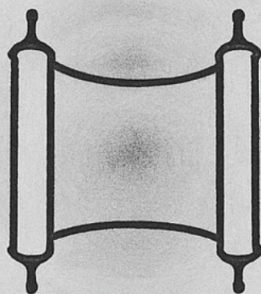


בס"ד

Reb Meir of Premishlan

Divrie Meir

Parshas Vayeitzei



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וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּעַר שְׁוֹעַ וַיֵּלֶךְ חֲרָנָה וַיִּפְגַּע בְּמָקוֹם וְגו' כח, י-יא

And Yaakov went out from Be'er Sheva and went to Charan. And he encountered the place, etc. (Bereishis 28:10–11)

Rabbi Meir of Premishlan said: It is written “and he went to Charan” — the wrath (*charon af*) departed.

אמר רבי מאיר מפרמישלאן: כתוב וַיֵּלֶךְ חֲרָנָה – נסתלק חרון אף.

And why? He said, because it is written “and he encountered the place,” meaning he met the Holy One, blessed is He; therefore “and he went to Charan” — the wrath departed.

ומדוע, ואמר כי כתיב וַיִּפְגַּע בְּמָקוֹם – הוא פגש את הקדוש ברוך הוא, לפיכך וַיֵּלֶךְ חֲרָנָה – נסתלק החרון אף.

But how is it possible to meet the Holy One, blessed is He? Therefore Rashi, of blessed memory, explained that “there is no encounter except prayer,” for if one prays to Hashem, then “and their cry He will hear” (Tehillim 145:19).

אבל איך אפשר לפגש את הקדוש ברוך הוא. ולכך פירש רש"י ז"ל אין פגיעה אלא תפלה, אם מתפללים לה' – אז ואת שועתם ישמע (תהלים קמה, יט).

[NOTE Summary:

Rabbi Meir of Premishlan explains that when the Torah says “and he went to Charan,” it also hints that the *charon af* — Divine wrath — was removed. This was because Yaakov “encountered the place,” meaning he met the Holy One, blessed is He. Such a meeting happens through prayer, as Rashi explains: “There is no encounter except prayer.” When a person prays sincerely to Hashem, their plea is heard, as in the verse “and their cry He will hear” (Tehillim 145:19).

Practical Takeaway:

Prayer is the path to encounter Hashem and remove harsh judgments. One should approach prayer as a genuine meeting with the Divine, knowing it has the power to sweeten and remove any decree. **END NOTE]**

וַהֲבִיחַ מַצֵּב אֲרָצָה וְרֹאשׁוֹ מֵגִיעַ הַשְּׁמַיְמָה וַהֲבִיחַ מַלְאָכֵי אֱלֹקִים עֲלִיָּם וַיֵּרְדּוּ בּוֹ כח, יב

And behold, a ladder was set on the earth and its top reached the heavens; and behold, angels of God were ascending and descending on it (Bereishis 28:12)

Once, before the holy Rabbi Meir of Premishlan, may his merit protect us, Amen, a child came. The holy Rabbi asked him about the dream of our forefather Yaakov, of the ladder standing on the earth and its top reaching the heavens: was that ladder doubled, as is customary with ladders so they can stand on their own?

לפני הרב הקדוש רבי מאיר מפרמישליין זכותו יגן עלינו אמן בא פעם ילד. שאלו הרב הקדוש על החלום של יעקב אבינו די סלם מצב ארצה וראשו מגיע השמימה: האם סלם זה כפולה היתה, כנהוג בסלמות בכדי שיעמדו מעצמן.

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The child answered and said: No. He said to him: And if it was a single ladder standing from the floor to the ceiling, could it stand without support above? Surely it could. If so, upon what did that ladder lean? Meir will tell you that the ladder leaned upon grooves that were in the heavens.

And the holy Rabbi continued to say: And perhaps you wish to know how grooves are made in the heavens? Meir will tell you this too: that through prayer, Torah, charity, and good deeds, through this one makes grooves in the heavens so that the ladder will lean upon them.

[NOTE Summary:

Rabbi Meir of Premishlan explained a childlike yet profound interpretation of Yaakov's dream of the ladder reaching the heavens. When asked if the ladder was doubled, as is common so it can stand on its own, the child answered "No." Rabbi Meir pressed further — if it was a single ladder, how could it stand without support above? The answer: it leaned upon grooves in the heavens. And how are such grooves made? Through prayer, Torah study, charity, and good deeds, which create a firm place in the heavens for one's spiritual ascent.

Practical Takeaway:

One's spiritual "ladder" to heaven needs a place to rest. By engaging in prayer, Torah, acts of kindness, and charity, we carve out a connection point above, making our ascent stable and secure. **END NOTE]**

The *Sfas Emes* and the *Beis Yisroel* of Gur, in the name of Rabbi Meir of Premishlan, of blessed memory, said: Come

and see the difference between one dream and another. Our forefather Yaakov, peace be upon him, slept and dreamed — his dream was: "And behold, a ladder was set on the earth and its top reached the heavens, and behold, angels of God were ascending and descending on it."

Pharaoh also dreamed a dream, but his dream was: "And behold, from the river were coming up seven cows" (Bereishis 41:18) — that he dreamed about animals, cattle.

ענה הילד ואמר: לא. אמר לו: וכי סלם יחיד הנצבת מהרצפה ועד התקרה יכולה לעמוד בלי משענת למעלה – הרי ודאי תוכל. ואם כן, סלם ההיא על מה נשען? אף מאיריו יומר לה דהסלם נשען על חריצים שהיו בשמים.

והמשיך הרב הקדוש לאמר: ושמא תרצה לדעת איך עושים חריצים בשמים? מאיריל יומר לה אף זאת: דעל ידי תפלה ותורה וצדקות ומעשים טובים, על ידי זה עושים חריצים בשמים בכדי שיהסלם תשען אליהם.

ספר והבית ישראל מגור בשם הרבי רבי מאיר מפרימישלאן זכרוננו צדיק לברכה – שאמר: בא וראה מה בין חלום לחלום. יעקב אבינו עליו השלום ישן וחלם – חלומו הנה: "והנה סלם מצב ארצה וראשו מגיע השמימה, והנה מלאכי אלקים עלים ויורדים בו".

פרעה גם חלם חלום, אולם חלומו הנה: "והנה מן היאר עלות שבע פרות" (שם מא, יח) – שחלם על בהמות, שורים.

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[NOTE Summary:

Rabbi Meir of Premishlan contrasted two biblical dreams to highlight the nature of a person's inner world. Yaakov's dream was lofty — a ladder standing on the earth with its top reaching the heavens, angels of God ascending and descending — a vision of spiritual connection and divine service. Pharaoh's dream, by contrast, was of cows rising from the Nile — entirely bound to the physical and material. A dream mirrors the dreamer's essence; the content reflects where the person's mind and heart dwell.

Practical Takeaway:

One's inner focus shapes even their subconscious. If a person fills their mind with Torah, prayer, and holiness, their thoughts and dreams will be elevated. Immersing oneself in the material alone produces a vision that is earthbound.

Chassidic Story:

Once, a young man came to Rabbi Meir of Premishlan troubled by disturbing dreams. Rabbi Meir told him: "At night, you only see what you place there by day. If your thoughts climb heavenward during the day, your dreams will follow." This guidance inspired the young man to dedicate fixed times to Torah study and acts of kindness, and within weeks his nights were filled with peace. **END NOTE]**

וַיִּקְץ יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁנָתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר: אֲכֵן יֵשׁ ה' בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וְאֲנֹכִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי כֵחַ, טז

And Yaakov awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely Hashem is in this place, and I did not know" (Bereishis 28:16)

I also heard in the name of the aforementioned holy Rabbi of Premishlan, who said on the verse "And Yaakov awoke from his sleep and said": At night every person awakens a little from his sleep — the tzaddik as well as the common man.

However, the difference between one and the other is that when the tzaddik awakens a little, he rises immediately from his bed with zeal and eagerness, and ignites himself for the service of Hashem, blessed be He, in Torah and service, songs and praises.

But not so the common man — even when he awakens, he turns himself to the other side until he sleeps again plenty more. And this is the meaning of the verse, "And Yaakov awoke" — the tzaddik — "from his sleep, and said" immediately "Surely Hashem is," whereas "And Pharaoh awoke" (Bereishis 41:4) — the common man — "and he slept again." And the words of a wise man's mouth are gracious, and his lips will kiss.

שְׁמַעְתִּי עוֹד בְּשֵׁם הָרַב הַקָּדוֹשׁ הַגָּ' ל
מְפָרִימִשְׁלָן שֶׁאָמַר עַל הַפְּסוּק "וַיִּקְץ יַעֲקֹב
מִשְׁנָתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר: כִּי בִלְיָלָה כָּל אִישׁ וְאִישׁ
מִתְעוֹרֵר מֵעַתַּת מִשְׁנָתוֹ – הַצָּדִיק כְּאִישׁ הַמוֹנִי

אֲמַנָּם הַחֲלוּק בֵּין זֶה לָזֶה: כִּי הַצָּדִיק כְּשֶׁמִּתְעוֹרֵר
מֵעַתַּת – קָם תַּכָּף מִמְּשָׁכְבוֹ בְּזִרְיוֹת וְחֶשֶׁק,
וְנִתְלַהֵב לַעֲבוֹדַת ה' יִתְבָּרַךְ – בְּתוֹרָה וְעֲבוֹדָה,
שִׁירֹת וְתַשְׁבָּחוֹת

אֲבָל לֹא כֵן אִישׁ הַמוֹנִי – גַּם כְּאִשְׁרֵי מִתְעוֹרֵר,
הוֹפֵךְ אֶת עַצְמוֹ לְצַד הַשְּׁנִית עַד שֶׁיִּשְׁן עוֹד דִּי
וְהוֹתֵר. וְזֶה מֵאִמֶּר הַכְּתוּב: "וַיִּקְץ יַעֲקֹב" –
הַצָּדִיק – "מִשְׁנָתוֹ, וַיֹּאמֶר" תַּכָּף "אֲכֵן יֵשׁ ה'".
וְ"וַיִּקְץ פַּרְעֹה" (בְּרֵאשִׁית מ"א, ד) – הָאִישׁ
הַמוֹנִי – "וַיִּשְׁן עוֹד". וְדִבְרֵי פִי חֶכֶם חֵן,
וְשִׁפְתָּיִם יִשָּׁק

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[NOTE Summary:

Rabbi Meir of Premishlan taught that everyone experiences moments of waking in the night — both the tzaddik and the common person. The difference is in the response. The tzaddik, upon waking even slightly, rises immediately with enthusiasm, igniting himself for the service of Hashem through Torah, prayer, and song. The common person, however, turns over and returns to sleep, losing the opportunity for connection. This contrast is hinted at in the verses: “And Yaakov awoke from his sleep and said, ‘Surely Hashem is in this place’” — awakening leading straight to awareness of Hashem — versus “And Pharaoh awoke...and he slept again.”

Practical Takeaway:

When a spark of spiritual awakening comes — whether in the quiet of the night or in a moment of inspiration — act immediately. Delaying risks letting the moment fade back into spiritual slumber.

Chassidic Story:

It is told that Rabbi Meir of Premishlan would often rise in the middle of the night to pray or study Torah. Once, a disciple asked how he always found the strength. He replied, “When the King calls, will you tell Him, ‘Let me sleep a little longer’? The tzaddik hears the call even in half-sleep and runs to answer.” This story reflects his teaching that seizing the moment transforms fleeting awakenings into eternal gains.

END NOTE]

וַיִּירָא וַיֹּאמֶר מֶה גֹרֵא הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה אֵין זֶה כִּי אִם בֵּית אֱלֹהִים וְזֶה שַׁעַר הַשָּׁמַיִם בְּרֵאשִׁית כח:יז

And he was afraid and he said: “How awesome is this place; this is none other than the House of God, and this is the gate of the heavens” (Bereishit 28:17).

The holy Rav, Rabbi Meir of Premishlan, of blessed memory, came to a certain small town where the beit midrash there was rickety and leaning to fall, and the broken areas were greater than the standing ones.

When he opened the door, he stood and said: “How awesome is this place; this is none other than the House of God,” and he repeated his words twice.

Those standing around him understood that certainly he had some specific intention in this, yet they did not know the intention.

And while they were contemplating to grasp his thought, he turned to them and said:

הָרַב הַקָּדוֹשׁ רַבִּי ר' מֵאִיר מְפָרַעַמִּישְׁלָאן זצ"ל
כָּא לְאִיזָה עִיר קִטְנָה שֶׁהָיָה הַבֵּית מִדְרָשׁ שָׁם
רְעוּעַ וְנוֹטָה לְנִפּוֹל וְהַפְּרוּץ הָיָה מְרַבָּה עַל
הָעוֹמֵד,

כַּאֲשֶׁר פָּתַח הַדָּלֶת עָמַד וְאָמַר מֶה גֹרֵא הַמָּקוֹם
הַזֶּה אֵין זֶה כִּי אִם בֵּית אֱלֹהִים, וְחִזָּר דִּבְרָיו שְׁנֵי
פְעָמִים,

הָעוֹמְדִים סָבִיבוּ הִבִּינוּ כִּי בְּוַדַּאי אֵין זֶה כוֹנֵן
מִיָּחָדָת יֵשׁ לוֹ לְאוֹתוֹ צִדִּיק בְּזֶה אֵף לֹא יָדְעוּ
הַכּוֹנֵן,

וּבְעוֹדָם מְתַבִּנְנִים לִירֹד לְסוּף דַּעְתוֹ פָּנָה אֲלֵיהֶם
וְאָמַר,

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“Indeed, ‘How awesome is this place’ — truly it is a danger to life to enter it; ‘this is none other than the House of God,’ and it has no owners who will care to repair the damages of the building.

For behold, all the houses in the town that have owners — I see that they are all strong and properly maintained; only the beit midrash alone is in a state of collapse.

And why is this? Is it not because ‘this is none other than the House of God,’ and therefore it does not belong to any particular householder who would be concerned to fix it and care for the needs of repairing the house.”

אָמַנָם מֵה גּוֹרָא הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה מִמֶּשׁ סַכְנַת נַפְשׁוֹת
לָכֵּן בּוֹ, אֵין זֶה כִּי אִם בֵּית אֱלֹקִים וְאֵין לוֹ
בְּעָלִים שְׂיִטְפְּלוּ בוֹ לְתַקְּנוֹ בְּדַקֵּי הַבַּיִת

כִּי הֲרִי כָּל הַבָּתִּים שֶׁבַּעִיר שְׂיִישׁ לָהֶם בְּעָלִים
רוֹאֶה אֲנִכִּי שֶׁהֵמָּה כָּלֶם חֲזָקִים וּמְתָקָנִים כְּרֹאִי,
וְרִק הַבַּיִת מְדַרְשׁ בְּלִבְדּוֹ הוּא בְּחֻזְקַת מַפְלָת

וְלָמָּה, הֲלֹא אֵין זֶה כִּי אִם מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהוּא בֵּית
אֱלֹקִים וְלֹא שֶׁיֵּד לְאַיִזָּה בְּעַל הַבַּיִת מִיָּחִיד שְׂיַחְוֹשׁ
לְתַקְּנוֹ וְלְדַאֵג בְּעַד צָרָכֵי בְּדֻק הַבַּיִת

[NOTE Summary:

Rav Meir of Premishlan arrives in a small town whose beit midrash is dangerously dilapidated, with its beams sagging and its walls ready to collapse. Upon entering, he loudly repeats the verse “How awesome is this place; this is none other than the House of God,” leading the onlookers to assume he is expressing a deep mystical intention. Instead, he explains that his meaning is entirely literal: the place is truly dangerous, and the only reason it remains neglected is precisely because it belongs to God, and thus to everyone and no one. All private homes in town are well maintained because each has an owner who feels responsible; only the beit midrash, the House of God, is left to fall into ruin. Rav Meir’s point is sharp and practical—the House of God suffers when no individual feels personally obligated to care for it. The holiness of a place does not absolve the community of responsibility; rather, it increases it. In this maamar, Rav Meir transforms a pasuk of awe into a call for communal accountability, urging every Jew to see themselves as a “baal habayit” over the needs of the beit midrash and the spiritual infrastructure of the community.

Practical Takeaway:

When something belongs to no one, it is neglected by everyone. Holiness requires guardianship, and sacred spaces—physical or spiritual—remain upright only when individuals take personal responsibility. Each Jew must see themselves as the caretaker of communal Torah life, stepping forward to repair what is broken rather than assuming others will do so.

Chassidic Story

In the city of Premishlan, there was once a bitter winter during which the roads became sheets of ice, forming steep, slippery inclines up the hill leading to the beit midrash. The townspeople avoided the dangerous ascent, choosing instead to pray in their homes. But Rav Meir of Premishlan walked the icy slope daily as if it were dry ground.

One morning, a visitor asked him how he managed to climb without falling. Rav Meir answered simply: “When one is tied Above, he does not fall below.”

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That week, the townspeople realized that although the beit midrash was filled with Torah and holiness, its pathway had grown dangerous because no one had taken responsibility to sand the ice or clear the way. Inspired by Rav Meir's example, they gathered together, brought sand and tools, and made the difficult ascent safe for everyone. Their efforts embodied Rav Meir's lifelong teaching: holiness cannot stand on its own. Just as he had taught in the small town with the collapsing beit midrash, sacred places endure only when each Jew takes ownership—not only of the spiritual elevation within, but of the very physical steps required to reach it. **END NOTE]**

וַיֹּאמֶר הֵן עוֹד הַיּוֹם גָּדוֹל לֹא עַתְּ הָאֶסֶף הַמִּקְנֶה הַשְּׂקוּ הַצֹּאן וְלָכוּ רְעוּ בְּרֹאשִׁית כֹּט:

And he said: “Behold, the day is still great; it is not yet time to gather the livestock — water the sheep and go pasture them” (Bereishit 29:7).

I heard in my time from him — from Rabbi Shlomo of Munkatch — in the name of the holy Rav, Rabbi Meir of Premishlan, may his memory be a blessing, the above teaching:

“‘It is not yet time to gather the livestock’ — if, Heaven forbid, the appointed end of the redemption to gather the holy flock has not yet arrived,

then ‘water the sheep and go pasture’ — at the very least, give them sustenance according to the moment,

until we merit the complete redemption speedily in our days, Amen.”

שְׁמַעְתִּי וַעֲתִי מִמֶּנּוּ מֵרַבִּי שְׁלֹמֹה מִמוֹנְקאַטֵשׁ
בְּשֵׁם הָרַב הַקָּדוֹשׁ וְרַבִּי מְאִיר מִפְּרֵמִישְׁלָאן
הַנִּזְכָּר

לֹא עַתְּ הָאֶסֶף הַמִּקְנֶה אִם חֹס וְשָׁלוֹם לֹא הִגִּיעַ
עַדִּין קִץ הַגְּאֻלָּה לְאֶסֶף צֹאן קֳדָשִׁים

הַשְּׂקוּ הַצֹּאן וְלָכוּ רְעוּ עַל כָּל פָּנִים תֵּן לָהֶם
פְּרֻנְסָה לְפִי הַשָּׁעָה

עַד אֲשֶׁר נִזְכָּה לְגְאֻלָּה שְׁלֵמָה בְּמַהֲרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ
אָמֵן.

[NOTE Summary:

In this teaching, transmitted by Rabbi Shlomo of Munkatch in the name of Rav Meir of Premishlan, the verse “Behold, the day is still great; it is not yet time to gather the livestock — water the sheep and go pasture them” (Bereishit 29:7) becomes a message for the Jewish condition in exile. Rav Meir explains that if the destined moment of redemption has not yet arrived, and the holy flock of Israel cannot yet be gathered in its fullness, we are nevertheless charged with a sacred task. “Water the sheep and go pasture them” means that even before redemption comes, we must continually nourish, strengthen, and sustain the Jewish people in every generation. Spiritual life, Torah learning, chesed, and communal care must not be paused while awaiting the end of days. Just as Yaakov instructs the shepherds to tend to their flocks until the proper time of gathering, Rav Meir teaches that as long as the final redemption has not dawned, our responsibility is to give the community “parnassah according to the moment”—the spiritual sustenance required to keep souls alive and hearts connected to holiness. This transforms waiting into active devotion and exile into continual nurturing of the Jewish flock.

Practical Takeaway:

Do not wait for the perfect moment to nourish the souls around you. Even when the ultimate redemption

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has not yet arrived, every Jew can “water the flock” by offering Torah, kindness, encouragement, and spiritual support. Small acts of sustenance create strength that carries the community until the fullness of redemption is revealed. **END NOTE]**

וַיֵּרָא ה' כִּי שְׂנוּאָה לֵאָה וַיִּפְתַּח אֶת רִחְמָהּ וַיֵּרָחֵל עֵקֶרָהּ. וַתֵּהָר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי שָׁמַע ה' כִּי שְׂנוּאָה אֲנִי וַיִּתֵּן לִי גַם אֶת זֶה וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ שִׁמְעוֹן בְּרֵאשִׁית כֵּט:לֹא-לֵג

And Hashem saw that Leah was hated, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. And she conceived again and bore a son, and she said: “Because Hashem has heard that I am hated, He has given me this one also,” and she called his name Shimon (Bereishit 29:31–33).

And Hashem saw that Leah was hated and He opened her womb, etc. And she conceived and bore again a son, and she said: “Because Hashem has heard that I am hated, He has given me also this,” and she called his name Shimon.

And behold, the difficulty is known: if so, her holy children would be, Heaven forbid, “children of the hated,” one of the nine negative traits explained in the Gemara Nedarim (20b).

And our holy teacher, Rabbi Meir of Premishlan, may his memory be a blessing, asked further: in the way of the world, a woman who is hated by her husband would be ashamed to publicize this, for a woman becomes jealous only regarding her fellow’s womb (Megillah 13a).

So how could Leah our mother call her son by a name referring to the fact that she was hated, as if to boast of it before everyone?

And our teacher said that the explanation is this: Heaven forbid that Yaakov our father hated her, for it is not written anywhere “And Yaakov hated Leah,” or “Hashem saw that Yaakov hated her.”

Rather, the opposite is written: “And he loved Rachel also more than Leah” — he increased his love for Rachel; but in any case Leah was not hated by him.

But it is known from our sages (Bava Batra 123a) that Leah the elder had been designated for Esav, the elder son of Yitzchak. But that righteous woman did not desire to cleave to him.

וַיֵּרָא ה' כִּי שְׂנוּאָה לֵאָה וַיִּפְתַּח אֶת רִחְמָהּ גו'. וַתֵּהָר עוֹד בֶּן וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי שָׁמַע ה' כִּי שְׂנוּאָה אֲנִי וַיִּתֵּן לִי גַם אֶת זֶה וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ שִׁמְעוֹן.

וְהִנֵּה נִודַעַת הַקְּשִׁיָּא דְּאֵם בֶּן הָרִי בְּנֵי הַקְּדוּשִׁים חֵס וְשְׁלֹם בְּנֵי שְׂנוּאָה, אַחַת מִתְּשַׁע מִדּוֹת רְעוּת (פְּמִבְּאָר בְּגִמְרָא נְדָרִים כ).

וּרְבִינוּ הַקְּדוֹשׁ רַבִּי מֵאִיר מִפְּרֵמִישְׁלָאן הַקָּשָׁה עוֹד, דְּבִנְהִיג שְׁבַע עוֹלָם אִשָּׁה שֶׁהִיא שְׂנוּאָה לְאִישָׁהּ תְּבוּשׁ מִלְּפָרְסָם זֹאת, כִּי אִין אִשָּׁה מִתְקַנָּא אֵלָּא (בְּנִירָד חֲבֵרְתָּה מַגִּילָה יג).

וְאִידֵּי זֶה קָרָאָה לֵאָה אֲמִנּוּ שֵׁם בְּנָהּ הַנּוֹלֵד לָהּ “שִׁמְעוֹן” עַל שֵׁם שְׂשֻׁנוּאָה הִיא, כְּאֵלּוּ תִּתְּפָאֵר בְּנָהּ בְּפָנֶי כָּל.

וְאִמָּר רַבִּינוּ דְּהַפְרוּשׁ הוּא כָּךְ, שְׁלֹא חֵס וְשְׁלֹם יַעֲקֹב אֲבִינוּ שְׂנוּאָה, דְּלֹא כְּתִיב בְּשׁוּם מְקוֹם “וַיִּשְׁנֶא יַעֲקֹב אֶת לֵאָה,” אוֹ “וַיֵּרָא ה' כִּי יִשְׁנֶא יַעֲקֹב.”

וְלִהְיוֹת כְּתִיב “וַיֵּאָהֵב גַּם אֶת רַחֵל מִלֵּאָה” מְרַבָּה אֶת רַחֵל, עַל כָּל פָּנִים לֹא הָיְתָה לֵאָה שְׂנוּאָה מִמֶּנּוּ.

אֲבָל נִודַע אֲמָרָם ז"ל (ב"ב קכג.) שֶׁאֵת לֵאָה הַגְּדוֹלָה שָׂרְכוּ לַעֲשׂוֹ בְּנוֹ הַגְּדוֹל שֶׁל יִצְחָק, אֲבָל הַצְּדִקָּה הָיְתָה לֹא תִפְצָה לְהִתְדַבֵּק בּוֹ.

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Therefore it is written, “And Leah’s eyes were tender,” and Onkelos translates: “And Leah’s eyes were beautiful.” Though at first glance the translation seems to contradict the literal meaning.

But the intention is that since Leah saw that she had been designated for Esav, and she knew he would desire her because her eyes were beautiful, and a bride whose eyes are beautiful requires no further checking (Taanit 24a),

Therefore she increased her crying until her eyes became worn. And this is the true beauty: “Grace is false and beauty is vain” (Mishlei 31:30), but a woman who fears Hashem — she, desiring not to be in the lot of the wicked — shall be praised.

And in reward for this — because she did not want to cleave merely to the body of the righteous one — she merited that the tribes of Hashem came forth from her.

And this is what the verse means: “And Hashem saw that Leah was hated” — that she had so greatly increased her crying until Esav hated her; “and He opened her womb,” and therefore she called her son Shimon, so that the daughters of Israel would learn from her modesty to give their lives not to cleave except to the righteous.

[NOTE Summary:

In this profound teaching, Rav Meir of Premishlan confronts the troubling phrase “Vayar Hashem ki senuah Leah — Hashem saw that Leah was hated” (Bereishit 29:31). At first glance, this seems to imply that Leah’s holy children were “children of the hated,” a status listed in Nedarim 20b as one of the nine spiritually damaging conditions. Rav Meir rejects this outright, proving that Yaakov never hated Leah; the Torah only states that he *increased* his love for Rachel, not that he withdrew love from Leah. The “hatred” must therefore come from elsewhere.

Rav Meir explains, based on Chazal, that Leah had originally been designated for Esav. Her naturally beautiful eyes, as Onkelos translates “yai’an,” would have made her desirable to him. But rather than accept this fate, Leah poured out her heart in ceaseless tears, pleading that she not fall to the lot of the wicked. Her crying was so intense that her eyes became worn and tender. This, Rav Meir teaches, is true beauty. External charm fades, but the spiritual beauty of a woman who fears Hashem and rejects attachment to evil is everlasting. Through this self-sacrifice, Leah merited that the tribes of Hashem emerged from her.

ולכן כתיב “ועיני לאה רכות,” ותרגם אנקלוס “ועיני לאה יאין,” שלפי הפשט נראה כאלו התרגום סותר לפשט הכתוב.

אבל הפונה שפיון שראתה לאה ששרכו אותה לעשו, וידעה כי יתפץ בה כי היו עיניה יאין, וכלה שעניה יפות אינה צריכה עוד בדיקה (תענית כד).

לכן הרבתה לבכות עד כי היו עיניה טרוטות. וזהו היפי האמתי, כי “שקר החן והכל היפי” (משלי לא:ל), אך אשה יראת ה' שלא תפצה להיות בגורל הרשע, היא תתהלל בנפיה, ואלו העינים הן היפות באמת.

ובשכר זה לפי שלא רצתה להתדבק אף בגוף הצדיק, זכתה שיצאו ממנה שבטי יה.

וזה שאמר הכתוב “וירא ה' כי שנואה לאה,” כי כה הרבתה לבכות עד כי שנואה עשו, “ויפתח את רחמה,” ועל שם זה קראה את בנה “שמעון,” שממנה ילמדו בנות ישראל הצנועות למסר נפשן לבלתי התדבק אף בצדיק.

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Accordingly, “Vayar Hashem ki senuah Leah” means that Hashem saw how Leah had made herself “hated” by Esav — she had distanced herself completely from him through her tears and righteousness. And “He opened her womb” in reward for rejecting a future bound to wickedness. She named her son Shimon so that future daughters of Israel would learn from her example: to remain steadfast, modest, and unwilling to attach themselves to anything other than holiness and righteousness.

Practical Takeaway:

Spiritual beauty is earned through inner commitment, not outward features. Leah teaches that one tear shed to avoid spiritual compromise has more worth than all external charm. True elevation comes from choosing righteousness even when destiny seems to pull in another direction. Every Jew can imitate Leah’s strength by resisting negative influences and holding fast to what is pure and upright.

Chassidic Story

There is a well-known account from Premishlan of a young woman who sought Rav Meir’s counsel. She came from a village where many were abandoning the path of Torah, and she feared being pressured into a marriage that would lead her away from a life of holiness. Tearfully, she asked the Rebbe what she could do when those around her pushed her toward choices that would compromise her soul.

Rav Meir listened quietly and then told her the story of Leah’s tears — how she cried not out of weakness but out of strength, refusing to accept a destiny that would bind her to Esav. Her tears changed her fate, and through that steadfastness, she became the mother of tribes. “Your tears,” Rav Meir said softly, “have the same power. A tear shed for holiness is never lost. It carves a new path in Heaven.”

The young woman gathered courage from his words. When her family continued to pressure her, she stood firm and refused the match. Some time later she married a sincere and righteous man. She would later tell others that those words from Premishlan had sustained her: “Leah’s tears were not tears of pain but tears of choice.”

Rav Meir’s message lived on through her life — that true beauty and true greatness come from the courage to choose holiness even against pressure, and that Heaven opens its gates for those who, like Leah, cling to righteousness with all their heart.

END NOTE]