

# EMOTIONAL REALITIES

*by Rabbi Daniel Travis*

*In the morning [Yaakov discovered that] it was Leah... (Bereshith 29:25)*

Why didn't Yaakov discover this at night? Had she not been the same Leah at night as she was in the morning? At night, Yaakov felt he had adequate proof that she was Rachel, since he had given Rachel certain signs by which he might recognize her, which they had kept a secret between them. Yet when Rachel saw that her father was about to marry Leah to Yaakov in her place, she immediately revealed these signs to Leah, thinking, "I cannot allow my sister to be put to shame." She spared her sister's honor, although she was deceiving Yaakov in the process.<sup>1</sup>

When one of the students of the great Torah sage and Rosh HaYeshivah Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer was released from the draft, everyone knew that the news would bring the Rav great joy. At that time, being drafted into the non-Jewish army meant almost certain death, and in any case it posed nearly insurmountable problems regarding Torah observance. One by one, his other students came to inform Rav Meltzer of the news. The Rosh HaYeshivah responded to each of his students with exactly the same enthusiasm as he had to the first student who related the news to him.

Although Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer's reaction involved a certain amount of deception, for he gave each student the impression that he was hearing the news for the first time, one may do so for the sake of the well-being of another.<sup>2</sup> Since each of his students had taken the time and made the effort to bring the Rosh HaYeshivah the news, and each would derive tremendous pleasure from feeling that he had been the first to relate the information, Rav Meltzer did not want to disappoint any of them.

We all encounter similar situations frequently in our everyday lives. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach said that if someone tells us something that we have heard before, if we care about the speaker, we will be patient enough to hear it again, and will act as though we are hearing it for the first time.<sup>3</sup> We should not consider this a waste of our time, since, in addition to the fact that we have gained tremendous merit in showing honor to others, we can often gain some new insight when we hear something a second time. In addition, it is a sign of humility to listen to them.<sup>4</sup>

By the same token, if someone is discussing a personal problem with us, although the problem may seem trivial, or an immature response, we must realize that from other's perspective it is a very serious matter, and we must demonstrate our concern. The Torah teaches us this principle when it describes the plague of locusts in Egypt: "...before them there were no such locusts... never after

them will there be such [a plague of locusts.]"<sup>5</sup> Rashi notes that in the times of the prophet Yoel<sup>6</sup> there was a greater infestation. Since the Egyptians had already been devastated by other plagues, it was extremely difficult for them to deal with the locusts. Although there were more locusts in the days of Yoel, according to the Egyptians' emotional reality, their plague was actually worse than the one in Yoel's days.<sup>7</sup>

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1. *Rashi on Bereshith 29:25.*
  2. Sha'arei Teshuvah 3:181. See also the article entitled "Masters Of Disguise," (page 93) on Bereshith 18,2.
  3. Cited in Titein Emeth L'Yaakov p. 130.
  4. Sefer Chasidim 15.
  5. Shemoth 10:14.
  6. Yoel 2:2.
  7. Chatham Sofer, Shemoth 10:14.
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