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Rosh Bais Medrash English Speaking Program JCT Machon Lev

Like a Few Days - Yaakov's Love for Rachel

The Torah describes Yaakov's years of labor for Rachel:

וַיַּעֲבֹד יַעֲקֹב בְּרָחֵל שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים וַיִּהְיוּ בְעֵינָיו כְּיָמִים אֲחָדִים בְּאַהֲבָתוֹ אֹתָהּ

Yaakov served for Rachel seven years, and they seemed in his eyes like but a few days because of his love for her.[1]

The commentators ask an obvious question: usually, when one longs intensely for something, time feels longer, not shorter. What is the intended meaning of the term used in the pasuk above, "they seemed in his eyes like but a few days"?

The *Baalei HaTosafot* explain that the Torah does not mean the years passed quickly. It was not about quantity. Rather, it means that every effort, every sacrifice, every moment of labor felt worthwhile. Compared to the greatness of Rachel Imeinu, seven years were insignificant. True love transforms sacrifice into privilege. The period was not shortened, but felt worth it every day.

This resembles the famous insight regarding the source of *kiddushei kesef (using money to get married)*, derived from Avraham's acquisition of *Me'arat HaMahpelah*.[2] Doesn't it seem a bit peculiar to derive a lesson about a marriage transaction from the acquisition of a burial plot? Couldn't Hazal have selected a more positive parallel? Perhaps the connection is as follows. If you had asked Efron who got the better deal, he would have said, What do you mean? He gave me four hundred shekel for a cave. I completed the deal of the century. I sold an empty plot of land for the highest price per square meter ever! If you had asked Avraham, he would have said, I was able to acquire the entrance to Gan Eden for a few shekels. What a bargain!

Each party felt that they got the best deal of their life. And that's what marriage is about. Each spouse should look at the other and say, What a deal I got!

Every moment in a relationship is not always rosy. Misunderstandings are bound to occur. When they do we should recall the way

1. Bereishit 29:20

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2. The Talmud derives a gezera Shava. קיחה קיחה משדה עפרון . With respect to Avraham's acquisition of me'arat hamachpela it states: כסף השדה קח ממני. In connection with marriage it states: כי יקח איש אשה – the use of the verb קח appears in both verses and thus are connected. See Kiddushin 2a

Adam dealt with Hava. After Hava ate from the forbidden tree man's punishment was destined as the Torah dictates: *With the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread*.[3] In the very next *pasuk*, Adam named his spouse "Hava." He did not reprimand her or blame his punishment on her wrongdoing; rather, he called her "*Hava, em kol hai*" – "the mother of all." Adam placed everything into perspective. If we recognize and appreciate what we have rather than focusing on what we lack, we will experience happiness with our spouse.

In a healthy marriage, each spouse should feel: *I received far more than I gave.* That was Yaakov's feeling regarding Rachel: *they seemed in his eyes like but a few days.* Every sacrifice was small compared to the greatness of what he gained.

Perhaps this is one of the deepest lessons of Parashat Vayeitzei and of marriage itself. Yaakov Avinu teaches us that love is not measured by how little one gives, but by how meaningful the relationship becomes. When something is truly precious, sacrifice no longer feels like sacrifice. Time, effort, patience, and compromise are transformed into expressions of gratitude and privilege.

In a world that constantly encourages people to focus on what they are missing, the Torah teaches the secret of enduring happiness: to focus on the gift standing before us. Yaakov looked at Rachel and felt that seven years were *like a few day*s. Adam looked at Hava after the greatest failure in human history and still called her t*he mother of all life.* Greatness in relationships comes from seeing the blessing more than the burden, the privilege more than the price.

Perhaps that is why the Jewish home is called a *bayit ne'eman b'Yisrael* - a faithful home in Israel. A Jewish marriage is not built merely on emotion, but on appreciation, commitment, perspective, and the ability to recognize the infinite value within another human being.

When husband and wife each feel, *I received more than I gave,* their home becomes more than a partnership; it becomes a dwelling place for the Divine Presence. Through such homes, the Jewish people continue the legacy of Yaakov and Rachel and build a strong future based on love, sacrifice, and gratitude. ■

3. Bereshit 3:19



