

VAYEITZEI (GENESIS 28:10-32:3)

Fooling a Fooler

2025 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Sepowitz

Jacob had escaped with his life.

Not realizing how wicked his firstborn son was, Isaac planned to bless Esau.

A blessing from a holy man like Isaac would have empowered Esau to rule over Jacob (and perhaps the world.)

Consider this.

We all know the Purim story. Haman, a descendent of Amalek and Esau, wanted to destroy the Jews. What if Isaac's blessing had empowered him to win?

The Vilna Gaon was of the opinion that the German nation are decedents of Amalek. What would have been, G-d Forbid, if Esau/Amalek/Haman/Germany had won the two World Wars?

Esau had to be stopped. Isaac could not be allowed to make this mistake.

With the encouragement of his mother Rebecca (who was a prophetess and was operating with Divine approval) Jacob disguised himself as Esau and received the blessings that were meant for Esau. (In the end, when he knew the whole story, Isaac, in retrospect, approved the ruse.)

Now Esau wants to kill Jacob. Jacob's parents tell him to get out of Dodge.

Jacob has come to Haran (in Iraq) in search of a bride. He has found her. Or so he thinks.

He name is Rachel. She is his first cousin, daughter of his mother's brother Laban. Jacob cries. Prophetically he knows that she's the one for him. Yet, he cries. He cries because he also knows prophetically that they will not be buried together.

Jacob and Rachel were both prophets. But the fact that a person is blessed with prophecy doesn't mean he knows everything. A prophet knows what G-d wants him to know. The rest, he'll find out when he's supposed to.

One of the things Jacob didn't know about was Rachel's older sister Leah.

Jacob asked his Uncle Laban for Rachel's hand in marriage, and offered to work for him for seven years. Laban agreed. Sort of.

Laban said, "It would be better to give her to you than to give her to someone else. Stay with me. (Genesis, 29:19)

Notice that he didn't say yes. Notice, too, that he said "*Stay with me.*" He didn't agree that seven years of Jacob's work would earn him Rachel's hand.

Seven years go by. Jacob tells Laban it's time for the wedding. Laban schedules the wedding. Sort of.

A wedding feast took place and Jacob took his veiled bride home to his tent. It wasn't until the next morning that Jacob discovered that he had married the wrong woman! It was Leah! He had been had! His uncle had cheated him!

Laban defended his treachery by claiming that it was not customary to marry off the younger sister before the older one. However, Laban was "gracious" enough to allow Jacob to marry Rachel as well, if Jacob was prepared to commit himself to another seven years of work.

But Laban wasn't the only one who had trickled him. What about Leah? How dare she fool him like that!

He said to her, 'You are a liar, the daughter of a liar! Didn't I call out in the night, "Rachel," and you answered me!'

*She said to him, "Is there not a teacher without students? Didn't your father call out, 'Esau,' and you answered him?" (*Medrash Rabba 70:19)

Jacob mislead Isaac in order to prevent a mistake. Leah simply appears to be giving Jacob a dose of his own medicine. Now he knows how it feels!

But I think it is much more than that.

There were a number of prophecies that were known.

It was known that Jacob was going to be the father of the 12 Tribes of Israel. It was known that Rachel was to be his wife. What Jacob apparently didn't know was that Leah was also destined to be his wife. (And she, not Rachel, was destined to be buried next to him.)

Sometimes we think we know the whole story. We usually don't.

When I was in 8th grade, it was time to look at Yeshiva high schools. I wanted to go to New York. My mother wanted me to go to Providence. Mom won. About 22 years later, my former principal from Providence recommended me for a temporary job, filling in for a rabbi in a nursing home. As a result of that job I ended up being recommended to become the rabbi of the retirement community where I have been working for the past 27 years!

But there's more.

In my senior year in high school I had my whole career all figured out. I decided to continue my studies in a certain Yeshiva in Israel. My mother wanted me to go to a certain seminar. So I did. I met someone who told me about a different Yeshiva with a different approach. I went to that Yeshiva, and it changed my life! (I also met a Mohel at that seminar who spoke about becoming a Mohel. That too changed my life!!) So much for my well-thought-out career plans!!

There was a reason that G-d didn't want Jacob to know yet that "Mamma Leah" was destined to be the mother of half the tribes of Israel, and he had to be tricked into marrying her.

Maybe the idea is to show us that we never know the whole story, and we need to trust in Go-d to make it all turn out alright.

Why didn't Jacob marry Leah initially? Because he didn't want to!

**The eyes of Leah were weak (*Whatever THAT means) and Rachel was of beautiful form and beautiful appearance. (Genesis, 28:15)*

And let's not forget that once the Torah was given, it was forbidden for a man to be married to 2 sisters at the same time. So maybe even now there would have to be a VERY good reason to engage in such a marriage.

We sometimes think we have it all figured out... until someone hits us over the head and changes our plans!

There used to be 12 Tribes of Israel. Ten of them are lost. See <https://aish.com/the-search-for-the-ten-lost-tribes/>) There are basically 2+ left that we know of.

Are you a Kohain? How about a Leivi? Either way, you are from the Tribe of Leivi, the third son of Leah. You are a descendent of Momma Leah! Most of the rest of us "regular" Jews are from the Tribe of Yehudah, the fourth son of Momma Leah. That's why we're called "Jews," from Judah. A small percentage of us are decedents of Benjamin. That would make you a descendent of Mamma Rachel.

The overwhelming majority of those people who identify today as Jews are descendants of Leah.

Aren't you glad that Momma Leah got our father Yaakov to marry her?

Sometimes we can accomplish more when we don't have the whole story.

Have a great Shabbos.

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