

Chava's Bat Mitzvah, Shabbat Korach 5766 (23/24 June 06)

Chava, this Friday evening, just like every Friday evening, your father blessed you with the three fold Priestly blessing which is preceded by the request that Hashem should make you like Sarah & Rivka, Rahel & Leah.

Sarah was the first Matriarch and was at such a level that when Avraham objected to throwing out Hagar & Ishmael (Berashit 21:11), Hashem said to him:

"..listen to her voice" כל אשר תאמר אליך שרה שמע בקולה
and Rashi says on שמע בקולה, "From this we learn that Avraham was inferior to Sarah in prophecy"

Rivka also knew better than her husband, she saw that Esav was fooling him, and that Yakov should have the spiritual blessing, and so dressed him in Esav's clothes so that he should receive the blessing. Yacov was afraid and said to her that if his father realizes he is not Esav, he will be cursed instead of being blessed, but Rivka told him (Berashit 27:13):

"...listen to my voice" עלי קלְתֶךָ בְּנִי אֶךְ שִׁמְעֵ בְקוֹלִי

Rahel was in love with Yakov but when she learned of the planned substitution of her sister in her place at the wedding, she told Leah the signs she and Yacov had agreed on to prevent such a substitution, because she decided that **not causing her sister to be shamed**, was more important than her own happiness.

Leah was also in love with Yakov but he hated her. As her reward from Hashem she had six of his twelve sons and his only daughter (Reuven, Shimeon, Levi, Yehuda, Yissachar, Zevulun, Dinah). From Levi came Moshe and Aharon, who brought us out of Egypt, and also the Cohanim (Priests) and the Leviim (Levites). From Yehuda came King David, also our name as Jews – Yehudim – and also will come the Moshiach. From Yissachar came the heads of the Sanhedrin – as explained by Rashi on Berashit 49:15.

From this week's parsha we also learn of yet another woman, the wife of On ben Pelet. He is listed as one of the followers of Korach (Bemidbar 16:1) but our sages point out (Sanhedrin 109B) that he is not mentioned again when the Torah describes how Korach and his followers died. They explain this by telling us that his wife saved him, by persuading him that it was not in his interest to get involved.

When we look at all these women, we see a recurring theme, they achieved what they did **by discussion and reason and not by force**.

We can draw a further proof from next week's parsha Chukot (Bemidbar 20:1-2):

וְתָמָת שָׁם מָרִים . . . וְלֹא הָיָה מַיִם לָעַדָּה

and Miriam died there (in Kadesh) and there was no water for the people.

Rashi explains that during all their forty years in the desert, they were accompanied by a well, which gave them water. They had this well only due to the merits of Miriam (Ta-anit 9A). Hashem now told Moshe (Bemidbar 20:8):

“... **speak** to the rock”,

וְדַבַּרְתֶּם אֶל הַסֵּלֶעַ

Moshe instead struck it with his rod, and was immediately told by Hashem (Bemidbar 20:12) that because he did not listen to him, he would not be allowed into the holy land. One of the explanations given for this, is that while Miriam was alive, **she knew how to talk to people and persuade them with her words**. Now she was dead, Moshe needed to learn **how to lead people by persuasion and not by force**, but unfortunately he failed the test.

Chava, the first major milestone in our religious life, which is common to both sexes, takes place at 12 for a girl and 13 for a boy. At this age they become responsible for their own lives, how they behave, what they do, how they interact with other people and with Hashem, what mitzvot they keep and so on.

Superficially, the boy has a much more impressive entrance into adulthood, his first aliyah, putting on tefillin, making up a minyan and so on. However, I hope, that from all the examples I have been quoting, you have realized that actually the girl has **a much more important role to play**. She must persuade people to do the right thing by **discussion and dialog**, against the prevalent male society that tries to determine everything by force.

Chava, on this, the start of your adult life, may I wish you a life full of mitzot, may you be blessed with a husband and children, may your home always be full with the light of Torah and:

יְשַׁמַּח אֱלֹהִים כְּשָׂרָה וְרִבְקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה

“May the Lord make you like Sarah and Rivka, Rahel and Leah”

Mazel Tov.