prevent conversos from worshipping Hashem. The conversos, when they hear their words, will think they cannot marry and will not return to serve HaShem, because their deceased husbands had brothers who assimilated. They will return to their straying! The entire thought of these people is to push them away from serving Gd. They are almost instigators [to worship idol worship], and almost deserve the death penalty like all who persuade and instigate [idol worship].

We did not issue this ruling, permitting them to re-marry, in order to keep them from returning to their lives among the nations and from straying. Rather, this is the law. There is no time right now to write at length. Warn them not to open their mouths against the conversos, lest they be scorned.

Born in 1475 in Arta, Greece, R' Binyamin ben Matityahu led his community through the turbulent period of the Spanish Inquisition, during which many conversos left Spain and moved to Greece. After the inquisition, there were six distinct Jewish communities in Arta, five made of those fleeing Spanish and Portuguese territories: Spanish, Portuguese, Calabrian, Sicilian, and Apulian. As challenging as it was, R' Binyamin endeavored to keep the various communities unified within a halachic system.

Throughout his life, R' Binyamin maintained correspondence with leading Rabbis within the Ottoman Empire, including R' Moshe Capsili, the Chief Rabbi of the Ottoman Empire; R' Eliyahu Mizrahi, R' Capsili's primary student and successor as Chief Rabbi, as well as the author of an important supercommentary on Rashi; and R' Yosef Taytzak, a leading Kabbalist of the day who had great influence on R' Yosef Karo (author of the Shulchan Aruch; Toronto Torah Vayishlach 5770).

His work "Shut Binyamin Ze'ev", a collection of some 450 responsa, includes many groundbreaking teshuvot on a wide variety of subjects. He severely condemns discrimination against conversos (75, 284, 287, among others); discusses the grave prohibition against spousal abuse (248); obligates landlords to repair dwellings on behalf of both Jewish and non-Jewish tenants (301); requires mikvaot to be heated (158); and prohibits mixed dancing, a practice instituted by some of the converso immigrants (303-305).

In one teshuvah, when discussing how to act when a non-Jew overpaid for an item, he relates that he once sold a non-Jew some wares and was overpaid, and he spent days to look for him to give him the money back. He regarded this as an obligation of Kiddush Hashem.

R' Binyamin ben Matityahu was father-in-law to R' Shmuel ben Moshe Kalai, author of Mishpetei Shmuel. R' Binyamin passed away in Arta c. 1539.

The translated responsum was collected and published in Shut Binyamin Ze'ev, but is authored by R' Moshe Capsili, as part of a correspondence between him and R' Binyamin.

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Bnei Brak takes its name from the ancient, Biblical (Joshua 19:45) Beneberak, which was located 4 kilometers (2 mi) to the south of where Bnei Brak was founded in 1924.

It is mentioned as the Beit Midrash of Rabbi Akiva and as a place of Torah in his time. We read every year in the *Haggadah* a story about sages who spent their *Leil-haSeder* in Bnei Brak.

Bnei Brak was founded as an agricultural settlement by Yitzchok Gerstenkorn and a group of Polish *Chasidim*. Due to a lack of land many of its founders turned to other occupations, and the village began to develop an urban character. The town was set up as a religious settlement from the outset, as is evident from this description of the pioneers:

*Their souls were revived by the fact that they merited what their predecessors had not. What particularly revived their weary souls in the mornings and toward evening, when they would gather in the beis medrash situated in a special shack which was built immediately upon the arrival of the very first settlers, for tefilla betzibbur (communal prayer) three times a day, for the Daf Yomi shiur, and a Gemara shiur and an additional one in Mishnayos and the Shulchan Oruch.*

Bnei Brak was declared a city in 1950.

Rabbi Avrohom Yeshaya Karelitz (the *Chazon Ish*) settled in Bnei Brak in its early days, attracting a large following. Rabbi Yaakov Landau, chief rabbi of Bnei Brak between 1936 and 1986, helped to make it an important religious centre.

Until the 1970s, the Bnei Brak municipality was headed by Religious Zionist mayors. After Mayor Gottlieb of the National Religious Party was defeated, *Haredi* parties grew in status and influence; since then they have governed the city. As the *Haredi* population grew, the demand for public religious observance increased and more residents requested the closure of their neighbourhoods to vehicular traffic on Shabbat. When they demanded the closure of a main street (HaShomer St. now Kahaneman St.), the non-religious residents protested but the town's religious inhabitants won the battle. Since then, their influence in the city has continuously grown.

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## How wide was the ladder in Yaacov's dream?

- **The Gemara** calculates that there were four angels ascending or descending the ladder at one time. If they passed the same point in the ladder at one time and each angel is 2000 parsah, the ladder was at least 8000 parsah wide (18-24,000 miles).

## What halachot can be learned from the words, מלא שבט זאת?

- **Ibn Ezra, Ramban and Rashbam** all identify this pasuk as the source for the halachah of having seven days of Sheva Brachot for a newly married couple.
- **Bereishit Rabbah** derives a larger principle from this event: Yaakov couldn't marry Rachel until he finished Sheva Brachot with Leah because of the rule *ein miarvin simchah b'simchah*, that we do not combine two smachot together.
- **The Yerushalmi** provides a specific application of the above-stated rule, saying that it is forbidden to get married on a holiday (*moed*).

## What is the significance, or meaning, of the name of Leah's fourth son?

- **Rashi** (on the pasuk and in Berachot) suggests that Yehudah was given his name because he was Leah's fourth son, which gave her more of the twelve tribes than she deserved (as one-third of the four matriarchs).
- **Targum Yonatan** understands that Leah thanked Hashem for giving her descendants from Yehudah who would be kings. This referred to Dovid Hamelech who would be *modeh* (offer praise) to Hashem through his authoring of tehillim.
- **Ibn Ezra** says Leah thanked G-d as a way of stating that she was content with the number of children she had.
- **Daat Zekeinim** says that in the future Yehudah would come forth publicly and admit to fathering Tamar's child. (*modeh* may also refer to *admission*)
- **Recanati** adds that Yehudah's admission of his guilt also explains why his name contains the letters of G-d's Name. The gemara (Yoma

86a) says that teshuvah is so great that it reaches to the *kisei hakavod* – the holy throne of Hashem. Yehudah is given those letters because his teshuvah would one day reach G-d as well. (Also see Sforno).

- On a separate note, **Abarbanel** notes that when Leah names her children she uses G-d's Name of Hashem and not Elokim, because G-d interacted with her *lifnim mishurat hadin*, beyond the letter of the law, and Elokim describes G-d's attribute of judgement.

## For children: In what way were Leah's eyes unusual?

- **Rashi** says that Leah's eyes were tender because she cried often, due to the expectation that she would be compelled to marry Esav.

**Have another answer? We'd like to hear it! Email it to [dzirkind@torontotorah.com](mailto:dzirkind@torontotorah.com)**

## Schedule for the Week of November 6, 29 Marcheshvan

### Shabbat, November 13

7:45AM Ramban al haTorah, Or Chaim

After Hashkama R' Meir Lipschitz: Parshah, Shaarei Shomayim

6:30PM Parent/Child Learning, Shaarei Shomayim

### Sunday, November 14

9:15AM Itamar Zolberg: Parshah & Issues b'Ivrit, Zichron Yisrael

7:30PM R' Azarya Berzon: The Study of Masechet Megilah, Shaarei Shamayim

8:30PM R' Azarya Berzon: Gemara In-depth, Shaarei Shamayim

### Monday, November 15

6:00 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner: Rabbis in the New World, 1 of 3, Miles Nadal JCC, RSVP to [sharonis@mnjcc.org](mailto:sharonis@mnjcc.org) (\$15 for series)

8:30PM R' Azarya Berzon: Rambam and the Nature of the Obligation of Chinuch, Clanton Park

8:45PM R' Meir Lipschitz: Gemara Beitzah Chaburah, Shaarei Shomayim

9:20PM R' Azarya Berzon: Ramban: Toward a Definition of Chanukah, 12 Midvale Road

### Tuesday, November 16

1:10PM Russell Levy, Masechet Pesachim (advanced), Wolfond Center Lunch served, followed by mincha

1:30PM R' Mordechai Torczyner: Yoel, at Shaarei Shomayim, with Mekorot

7:30PM R'' Meir Lipschitz: The Thought of R' Shlomo Aviner, 3000 Bathurst #1201, Women

8:00PM Dovid Zirkind: Interactive Parshah Discussion, Westmount Learning Centre

8:30PM R' Mordechai Torczyner: Minchat Chinuch at Clanton Park: Korban Pesach Leftovers

8:30PM R' Azarya Berzon: Halacha and Hashkafa for Life, Kiddush Hashem Chanukah, BAYT, 3rd floor, classroom #1

### Wednesday, November 17

9:15AM R' Mordechai Torczyner: Hosheia, 239 Franklin Women Babysitting provided

1:00PM R' Mordechai Torczyner: Chanukah, MArS (College St.)

7:00PM R' Azarya Berzon: Gemara B'Iyun, Highlights of the week's shiurim, 12 Midvale Road

9:00PM R' Mordechai Torczyner: Responsa that changed Jewish History, Week 6: Kollel Study, BAYT

### Thursday, November 18

8:00PM R' Netanel Javasky: Landmark Halachic Responsa, Bnai Torah

8:00PM David Teller: Secrets of the Shema, Week 3: What should I be Hearing? Shaarei Tefillah

8:00PM R' Azarya Berzon: Gemara B'Iyun, Shomrai Shabbos

9:00PM R' Azarya Berzon, Yaakov and Esav, Rachel and Leah, Clanton Park