



KINDER TORAH

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PARASHAS VAYETZE

PRAISE HER BEAUTY

"Rachel was beautiful of form and beautiful of appearance" (Bereshis 29:17). It appears that the verse is praising Rachel's physical beauty. Is it proper to do such a thing? Shlomo HaMelech writes in the very end of Mishlei (31:30), "Grace is false, and beauty vain; a woman who fears Hashem, she should be praised." If beauty is vain, why does the Torah praise it? Sara's beauty was also recognized, as the verse states, "Now I know that you are a woman of beautiful appearance" (Bereshis 12:11). Esther was also "beautiful of form and beautiful of appearance" (Megillas Esther 2:7). Yosef HaTzaddik is also referred to as "handsome of form and handsome of appearance" (Bereshis 39:6). Why is the Torah paying tribute to vanity?

The Vilna Gaon answers this question in his *peirush* on Mishlei. It is true that grace is false and beauty is vain. When? When they are possessed by a woman who has no fear of Hashem. Her beauty is compared to a gold ring in the nose of disgusting animal. However, a woman who fears Hashem is worthy of praise. What is laudable about her? Firstly, her *yiras Hashem*. That is one of the most beautiful qualities on the face of this earth. Additionally, even her physical beauty becomes praiseworthy.

This concept still needs clarification. We know that the true beauty of a person is his *neschama* (soul). Why does the Torah go out of its way to commend the physical beauty, something that is secondary and temporary? The Gaon in his *peirush* on Megillas Esther answers this question by revealing to us the deeper meaning of Esther's beauty. "Beautiful of form" refers to the physical limbs, which are connected to the mitzvos. Our sages teach us that the 248 positive mitzvos correspond to the 248 limbs of the body. Performance of the mitzvos beautifies the limbs. Therefore, "beauty of form" is really referring to one who is rich in mitzvos.

Secondly, the Gaon explains "beautiful of appearance." This is referring to the *kavannah* (intention) of the heart. A mitzvah that required performance of an action has two parts to it. The action and the *kavannah*. When a person performs a mitzvah with the proper *kavannah*, he "beautifies" it. Therefore, when the Torah refers to Rachel as "beautiful of form and beautiful of appearance," it is praising her mitzvos and *kavannahs*. They are what make her beautiful.

Kinderlach . . .

What makes a person beautiful? Nice clothes? Cosmetics? Perfumes? Hairstyles? These alone are in the category of "grace is false, and beauty vain." They are like a gold ring in the nose of disgusting animal. However, the woman who possesses yiras Hashem is different. She performs mitzvos. She has the proper kavannahs. This beautifies her soul and her appearance. She is truly "beautiful of form and beautiful of appearance." She is a woman who fears Hashem. She should be praised.

TRUE LOVE

"Yaakov worked seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him a few days because of his love for her" (Bereshis 29:20). This seems a bit strange. When a person loves someone and really desires them, every minute of separation seems like years. Yaakov's love for Rachel made years seem like minutes. How could this be? Many meforshim ask this question. The Malbim explains what made Yaakov's love for Rachel so special. Yaakov realized that Rachel was a *tsadekes*, whose true value was more than precious gems. Seven years of work was a very small price to pay for such a life partner. It was like a few days in his eyes, compared to what he was receiving in return.



Contrast this with the shallow love of desire. The person really loves only himself, and just wants to satisfy himself. He cannot wait. Therefore, every day seems like a year. This is not the love of our holy forefathers. This is not the love upon which the Jewish people were built. Ours is a much deeper, more meaningful, and more lasting love.

Kinderlach . . .

We all want to marry a wonderful spouse, and love them dearly. The question is what makes a wonderful spouse. Someone who has Yiras Shomayim (fear of Hashem), good middos (character traits), Torah knowledge, and a commitment to the right values is indeed a treasure. They

will make a good marriage partner. May you merit to marry a truly good spouse, and build a Bayis Neeman b'Yisrael (Home faithful to Jewish values).

SILENCE

"And Hashem remembered Rachel, He listened to her, and He opened her womb" (Bereshis 30:22). The Sifsei Chachomim explains that whenever the Torah states that Hashem remembers someone, He remembers a good deed or deeds that the person performed in the past and subsequently grants their request. The Medrash Tanchuma notes that Hashem remembered Rachel's silence. Yaakov wanted to marry Rachel. He sent gifts to her. Lavan intercepted the gifts and gave them to Leah instead. Rachel was quiet. The Medrash praises her silence by quoting the Mishnah (Avos 1:17). Shimon the son of Rabban Gamliel said, "All of my life I have been raised among the sages and I have not found anything better for the body than silence." Our sages praise silence in many other ways. Rebbe Akiva said, "The fence that protects wisdom is silence" (Avos 3:17). The Gemora (Megilla 18a) writes, "The best medicine in the world is silence." "Those who listen to insults and do not answer back are beloved by Hashem. They will grow stronger as the rising sun from morning to midday." The Vilna Gaon writes in the name of the Medrash, "Each and every minute that a person seals his lips he merits to see the light that was hidden away (from the time of the creation of the world). This value of this reward is beyond the comprehension of any creature."

Kinderlach . . .

Let's go around the Shabbos table giving examples of when we should be silent. "When we are thinking of saying Loshon Hora." Very good Dovid. "When someone who will not listen to criticism says something insulting to us." Excellent Rivkah. "When we are bored and just want to say something silly." You're right, Chaim, it's better to say nothing. "When we are in the middle of an argument." So true, Esti. The other person cannot continue arguing with himself. Kinderlach, quiet is a beautiful sound.

Parasha Questions:

- Why were Leah's eyes tender? (Rashi 29:17)
- Why did Yaakov need to identify Rachel as "Rachel your younger daughter"? (Rashi 29:18)
- Where does the name Zevulun come from? (30:20)
- What were the different type of spots on Lavan's sheep? (30:32 and Rashi)

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