

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

RABBI EZRA STETTIN

Clean “White?”*

THIS WEEK’S TORAH PORTION IS FILLED WITH episodes that illustrate Lavan’s perverse perception of reality. But I came across a thought from the *Bais haLevi*, about one episode in particular, which jumped out at me.

...In the morning, behold, [Yaakov’s bride] was Leah!

[Yaakov] said to Lavan, “What is this that you’ve done to me? Didn’t I work with you for Rachel? Why have you tricked me?”

Lavan said, “In our place, it isn’t done so—to give the younger [sibling’s hand in marriage] before the elder...” (29:25–26)

The *Bais haLevi* explains Lavan’s unusual emphasis on his land’s code of conduct: He was insinuating that perhaps, where Yaakov came from, they didn’t have basic *derech eretz* (decency).

When I saw this, I realized that no degrading name-calling can accurately describe Lavan’s perversity. Yet in his outrageous remark lies a gem of a lesson about human nature: Anyone can twist anything to fit his or her perspective.

I once heard a lecture by Rabbi Moshe Shapiro, of blessed memory, in which he pointed out that our power of sight is *m’kulkal*, twisted. He noted that we see this all the time, when two people, who disagree on a point, see the same thing, and both exclaim, “This is evidence in my favor!”

The only way to correct this is to look at ourselves in the mirror and ask, “Is this that I perceive actually correct, or is what I see colored in some way? Is what I’m doing the behavior of Yaakov, or of Lavan?”

That’s a difficult thing to do, but it’s so worth it. 🙏

* The Hebrew word *lavan* means “white.”

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A TIMELY HALACHA

BY RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

Considering that we make *Kiddush* twice every Shabbos, let us take a few minutes to review its laws.

Kiddush is recited over a cup of wine or grape juice which holds a *r’vi’is* (3.3 fluid ounces). At least a cheekful (approximately 1.7 fluid ounces) must be drunk. (M.B., O.C. 183:9)

Some authorities advise against using a disposable cup for *Kiddush* (*Ig’ros Moshe* O.C. 3:39), while others are not particular about that (Rabbi Y. S. Elyashiv, quoted in *Sh’vus Yitzchak*, Laws of *Muktzeh*, pg. 48). [Editor’s note: See “The Rabbi Was Asked,” in this year’s Cincinnati Torah, *Parashas Vayeira*.]

Only the person who makes *Kiddush* must taste the wine. Listeners are only required to intend to fulfill the mitzvah, and to hear every word of the blessings.

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A RIDDLE FOR YOU

When would a son have a mitzvah to injure his father?

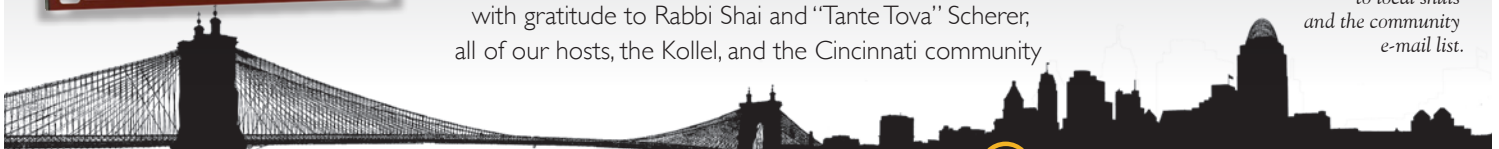
The answer will appear in two weeks.

PREVIOUS RIDDLE:

- Q Who would be sent to live in a City of Refuge (*Ir Miklat*) even though he had never killed anyone accidentally?
- A If a man is exiled to a City of Refuge for killing someone accidentally, his rabbi follows him into exile, as would the students of a rabbi who was himself exiled for the same reason. (Rambam, *Hil. Rotze’ach* 7:1) 🙏

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A TIMELY HALACHA

CONTINUED

However, it is desirable (a *mitzvah min hamuvchar*) to partake of the Kiddush wine. (O.C. 274:14)

There is a whole discussion among contemporary authorities over whether it is advisable for one to drink some wine while attending a *kiddush* at shul. The issue is as follows: The blessing over wine and grape juice, *Borei P'ri haGafen*, automatically includes every beverage which is on the table (or which one knows will be brought to the table)—that is, there's no need to recite the *Shehakol* blessing over those drinks after reciting *HaGafen*. (O.C. 174:2) If one heard his friend recite that blessing (that is, he didn't recite it himself), it only covers the other beverages if the listener drinks a cheekful of wine or grape juice right afterward. If one drinks less than that (which is typical at a shul *kiddush*), it is questionable whether or not he needs to make another blessing before drinking other beverages. (*Bi'ur Halachah* 174:2)

Therefore, one should do the following:

- The preferred option: Don't partake of the *kiddush* wine at all.
- Drink at least a cheekful.
- Recite a *Shehakol* on a food item before drinking anything.
- Listen to a *Shehakol* recited (on his behalf) by another person, then immediately take a drink 

GREAT ACTS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

DENNIS, A NEW, NON-JEWISH VOLUNTEER IN AN Israeli home for children with disabilities, witnessed a curious scene every day, that he did not understand.

There was a child who was physically and mentally disabled and, to top it all off, was also deaf-mute. The boy's mother would come visit every day—traveling an hour each way, he was told by the staff. Each day she would sit and hold her son's hand and talk to him.

But it was something else she did that caught this volunteer's eye. The boy's mother would take out a garment with strings hanging from it and put it over the

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TIDBITS OF CINCINNATI JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL


On 8 Kislev, 5688 (1927), the newspaper *Every Friday* reported the farewell speech of Rabbi Chaim Fishel Epstein, then Chief Rabbi of Cincinnati. He bemoaned the fact that, though he had been treated very respectfully, as a spiritual leader he felt ignored. He warned his congregants to be wary, in choosing a successor, of those who represent themselves as Orthodox rabbis yet acquiesce to allowing men and women to sit together during prayer. In an open letter to the community which he wrote after he left, he also mentioned that providing proper Kosher supervision of *sh'chita* in town had been a source of frustration, and that disunity in the Orthodox community had prevented anything from getting done. That last sentiment had been echoed by many since 1924, when the previous Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Gershon Lesser, had passed away. This situation was, in fact, the backdrop for the invitation to Rabbi Eliezer Silver in 1931 to help reorganize the Orthodox community structure. 

boy's head. She seemed to be saying a prayer, and she would bring the strings to the boy's lips, for him to kiss.

After several weeks of watching this ritual, he asked the mother about it.

The mother explained the concept of *tzitzis*, and said that after she put the *tzitzis* on her son, she uttered the verses of *Sh'ma* and "*Torah tziva lanu Moshe*," which contain the basic tenets of Judaism.

She continued, "I know that he cannot hear me and cannot understand what I'm doing, but we believe that every person has a soul which is whole and unfettered. When I speak, his soul hears everything I say."

Dennis was very moved by the woman's words and impressed by her conviction. Dennis wanted to learn more about Judaism, and he eventually became Dovid—a religious Jew. 

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