

Parshat Chayei Sarah – 5780 – Yissochor Wartell

Nothing New Under the Sun

In this week's parshah, when Eliezer sees Rivka appear, she appears with a jug on her shoulder, as the Torah writes “וַהֲנִיחָהּ רִבְקָה יְצֵאתָ... וְכַדָּה עַל שִׁכְמָהּ” (“And behold Rivka went out... and a jug was upon her shoulder”). And again, when Eliezer is telling the story to Rivka's family, he states: “וַהֲנִיחָהּ רִבְקָה יְצֵאתָ וְכַדָּה עַל שִׁכְמָהּ” (“And behold Rivka went out and a jug was upon her shoulder”). Although Eliezer changes numerous parts of what transpired (for various reasons, beyond this scope of this dvar), these words and phrases are identical in both instances.

Although Rivka was the progenitor of the Jewish People, she gave birth to both Yaakov and Eisav. Many Jewish sources, especially those of a mystical nature, align Eisav and his descendants with the sun, whereas Yaakov and the Jewish People are connected to the moon. It is interesting that the appearance of Rivka actually seems to allude to both of these. She appeared with ‘כַּדָּה’ (*kada* - her jug), upon ‘שִׁכְמָהּ’ (*shichma* – her shoulder). The word שִׁכְמָהּ (*shichma*) is numerically equal to 365, the number of ‘solar’ days, or the revolution of the Earth around the sun. The word כַּדָּה (*kada*) is numerically equal to 29, the approximate number of days in a lunar month. Even more intriguing is the fact that the words preceding “וְכַדָּה עַל שִׁכְמָהּ” (*v'kada al shichma* - and a jug was upon her shoulder), are the words “וַהֲנִיחָהּ רִבְקָה יְצֵאתָ” (“And behold, Rivka went out). These words are numerically equal to “הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וְהַיָּרֵחַ” (The sun and the moon).

So, one could, in a sense, re-arrange this pasuk to say “וַהֲנִיחָהּ רִבְקָה יְצֵאתָ” (“And behold, that which came out of Rivka”) – the *kada* (Yaakov/ the Jewish People) and the *shichma* (Eisav / Edom). However, why is a solar ‘year’ ascribed to Eisav whereas a lunar ‘month’ is ascribed to Yaakov? One answer could be that Eisav's descendants, the Western world and much of the world overall, see the world overall as a year as the main entity and the month as more of a practical subdivision. However, the Jewish People go by the particular month and what it contains rather than the function of the (lunar) year. It is Tishrei - time for the high Holidays and Sukkot, it is Nissan - a time for Pesach and rebirth, etc...

A second reason could be surmised by the root of the words themselves. The word for ‘year’ is *shana*, which can either mean to repeat/do twice or it can mean to change. What will a new year bring? The same as last year or a change? This concept is definitely relevant to Jews as well, but more often, we are focused upon the *chadash* (new), the root of the word for month – Chodesh. We always strive for change, to make something new, to grow to create. Kohelet repeatedly writes *ein chadash tachat hashemesh* – ‘there is nothing new under the sun’, because the *chadash* is the *chodesh*, which is under the moon.

And as long as we remember who we are Jews and to constantly strive to grow and develop, to better ourselves as we live in Hashem's ways, then we can be the *kada* (jug) *al* (on top of) *shichma* (the shoulder) – we, the Jewish People, who are connected primarily to the moon, can rise above and be *al* (on top of), those who are only connected to the sun (Eisav), so that we can prosper and succeed until the coming *geulah* and final clarity and redemption of Moshiach.

Shabbat Shalom!