
פרשת ויצא

פרק כט פסוק לה

וַתִּהְיֶה עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר הַפַּעַם אֲנִי אֲתִּיה' עַל־כֵּן קָרָאתָ שְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה וַתַּעֲמֵד מִלְּדוֹת:

חז"ל

מִיּוֹם שֶׁבָּרָא הַקֶּב"ה אֶת הָעוֹלָם לֹא הָיָה אָדָם שֶׁהוֹדָה לַהֲקַב"ה עַד שֶׁבָּאָתָה לָאָה וְהוֹדָתוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר הַפַּעַם אֲנִי אֲתִּיה' עַל־כֵּן קָרָאתָ שְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה.

מושג

לֹא הָיָה אָדָם שֶׁהוֹדָה לַהֲקַב"ה עַד שֶׁבָּאָתָה לָאָה וְהוֹדָתוֹ.

Translation:

There was none who thanked Hashem until Leah came and thanked Him¹.

Explanation:

Although others thanked Hashem before Leah, she was the first who adopted the trait of הוֹדָה², in which one thanks Hashem and recognizes that He is always helping us even when things seem difficult. Leah realized that the fact that she was less beloved than Rachel was the reason Hashem blessed her with many sons.

What she thought was a curse was really a blessing, for which she was מוֹדָה to G-d. The Shoresh of the word, ה.ד.ה, would thus mean to thank/admit/confess, as all of these describe Leah's הוֹדָה. This ability was inherited by her descendants, as we find that Yehudah was מוֹדָה³, and דוד המלך said כי לעולם חסדו הוֹדוּ לֵה' כִּי טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ.

Looking in the Pasuk:

The Gemoroh is bothered by the word הַפַּעַם, this time. It answers that after having her fourth child Leah realized that she had received more than her portion of sons and thus, at this point, thanked Hashem. From the fact that this is the first time in the Torah that this word appears, the Gemoroh adds that Leah was the very first to be מוֹדָה to Hashem.

Musag Learning Outcomes:

Know: Leah is מוֹדָה to Hashem after having more than her share of sons. The Shoresh ה.ד.ה refers to a type of thanking that is an admission or confession.

Understand: We often lose perspective when things go wrong and do not realize that in the end they are to our benefit. הוֹדָה is the feeling of thanks that arises when we finally recognize that even the difficult experiences have been blessings. Leah was the first to experience this.

Think: Following the different usages of a Shoresh provides deeper insight into its true meaning. Additionally, infrequent use of a Shoresh highlights its significance.

1 See note #1

2 See note #2

3 See note #3

NOTES

1. Our Musag is taken from the גמרא in (ז.) ברכות which teaches that from the day that Hashem created the world no one had thanked Hashem, until Leah came and thanked Him, as it says “This time I will thank Hashem, therefore she called him Yehudah”.

The Gemoroh is commenting on the word הפעם which seems to be extra. Rashi quotes the Midrash Rabba which explains that Leah thanked Hashem only after the birth of her fourth child (הפעם meaning first now). This is because she somehow knew that Yaakov would have 12 sons, and assumed each of his wives would have 3. Once she received more than her share, she thanked Hashem⁴. However, the Gemoroh quoted above takes this idea to an even more extreme level. According to the Gemoroh it is not only referring to Leah finally thanking Hashem, but rather to all of humanity since the dawn of time, finally thanking Hashem.

2. On first reading our Musag seems difficult to understand. Does the Gemoroh mean to say that all the Avos never thanked Hashem? Did they not build altars to Hashem and bring offerings to thank Him? True maybe no one used the word אודה, but they certainly showed their appreciation for what Hashem did for them! Is this not considered thanking Hashem? Rav Ephraim Zalman Margolis⁵ provides an amazing explanation. He answers that of course others thanked Hashem before Leah. However, the word אודה carries with it a much deeper meaning. The word הודאה, he explains describes a thanking that is the result of one coming to the realization that what they had thought was hurtful was in truth helpful. We might add that the word for thanking and for admitting and confessing is the same, sharing the Shoresh ה.ד.ה. Perhaps this is because the act of הודאה is not simply a ‘thank you’ but rather a type of confession, admitting that a kind act was done for us when previously we had failed to recognize it as such.

The above feelings epitomize what Leah felt when Yehudah was born. Leah realized that Yaakov would always love Rachel more than her. She saw this as a curse, always being the ‘hated’ wife, always second best. But וירא ה' כי שנואה לאה ויפתח את רחמה (בראשית כט:לא), Hashem saw that she was not loved the same, and He ‘opened her womb’. When Yehudah was born she realized that she would have more children than any one of the other Imahos. She realized why; It was Hashem’s way of compensating her for her lowly marital status. She realized that her ‘curse’ was now her ‘blessing’. She said הפעם אודה, now I thank, as this term applies only now, when she realized that she looked at something the wrong way her whole life. In effect, it is a confession to Hashem. After all the years of bemoaning her fate, she now saw that it was all a blessing.

with Yehuda’s confession and finally הודאה³. There is a beautiful Midrash⁶ which connects Leah’s תדוד המלך’s praise of Hashem: לאה תפסה פלך הודיה ועמדו הימנה בעלי הודיה, יהודה (בראשית לח) ויכר יהודה ויאמר צדקה ממני, דוד אמר (תהלים קלו) הודו לה' כי טוב...

4 ויתהר עוד ותלד בן ותאמר הפעם אודה את ה', ר' ברכיה בשם ר' לוי לכהן שירד לגורן נתן לו א' כור של מעשר ולא החזיק לו טובה ואחד נתן לו קומץ של חולין והחזיק לו טובה אמר ליה אדוני הכהן אני נתתי לך כור וזה לא נתן לך אלא קומץ ואתה מחזיק לו טובה אמר ליה את מחלקי נתת לי אבל זה נתן לי משלו לפיכך אני מחזיק לו טובה, כך לפי שהיו אמהות סבורות שזו מעמדת שלשה וזו מעמדת שלשה, וכיון שילדה לאה בן ד' אמרה הפעם אודה את ה'. (בראשית רבה (וילנא) פרשת ויצא פרשה עא סימן ד)

One could ask why Leah would wait to have more than her share to thank Hashem? Shouldn't she thank Him even after one child? While our Musag explores the Gemoroh and not the Midrash, the answer we will soon give to explain the Gemoroh will explain the Midrash as well.

5 1760-1828

6 בראשית רבה (וילנא) פרשת ויצא פרשה עא סימן ה

While not connected to our Musag, it is very worthwhile to see the second half of this Midrash which focuses on the character trait of silence that Rachel instilled:

רחל תפסה פלך שתיקה ועמדו כל בניה בעלי מסטירין, בנימין ישפה, (אבנו בחושן) - יש פה - יודע במכירתו של יוסף ואינו מגיד, שאול (שמואל א') ואת דבר המלוכה לא הגיד לו, אסתר (אסתר ב) אין אסתר מגדת מולדתה ואת עמה.

, Yehuda, And הודיה and from her came those who carried the trait of הודיה Leah chose the trait of Yehudah recognized and said, "She is righteous, it is from me", Dovid said Give thanks to Hashem, for He is good.

This ability that Leah gave to her descendants allowed Yehudah to confess, to say I blamed Tamar, but now I look at things in another way; she was right, I was wrong. It allowed Dovid Hamelech, who in so many ways suffered in life, to say הודו לה' כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו. praise Hashem for He is good, forever is His kindness.

4. Questions for further thought:

- a. Immediately after telling us that Leah thanked Hashem, the Torah tells us ותעמוד מלדה. What is the connection?
- b. According to our explanation of the Shoresh ה.ד.י, can you understand the וידיו we say (אשמנו, בגדנו וכו') in a different light?