



Parsha Encounters

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Parshas Vayeitzei – Rabbi Shimon Zehnwirth

A Truthful Heart

“And this time I (Leah) will praise Hashem...” (Bereishis 29:25)

The Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 71:5) teaches us that with the above declaration Leah practiced the art of giving thanks or praise, and therefore she became the progenitor of others who had the same characteristic - Yehudah and Dovid HaMelech. Yehudah, the Midrash explains, exemplified this trait with his statement regarding Tamar, “She is more righteous than me” (ibid. 38:26); Dovid with his exclamation, “Give thanks to Hashem because He is good” (Tehilim 138). While Leah and Dovid's statements clearly share a common thread of “praise,” Yehudah's admission of guilt appears to have no connection with this attribute. Tamar was being taken to be executed and Yehudah confessed that she was innocent - he was the father of Tamar's children. How does this have any bearing on Yehudah's midah of giving thanks?

Apparently, the ability to give thanks and the ability to confess one's wrongdoing stem from a common source - the recognition of truth. Indeed the Hebrew word for “praise” (*Hoda'ah*) derives from the same root as the Hebrew for “admitting.” A person who

is truthful will recognize and acknowledge the bountiful blessings Hashem bestows upon him. By the same token, he will recognize and admit his shortcomings. The same poison of haughtiness that drives a person to deny his dependency upon Hashem, to blind himself to the constant goodness that sustains him, will also drive him to deny that he is fallible. Only a sincere and truthful heart can dispel this fog of arrogance, see through its falsehood and recognize the sobering reality.

Had Leah not excelled in the attribute of *emes*, had she not admitted how much gratitude she owed Hashem, then she would not have had a descendant such as Yehudah, who excelled in truthfulness and was therefore able to confess his mistake. Even though the birth of a child was clearly a gift from Hashem, Leah could still have attributed it somewhat to her own might and power, had she not reached such perfection in the midah of *emes*.

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Halacha Encounters

Nail Cutting

Rabbi Yisroel Langer

It is a mitzvah for one to cut their nails on Erev Shabbos and Erev Yom Tov (O.C. 260:1). The medrash (brought by the Elya Rabba 260:4) tells a story of a tzaddik who passed away and appeared to his student in a dream with a stain on his forehead. He explained to his student that one of the reasons for the stain was because he was not careful to cut his nails every Erev Shabbos Kodesh. It is commendable for one to proclaim prior to cutting his nails, "L'kovod Shabbos Kodesh"- in honor of the holy Shabbos (Yesod V'shorash Haavoda Shaar 8 ch. 1).

The best time for one to cut his fingernails is on Friday. The Aruch Hashulchan (260:1) writes that if possible one should wait till Friday afternoon after chatzos (midday) to cut them. Nails begin to grow on the third day after being cut. That being the case, it is not considered kovod Shabbos to cut one's finger nails before Friday as they will begin to grow again on or before Shabbos (Elya Rabba 260:5 cited by M.B. 260:sk 6). The Taz 260:1 has a unique opinion that one should not cut his nails particularly on Thursday since that will cause them to begin growing on Shabbos which resembles an issur (prohibition). However, the Mishna Berura and other Achronim do not take this reason into consideration. If one is unable to cut his nails on Friday, he should cut them on the closest possible day to Shabbos (M.B. 260:sk5). Some Achronim hold that one should not cut his fingernails and toenails on the same day. Accordingly one should cut his toenails on Thursday and fingernails on Friday (M.B. ibid). (There is more kovod Shabbos involved with cutting fingernails than toenails since the former is more noticeable. Therefore, it is that they should be cut on Friday rather than the toenails- Machtzis Hashekel). Other Achronim (Shaarei Teshuvah 260:2 quoting the Arizal) hold that one may cut both his fingernails and toenails on the same day.

Proper Order

The Rema (O.C. 260:1) says that when one cuts his nails he should not cut them in order, rather he should begin with the ring finger on the left hand, followed by the index finger, then go back to the pinky followed by the middle finger and finally the thumb. On the right hand one should begin with the index finger followed by the ring finger, then go back to the thumb followed by the middle finger and finally the pinky. The Aruch Hashulchan says that one should cut the nails on his right hand first, while the Elya Rabba (260:6) quotes the Kalbo to cut the nails on the left hand first as stated by the Rema. The Arizal is quoted as mocking the above minhag. However it is preferable for one to be machmir (strict) (M.B. 260 sk8),

especially since the opinions that are strict in this matter hold that it is a sakana (danger) to cut them in order (Elya Rabba 260:6). It is said that the Chazon Ish was only careful to cut his fingernails in the above fashion, but not his toenails. However not everybody is in agreement with this (see Perisha O.C. end of Siman 241 and sefer Shemira Haguf V'hanefesh siman 68 footnote 14).

Proper Disposal

After one cuts his nails it is best to burn them, or at the very least to dispose of them in a way that will ensure that they won't fall in a place that a pregnant woman might walk. If a pregnant woman would walk on them, it can Chas V'shalom result in a miscarriage. If one cuts (or bites) his nails in a place that only men enter (ex. Some batei midrashim, men's mikvah etc.), it is permitted to let them fall on the floor, since women aren't found there. If one accidentally drops a nail on the floor in his house and he can't find it, he should sweep up the area, because once the nail moves from the original place of falling, it becomes harmless. (The Elya Rabba questions whether it has to be swept out of the room in order to become harmless.) M.B. 260 sk6 According to the Pri Chodosh (Y.B. 117:sk9), this is only true if the nails fell accidentally. However, if he put them down intending to move them later on, they don't become harmless upon arriving to their second location.

Washing Hands

One who cuts or bites his finger or toenails should wash his hands afterwards (O.C. siman 4:18) (Kitzos Hashulchan siman 2:11). If one bites only one nail the Chazon Ish holds that one doesn't need to wash his hands. (see sefer Shemiras Haguf V'hanefesh siman 68:22 and footnotes). According to Hagaon R' Yaakov Kaminetzky ZT"L, one who bites even all of his nails does not need to wash his hands (Heard by Harav Dovid Zucker Shlita).

Some do not cut their nails on Rosh Chodesh even if it falls out on Erev Shabbos in accordance with R' Yehudah Hachasid. (Some say that if there are two days of Rosh Chodesh it is permitted to cut them on the first day (ibid 68:9)

Chol Hamoed

One may not cut his nails during Chol Hamoed unless he cut them on Erev Yom Tov. However, it is permitted to bite or cut them with one's fingers on Chol Hamoed (M.B. O.C. 532:1). It is also permitted to cut them on Erev Shabbos or Erev the last days of Yom Tov if it is his practice to cut them on every Erev Shabbos during the year. (Be'er Heitiv 532:1, S.S.K Ch. 66 note 136) (See also Aruch Hashulchan 532:2).

Rabbi Langer learns full-time at the kollel.