

Parshas Vayishlach

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1. The Secret to Jewish Survival

The Torah tells us that after working for his father-in-law Lavan for a period of 20 years, Yaakov, our Patriarch, fled with his family and wealth to return to Canaan. When Lavan discovered what had happened, he pursued Yaakov to destroy him. Hashem interceded and came to Lavan in a dream and told him not to harm Yaakov in any way. When Lavan finally caught up with Yaakov, he explained to him that had it not been for G'd's intervention he would have brought harm upon him. Yaakov understood that Lavan had the capacity and capability to destroy him and his family. It is interesting to note that despite Yaakov's understanding of the consequence of his flight and Lavan's pursuit of him, he did not attempt to prepare in any way for the eventual confrontation.

Contrastingly, before Yaakov was to confront his brother Esav, he took that eventuality very seriously. He prepared himself to meet Esav in three areas: Tefillah, gifts, and battle. **Tefillah (prayer)** - Yaakov beseeched Hashem to protect him from his brother and to fulfill His promise that he would be able to return to Canaan unharmed. **Valuable gifts** - Yaakov had prepared a gift comprised of herds and flocks to be presented to his brother with great reverence, hoping that this would defuse his wrath against him. Thirdly Yaakov prepared for **battle** - he divided his family into two camps so that in the event there was a confrontation with Esav, the second camp would be able to flee and survive.

Yaakov's existence was in no less jeopardy when he had fled from Lavan than at this moment when he was about to confront his brother Esav. Yet if this is the case, why did Yaakov need to prepare for the encounter with Esav if he did not do so for the confrontation with Lavan – which seems to have been an identical confrontation?

The Torah tells us that after Yaakov had received the blessings from his father Yitzchak, Esav had pleaded with his father to bless him also saying, **“Have you but one blessing, Father? Bless me too, Father!...So Yitzchak his father answered, and said to him: “...your brother you shall serve; yet it shall be that when you are aggrieved, you may cast off his yoke from your neck.”** Rashi explains that the only time the Jew is protected from the clutches and tyranny of Esav/Edom is when he adheres to the Torah in its entirety. However, if he should fail in this regard, then Esav will be able to cast off the yolk of Yaakov and become the dominating force.

Yaakov was not concerned regarding his confrontation with Lavan, although he was no less evil than Esav. Being worthy of Divine Protection from Lavan was not contingent upon Yaakov's spiritual status. Of course it is understood that Yaakov only survived his 20-year sojourn with his father-in-law because of G'd's initial promise that he would be protected. However, regarding his concern about surviving and succeeding with his brother Esav, despite his intense hate for him, it was another matter. It is a given that Yaakov needed some degree of merit to be protected from Lavan; however, it was not comparable to what was needed to protect him from Esav. Yaakov understood that G'd's guarantee would only be in effect if he had maintained a level of spirituality that was sufficient to make him worthy of the blessings.

The Gemara in Tractate Shabbos tells us that the Roman presence in Israel (who

were descendants of Edom, i.e. Esav) existed 186 years before the destruction of the Second Temple. This means that there was already a breach in the Divine Protection against Esav 186 years prior to the actual destruction of the Temple and expulsion of the Jewish people. It is only because the Jewish people had failed spiritually that they were vulnerable to Edom. Thus began the fourth exile (the Edomite exile), which we are currently experiencing.

Since the destruction of the Second Temple, Esav/Edom has been in a dominant position and the Jewish people have been down trodden. The Gemara in Tractate Yomah tells us that the Second Temple was destroyed because of *Sinaas Chinam* (baseless hatred between Jews). Esav despised and detested Yaakov's existence for taking the blessing from him, despite the fact that he had no basis for this claim because he had sold Yaakov the birthright. Thus, the characteristic of baseless hatred is that of Esav/Edom. Therefore when the Jew assumes the posture of Esav by emulating him in the context of having baseless hatred for his fellow Jew, he thus forfeits his special relationship with G'd.

Although the Jew may adhere meticulously to the precepts of the Torah, if one has baseless hatred of his fellow (to any degree), he no longer merits Divine Protection. The Jew will only merit blessing if he assumes the posture of Yaakov, our Patriarch, which is Truth. The Jerusalem Talmud tells us that if the Temple is not rebuilt in a particular generation it is as if it were destroyed in that generation. This is because the Jew has the ability to correct the wrong of 2000 years, assume the posture of Yaakov, and no longer be identified with Esav.

2. Yaakov - the Embodiment of the Jewish People

The Torah tells us that after Yaakov had not seen his brother Esav for nearly 36 years, he communicated to him through angels (agents), ***“Im Lavan gartie - I have sojourned with Lavan and have lingered until now. I have acquired oxen and donkeys, flocks, servants, and maidservants...”*** Yaakov delineated to Esav his financial success and what he had amassed while with Lavan. Why did Yaakov share his successes with his brother Esav, who had despised him? Why would Esav have any interest in the information that was communicated to him by Yaakov?

Rashi cites Chazal who explain that when Yaakov communicated; ***“Im Lavan gartie - I have sojourned with Lavan...”*** he was telling Esav that despite all of the negative influences of Lavan and his community, he remained spiritually intact and unscathed. This interpretation is derived from the word *“gartie,”* which has a numerical value of 613. Meaning, Yaakov was telling Esav that he had adhered to all of the precepts of the Torah (both negative and positive) while in the household of Lavan. Thus, he remained protected by G'd because he was spiritually undiminished.

The Midrash Tanchumah explains that when Yaakov delineated his assets to Esav, he was communicating to him that he had nothing to fear because of his personal spiritual value. The Midrash states, “Yaakov said, “I have no reason to fear you (Esav) because I have acquired oxen...” The “ox” refers to Yaakov's son Yosef. Another reason Yaakov had no reason to fear Esav was because he had “donkeys.” This is an allusion to Moshiach, the son of (King) David, who will redeem the Jewish people and bring existence to spiritual perfection. As it is stated, “Moshiach will come like a poor man riding on a donkey...” The “sheep (flock)” mentioned by Yaakov refers to the merits of the sons of the Tribes (Yaakov's sons) – who are referred to as flocks. Additionally, Yehudah (Yaakov's son and Prince of the Tribe of Yehudah) is the antagonist of Esav. As the verse states, “The lion and the ox will eat the straw...” The “lion” refers to Yehudah

and the “straw” refers to Esav. When Yaakov mentioned “*eved* - servant (male)” he was alluding to Moshe Rabbeinu who is referred to as “*eved Hashem* – servant of G’d.” The “maidservant” which Yaakov had mentioned refers to Ruth who is the (grand) mother of King David. As the verse in Psalms states, “I am the servant of Your maidservant (Ruth) ...” Therefore because of all of these reasons, Yaakov had no reason to fear Esav.

At this particular moment in time, Yaakov had already fathered Yosef and Yehudah. However, he alluded to many things which touch upon the merits of future generations that would descend from his son. Moshe, Ruth, King David, Moshiach...are all decedents of Yaakov’s progeny. How do we understand Yaakov’s communication to his brother Esav regarding all of the individuals mentioned other than his sons Yosef and Yehudah, who were the only ones born at this time? How does the special dimension of Moshiach, King David, Ruth and the descendents of the Tribes offer a basis for Divine Protection from Esav if they did not yet exist?

Chazal refer to Yaakov as “the most special of the Patriarchs.” On a simple level, one could understand that Yaakov is referred to in this manner because he was qualified to father the twelve Tribes of Israel (who are referred to as “Shivtei Kah - the Tribes of G’d. However, based on the Midrash cited earlier, we are able to understand the uniqueness and special dimension of Yaakov at another level. Yaakov himself was an embodiment of the potential of the entire Jewish people until the end of time. Every level of spiritual advancement that could be achieved in the future was only because it was rooted in Yaakov himself. The Midrash is telling us that what Yaakov communicated to his brother Esav was that he had nothing to fear because he contained within himself the spirituality that would enable a Moshe Rabbeinu to evolve as well as King David, Moshiach and everything else to which Yaakov had alluded.

Thus, Yaakov merited G’d’s full protection, not to be compromised to any degree by Esav, because he inculcated within himself a dimension of spirituality that would manifest itself through these special people until the end of time. Because Yaakov played such a vital role in the destiny of the Jewish people he had no need to be afraid of Esav. Nevertheless the Torah tells us that Yaakov was very afraid. How do we understand this?

When Hashem commanded Avraham to take his only son Yitzchak to the Akeidah to be brought as a burnt offering, Avraham was confronted with the most difficult test of his life. Normally one would understand that the difficulty was that Avraham was being asked to sacrifice his “only beloved son,” as it is stated in the verse. However, the test goes beyond this because if Yitzchak were to be sacrificed, being the future Patriarch of the Jewish people, he would not father Yaakov and there would be no Jewish people to stand at Sinai to receive the Torah. If the Torah would not be given at Sinai, the world would revert to a state of pre-existence because it was only created as a setting for the fulfillment of the Torah. Avraham understood what was at stake. Thus, this was part of the overwhelming difficulty of the Akeidah in bringing his son Yitzchak as a sacrifice; it would bring existence to a close.

Similarly, Yaakov understood that if Esav were to end his life, it would mean that there would be no Jewish people. All the Kiddush Hashem (sanctification of G’d’s Name) that would have come about through their existence would not come to be if Esav were to kill him. Thus, Yaakov was frightened, not because of his concern for his own personal physicality and that of his family, but rather, that the destiny of the Jewish people, as he had foreseen it, would not unfold.

3. Understanding Yaakov’s Distress

The Torah tells us that when Yaakov was contemplating his confrontation with his brother Esav, **“Yaakov became very frightened, and it distressed him...”** Regarding Yaakov being frightened, the Torah uses the expression “meod – very;”- however, regarding his being distressed, the Torah only says that he was “distressed.” What is the difference between Yaakov being “very” frightened and not being “very” distressed?

Rashi explains that the meaning of Yaakov being “frightened” was that he was concerned that he may be killed in his confrontation with Esav. However, the basis for his “distress” was that he may kill others in a confrontation. Yaakov was “very” frightened not because of the possibility of dying in a physical sense. He was “very” frightened that if he were to be killed, all the Kiddush Hashem (Sanctification of G’d’s Name) that was to emanate from him would never come to be. He was “very” frightened that by his life coming to an end, there would not be a spiritual future for the Jewish people, which implies the end of existence. This was an overwhelming fear for Yaakov. However, the level of “distress” he felt in having to kill others in battle was not comparable to the idea that this could be the end of the Jewish People. This is why Yaakov was “very” frightened and not “very distressed.”

The Torah tells us that if one rises up to kill another, the one who is being attacked has an obligation to rise and kill his attacker. If Esav and his band of followers were to engage with Yaakov in battle, then it would be Yaakov’s Torah obligation to kill them. If this is the case then what is the basis for Yaakov’s distress? Additionally, rising and destroying Esav and his followers seems like a mitzvah which would purge the world from evil. It is clear from Rashi’s citation of the Midrash that Yaakov’s distress was not because he was concerned about the diminishment of his own spirituality, but rather, from having to kill others. We understand this because the Midrash does not say he was distressed to “kill” but rather to “kill others.” How do we understand this?

The basis for illness is rooted in one’s spiritual failing. Thus, when one becomes ill it is part of the rehabilitative process to recover one’s spiritual state. It is through illness and suffering that one atones for his sins. Reb Chaim of Volozhin z’tl in his work Nefesh Ha’Chaim asks, if illness atones for one’s sins, then why do we pray “Heal us, Hashem - then we will be healed; save us...Bring complete recovery for all our ailments...”? Perhaps one should not pray to be healed because in essence one is asking not to be rehabilitated. It would be analogous to a doctor suggesting that the only way one could recover from a specific illness is to undergo a certain therapy and the patient pleads with the doctor not to administer the therapy. Seemingly, this is what we are asking G’d. Reb Chaim of Volozhin z’tl explains the blessing of healing with an allegory:

A man has a son who has experienced a serious accident in which all of the bones of his body are broken and need resetting. The doctor tells the father that after the bones are all set properly, the son will have a full recovery and return to full function. The father who stands by and watches the doctor reset the bones, although he is happy and feels fortunate that this procedure will bring about a full recovery, simultaneously he feels tremendously pained and anguished to witness his son in such excruciating pain. Similarly, although Hashem brings illness upon a person for the sake of atonement, which is rehabilitative, He is simultaneously “pained” that His child needs to experience and undergo such unfortunate difficulties.

Reb Chaim of Volozhin z’tl explains that if one would feel Hashem’s pain, out of his love and reverence for Him, then that pain experienced by the person who is praying, would atone for the consequences of the sin which brought about the illness. If one could truly internalize the pain that Hashem “feels”, when He must punish His children, then

that pain would in itself alleviate spiritual diminishment.

Although Yaakov would have had the obligation to rise and kill his attacker, nevertheless his attacker is the handiwork of Hashem— regardless of their status as evil or not. When the Egyptians were drowned in the Sea, the angels began to sing the praises of Hashem. Regardless of the fact that the Egyptians were evil and they had enslaved and persecuted the Jewish people for over 200 years, G'd's response to the angels was, "My handiwork is drowning in the Sea! And you are singing My praises!" Hashem was "pained" to see the Egyptian people (His handiwork) dying in the Sea – although it was something that needed to take place. Similarly Yaakov was distressed if he would need to kill other individual(s), despite their representation of evil or his obligation to rise and destroy them. Yaakov was at a level that he experienced and internalized the "pain" of Hashem. Thus, the Torah tells us that he was "distressed" that he may have to kill others.

Reb Chaim of Volozhin z'tl explains that when a Jew responds, (during the recitation of the Kaddish), "*Amen, y'haish mei rabba m'vorach l'ol mei ol maya* – Amen, May His great Name be blessed forever and ever," he is declaring that Hashem should permeate all levels of existence and thus all evil would come to an end. The Gemara in Tractate Berachos tells us that when Hashem hears Jews responding with, "Amen, May His great Name be blessed forever and ever," G'd shakes His head (to the degree that one may express this) and says, "How fortunate is the King who is praised in His own house! What does a father have if He exiled His children? Woe to the children that have been exiled from their Father's table." This response of Hashem indicates that He is "pained" that His children, the Jewish people, are in a state of exile.

One must understand that when he transgresses he is not only violating the Word of Hashem but he is also causing G'd to be pained that His children need to be punished. Reb Moshe Cordevero in his work *Tomar Devorah*, says regarding the Attribute of Mercy of Hashem, that He carries the deliberate, defiant and inadvertent sin of the Jewish people. He explains that when one sins, one creates a negative spiritual entity. Every entity in existence (spiritual or physical) needs to be sustained. If the consequence of the sin would be sustained by the transgressor through punishment, the person would not survive. Thus, Hashem Himself, because of His unlimited level of Mercy, sustains the negative forces that were created on the various levels of transgression.

Despite the disgrace of Hashem that He needs to carry something that is the equivalent of "spiritual waste," He does so as a result of His Mercy. This is one of the advanced levels of Mercy of Hashem. Reb Moshe Cordevero cites a verse regarding the spiritual cleansing brought about by G'd, "When G'd has washed away the spiritual excrement/filth of the daughters of Tzion..." With this one should understand to remove himself from sin because "it is the King Himself who cleanses the filth from his garments." One should not only remove himself from sin because it is wrong; but rather, because of the disgrace of causing the Omnipotent Being (Hashem Himself) to cleanse one of something that is so spiritually vile. Yaakov, our Patriarch, was able to internalize that pain. Consequently, it is relevant for us to have a sense of that reality being the descendants of Yaakov.

4. The Power Behind Existence

The Torah relates to us the tragic incident of the defilement Dinah, the daughter of Yaakov, by Shechem (Prince of Canaan). The Torah states, "**Shechem, son of Chamor...saw her (Dinah); he took her, lay with her, and violated her. He became deeply attached to Dinah (her spiritual essence), 'bas Yaakov' the daughter of**

Yaakov...” The Torah could have simply referred to Dinah as “Dinah.” Why does it identify her in this context as “the daughter of Yaakov?” The Torah continues to say, “**Now Yaakov heard that he (Shechem) had defiled his daughter Dinah...**” The Torah could have stated that Yaakov heard that Shechem had defiled “Dinah.” Why does it refer to her as “his daughter, Dinah?” After Yaakov’s sons returned from the field, they had heard that their sister had been defiled, the Torah states, “**...the men were distressed, and were fired deeply with indignation, for he had committed an outrage/disgrace in Israel by lying with the daughter of Yaakov...**” Once again the Torah identifies Dinah as “the daughter of Yaakov.” It does not even identify her as “Dinah” but only as “the daughter of Yaakov.” What is the Torah communicating to us by continuously reiterating this fact – that Dinah is “*bas Yaakov- the daughter of Yaakov?*”

Dinah, the daughter of Yaakov, is representation of holiness because she was “*bas Yaakov.*” As “*bas Yaakov*” she possessed a semblance of the sanctity and holiness of her father Yaakov, our Patriarch. It is precisely for this reason that Shechem, who was Canaanite, was drawn to her. The descendents of Canaan are a “cursed stock.” Something that is cursed cannot attach itself to something that is blessed. Shechem was attracted to Dinah, the daughter of Yaakov not because of her exceptional beauty (the Torah does not identify her in this context) but rather because of her innate spirituality. Because his essence was cursed, Shechem was attracted to the essence that was blessed – to attach itself to it and subsume it.

The Torah tells us that Pharaoh had summoned the Jewish midwives (Yocheved and Miriam). The Midrash explains that he had done so in order to cohabit with them. The Maharal of Prague z’tl explains that the purpose of cohabitation with the midwives was to ultimately have a greater level of influence over them. Thus, when Pharaoh would later instruct them to kill the Jewish males they would acquiesce to his demands. The Maharal of Prague asks, “Was Pharaoh really aware of such a concept – that by having sexual relations with a woman one would assume a dominant position over her?” He answers that Pharaoh definitely did not consciously understand this concept; but rather, the evil force that was behind Pharaoh (which directs an individual to behave in a certain manner) was the motivating factor to bring about the destruction of the Jewish people. The individual himself believes that his behavior is motivated by his own rationale. However, the true motivating and compelling force behind his actions is this evil force, which is unbeknownst to him. The evil influence, which governed Pharaoh’s behavior, wished to take control of the Jewish midwives to use them to undermine the spirituality of the Jewish people. However, the midwives did not succumb to Pharaoh’s request.

Every one of the seventy root nations has its own archangel, which is responsible for that particular nation. The Torah tells us that after the Jewish people had left Egypt, they saw “Egypt traveling after them.” The word for “traveling” used by the Torah is “*nosayah,*” which is written here in the singular form rather than the plural. If the Torah wished to communicate that the Egyptians (as a people) were pursuing the Jewish people, it should have used the plural form of the word. Rashi cites Chazal who explain that the Torah is not referring to the Egyptian army but rather to the archangel of Egypt. The archangel of Egypt was the driving force behind them, which enabled them to become the most advanced civilization of that era. It was the spiritual force behind the Egyptian people that was the counterforce to the Jewish people who represent G’d’s Presence in this existence.

The Torah tells us that before Yaakov was confronted by his brother Esav, he wrestled with the archangel of Esav. Yaakov successfully subdued Esav’s archangel. It was because of Yaakov’s victory over the spiritual force that empowered Esav that he was

confident that he would be able to succeed with his brother. Since the spiritual counterpart of Esav was completely subdued and subordinated by Yaakov, he was able to subdue Esav himself. As a result of this victory, Yaakov assumed the appellation of “*Yisroel*” which identifies his advanced spiritual dimension.

Hitler and Amalek (may their names and memory be obliterated) were able to gain positions of control and dominance in relatively short periods of time, only because they were empowered by their archangel to do so. Their ascent to power and world dominance was not rooted in their intelligence or ability, but rather, in the spiritual force behind them. It was their archangel that caused them to act at the exact moment of opportunity to undermine and deceive all humanity in attempting to bring about the “Final Solution.” The reason these evil powers ultimately failed was because the spiritual force driving and directing them was restrained and subdued. It was not because of poor planning, physical weakness or faulty strategy.

Shechem was physically attracted to Dinah. However what motivated him and compelled him to seek her out for defilement was that fact that she was the daughter of Yaakov- the essence of holiness. He was not consciously aware of this motivating force. The force of evil that was the counterpart of Shechem motivated him to defile her so that it could become attached to her and destroy her spirituality. As the verse states, “**He (Shechem) became deeply attached (his soul attached itself) to Dinah (her essence) ...**” This is the reason that within the context of her defilement the Torah refers to Dinah as “**the daughter of Yaakov.**” When the brothers of Dinah heard that she had been defiled they were enraged not because their sister was raped, but because “the daughter of Yaakov” was defiled. Their level of outrage was only because it was a diminishment of her spirituality, which was an outgrowth of Yaakov.

The Torah tells us that when Yaakov encountered his brother Esav he bowed to him several times and then he embraced him – *v'yishakeihu*. When the Torah writes the word “*v'yishakeihu*” it places dots upon the letters of the word. Rashi cites the Midrash which explains the significance of these dots: “Reb Shimon Bar Yochai says, “It is a fact (halacha) and it is well known that Esav despises/hates/detests Yaakov. It was only at that moment that Yaakov aroused a sense of mercy within the heart of Esav that caused him to embrace his brother wholeheartedly.” Thus, the dots on the word are coming to teach us that although at that moment Esav expressed sincere feelings for his brother Yaakov, under normal circumstances “Esav despises Yaakov.” One should not think otherwise.

One may think that the western world/western civilization in which we live today is truly kind and generous to the Jewish people. At no other time in history did the Jews have such freedom, equality, and opportunity to succeed. Despite this fact, one must be aware and understand that nevertheless we are presently experiencing the fourth exile, which is that of Edom/Esav. While in the material sense our situation is better than it ever has been, the fact is that there has never been a time in history that assimilation has been at such catastrophic levels. It is precisely because of the freedom and affluence that has been afforded to the Jew that we are experiencing a spiritual holocaust.

The driving force behind our society is its archangel that compels it to behave as it does. Its interest and purpose is to subsume, subdue, and ultimately extinguish the spirituality of the Jewish people. As the Torah tells us through the dots on the word *v'yishakeihu* – *he kissed him* - despite all of the exterior indications that Esav truly loved his brother Yaakov, the fact that must be stated and known is that Esav despises Yaakov.

It is true that one must be beholden for all the kindness that is afforded to us as a

Jewish people in the free world. However, the Jew must understand and appreciate the driving force that is compelling the world to behave in this manner. Is the compelling force truly for the sake to do kindness to the Jewish people? Or is it ultimately to subsume and bring about the demise of the spiritual posture of the Jewish People/ *Benei Yisroel* (sons of Yaakov) - because the Jew is the representation of holiness in this existence - just as Shechem gravitated towards Dinah, “the daughter of Yaakov” to defile her. The nations of the world are not acting in this manner on a conscious level. It is the compelling spiritual force, the counterforce to holiness and spirituality that is attempting to diminish *Benei Yisroel* /Jewish people.

5. Yaakov’s Appreciation of Rachel’s Spiritual Dimension (from *Vayeitzei*)

The Torah states when Yaakov saw Rachel, “**Then Yaakov kissed Rachel; and he raised his voice and wept.**” Rashi cites Chazal who explain that the reason Yaakov wept was because he saw through Divine Inspiration that Rachel would not be buried with him in the Tomb of Machpelah. Another explanation cited by Rashi is that Yaakov wept because he came to Rachel, the future Matriarch of the Jewish people empty-handed - without any gifts. As the Midrash states, “Eliezer the servant of my grandfather (Avraham) came with nose rings, bracelets, and delicacies in his hand (to give as gifts for Rivka). It is because I (Yaakov) was pursued by Elifaz (son of Esav), who wished to kill me, that I had to relinquish all of my wealth.” What was the basis for Yaakov’s weeping? Was it because he was not able to satisfy his future wife with material gifts? Is it possible that Yaakov, the most special of our Patriarchs and the father of the Jewish people would weep for denying his wife material gifts? How do we understand this?

Regarding the gifts of jewelry that were given to Rivka, our Matriarch, the Torah is explicit in identifying the nature and the weight of the jewelry. The Torah refers to the weight of the nose ring as “Bekka.” Rashi cites the Midrash that explains that the weight of the nose ring “bekka” is an allusion to the Machtzis HaShekel which would be given in the future by Jewish people for the sake of purchasing communal offerings. The communal offerings atoned for the Jewish people. The two bracelets that are identified by the Torah are referred to as “two bracelets, their weight ten in gold.” The weight alludes to the Ten Commandments that were inscribed on Two Tablets which were of identical size. Meaning, the act of giving these gifts of jewelry to Rivka our Matriarch established and secured specific elements of spirituality for the Jewish people.

Yaakov, the Patriarch who fathered the Jewish people, understood that he must establish and secure the foundation for their destiny to guarantee the spiritual involvement of the Jewish people. Thus, when he came upon Rachel, the future Matriarch of the Jewish people, he understood that he was not able to establish through her the necessary elements that would secure the spiritual future of the Jewish people to a greater degree. Chazal tell us that Rachel was the “primary Matriarch” who mothered Yaakov’s most special son – Yosef. Thus, the setting to implant the necessary roots for the future would not be since Yaakov did not have gifts to present to her. The weeping of Yaakov was not simply because he denied his future wife material gifts; but rather, it was because it related to the spiritual dimension of the Jewish people.

Torah tells us that after Leah had given birth to a number of children, her sister Rachel remained barren. The Torah states, “**Rachel was jealous of her sister Leah.**” The

Torah cannot be communicating to us that Rachel, the primary Matriarch, was experiencing something that is the root of “sibling rivalry/jealousy.” Rashi cites Chazal who explain that the “jealousy” mentioned in the Torah is not referring to jealousy as it is understood in the vernacular; but rather, it is something positive. Rachel had wished that she could be at her sister’s spiritual level - thus enabling her to have children as Leah had. Rashi explains that Rachel wished to have been like her sister Leah in a spiritual sense. If in fact Rachel was barren, meaning that it was impossible for her to conceive, then why did she attribute this to lack of merit?

When Yaakov initially saw Rachel, he immediately saw her as the Matriarch of the Jewish people. She was identified as the “primary Matriarch.” Since this was the case, Rachel understood that the reason G’d’s miracle did not take place was because she was unworthy. Contrastingly, it was clear evidence to Rachel that her sister Leah, who had already given birth to four sons, was more devout than she was. Rachel understood who she was meant to be. This is the “jealousy” that the Torah is referring to.

The Matriarchs were an embodiment of holiness. They were the setting for the establishment of the Jewish people. Thus, the placing of the specific items of jewelry on Rivka and Rachel would spiritually impact upon the Jewish people until the end of time. Understanding this, we have no inkling or capacity to even begin to relate to who they really were.