



Tapping into the Soul Prints of Rachel & Leah

In *Parashat Vayetze* we learn about Rachel and Leah who overcame the challenge of sharing the same man. Although polygamy was permitted in the Torah, it was never encouraged. A wife in a polygamous family was called a צרה/*tzara* –‘trouble’ or ‘tragedy.’ Since sisters are naturally each other’s best friend, the Torah prohibited a man from marrying two sisters and thus setting them up against each other. Ya’acov’s marriage to both Rachel and Leah was an exception, because these holy women were destined to make a rectification for all future discord among sisters. By being able to overcome the ultimate challenge of being set up against each other as co-wives, they paved the way for all future sisters to get along.

Rachel & Leah Rectified All Future Discord among Sisters

Through their inner struggle, Rachel and Leah became like one person as Arizal teaches, “The feet of Leah ensconce (is clothed) within the crown of Rachel” (*Etz Chayim, Sha’ar 38, Chapter 3*). He also explains that Rachel was the revealed world while Leah was the hidden world (*Sefer Etz Chaim*). True relationships are not automatic, but must survive the struggles and bumps on the way. Like Rachel and Leah, struggle may strengthen our bond. Rachel in her soul-work and spiritual struggle with her sister allowed herself to be changed by her to become the inner (hidden) world as well. Whereas at first Leah was the one who did the inner work of tefilah and tshuva, (crying so hard that her eyelashes fell out), in the end it was Rachel’s heartfelt tears that elicited Hashem’s promise to return His exiled children to the Land (See *Yirmeyahu 31:14-16*). Both Rachel and Leah met each other in the middle ground halfway between hidden and revealed. The greater each partner in a relationship is able to change herself towards the other the holier is that relationship.

Bridging the Schisms in Israel

When we continue the rectification enacted by Rachel and Leah, we will be able to overcome the jealousy among the Jewish people so prevalent today. The foundation of *shalom bayit* (peace in the home) within the Jewish people as a whole, is reunification of the two main tenants of the *bayit* of Israel – the children of Rachel with the children of Leah. Each of the different schisms that we experience today can be traced back to the division between the children of Rachel and Leah. This includes the divisions between the Ashkenazim/Sephardim, religious/non-religious, settlers/city-dwellers *Chareidi/Dati Leumi*, etc.

Tuning Into the Rachel & Leah within Our Own Psyche

We women have the ability to bridge these gaps. Whenever the situation arises, we can do the greatest rectifications by really accepting and respecting our sister deeply even when her way of serving Hashem is so totally unlike ours. It is only schism, friction and contention between the children of Rachel and Leah that prevent the final redemption. The more we get in touch with the different aspects of Rachel and Leah within our own psyche and balance our own personality the more we will be able to truly bridge the different segments of Am Yisrael and bring about the true *ahavat chinam* and *achdut* with Hashem’s *Shechinah* in our midst!

Bringing Redemption by Overcoming Sisterly Challenges

The spiritual energy created by Rachel and Leah’s true loving bond generated Divine unifications that give us the merit to conquer the Land of Israel and bring redemption. I recall my mother’s

wise words, “When you sisters learn to get along, there can be peace in the world.” In our endeavor to bring redemption, we must tap into the energy of Rachel and Leah in order to learn to get along as mothers, daughters, sisters and friends. Connecting to others on the deepest level is most women’s highest aspiration. Redemption takes place in the merit of the righteous women who strive towards perfection in relationship, by overcoming jealousy, indifference, anger, and power-struggle to express true love in relationship on all levels. Below I share with you a poem that expresses the yearning for this kind of sisterly relationship.

Sisterhood Struggles

I always knew I loved you, but not how much I feel.
 You taught me to rub off the dead skin in order to heal.
 When I scrub myself with loofa, my heart thinks of you.
 My skin is red from rubbing, awaiting the growth of new.

Since time bygone, we have been each other’s spiritual guide.
 Like stitches in a perfect seam, together we were tied.
 With sisterly love, we comforted each other when we cried.
 Now the seam is ripping but your share of my soul never died.

I miss your gentle sweetness and your soft-spoken voice.
 Allowing your caring wisdom to prevail above all the noise.
 I long once again to strengthen you, and help you to succeed.
 Must we loosen our loving bond just because we disagreed?

Even if my best friend refuses to budge,
 I will not harbor resentment nor hold any grudge.
 I don’t want my sister to be penalized because of my pain.
 Yet I mourn lost opportunities that would make us both gain.

When you are so close for so long, you expect to share.
 Therefore, silence and rejection is too much to bear.
 Why can’t we work things out and each other truly hear?
 So that we once again can become seamlessly near.

I wish we could melt away each and every block
 to open all the barriers and our hearts unlock.
 I imagine us dancing together in the sun holding hands,
 going through the process of clearing up the misunderstands.

With great effort, strength, courage and care,
 We may unravel the tangles and mend the tear.
 We could grow wiser and learn how to truly respond,
 Like Rachel and Leah, struggle may strengthen our bond.

Let us overcome ourselves and our desire to hide!
 Let us seek true unity and reconnect every side!
 Together we can work out the issues and become highly aware,
 With fearless love build the Temple and bring world repair!