



# A Taste of Torah

## Maidtriarch

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

When we think of the Twelve Tribes, one of the first things that comes to mind is their noble lineage- that of the Patriarchs, Avraham, Yitzhak, and Ya'akov, and their wives, the four Matriarchs, Sarah, Rivka, Rochel, and Leah.

Yet upon scrutinizing the verses discussing the birth of the tribes, one may be surprised to discover that, in fact, one-third of the twelve were born from Bilha and Zilpa, the maidservants of Rochel and Leah, respectively, whom Ya'akov married at his wives' behest! Strangely, though, these two individuals - mothers of the Jewish people - are never mentioned among the Matriarchs.

Let us first understand the idea of servitude. A servant, by definition, is someone who is subservient to a master. One would expect, then, that a servant is one who lacks any identity and is a complete nothing. Yet we find the term servant applied to some of the greatest people in our history. The Torah refers to Avraham, Moshe, and Dovid - yes, Dovid, that renowned King of the Jewish People, founder of the Davidic Dynasty - as servants of G-d, just to name a few. These people were all outstanding personalities, with unique identities, who accomplished a tremendous amount during their lifetimes. Yet they are servants!

We need to redefine servant. Granted, a servant is one who negates himself before his master. But that doesn't mean that he has no identity; rather, the servant becomes completely identified with the master. It means using your talents and expressing your individuality for the sake of the master, instead of for your own interests. Our Sages express it succinctly and

beautifully when they say, "The servant of a king is a king."

Now, if you're a servant of G-d, that leaves you in pretty good shape. But let's say you're not quite at the level of becoming G-d's servant. Why not try the next-best thing - become a servant of one of His servants? This is where Bilha and Zilpa come in. They weren't there just to clean the table, sweep the floor, and help with the laundry. Rabbi Shimshon Pincus (1944-2001) explains that Bilha and Zilpa succeeded in submitting themselves to their mistresses so thoroughly that they were regarded as Rochel and Leah themselves! They were thus fit to have a part in the founding of the Jewish people, not as Bilha and Zilpa the maidservants, but as Rochel and Leah the Matriarchs.

In today's twisted, backward world, few things are as important as "discovering your individualism." Submitting to the will of another, be it G-d Himself, and sacrificing your dreams and ambitions of fame and fortune is tantamount to relinquishing one's identity, and is viewed as a tragic failure and waste of life.

The Torah is diametrically opposed to this world-view. The Jewish people have the unique ability - and mission - to represent G-d before the world, to reflect His greatness, and to allow mankind a glimpse of G-dliness, through their submittance to Him. It is then that the true identity of a Jew shines forth - that of G-d's Chosen Nation.

## Stories For The Soul

### A Bond Like No Other

Dear Susan,  
When Mom told me that she was expecting, I was ecstatic. I imagined how wonderful you would be and how much you would look like me. We took you home from the hospital and I showed you proudly to my friends. But when you were five months old, you seemed so unmoving and numb.

The thirteenth doctor told Mom you would never walk nor talk. I was furious. I realized that word would get around that you're not normal. So I did the unthinkable... I disowned you. I steeled myself not to love you. Mom and Dad showered you with love and that made me bitter. And as the years passed, that bitterness turned to anger, and then hate.

And then one day, you defied what all your doctors said - you crawled. And then you walked.

Over the years, Mom taught you to speak, read and write. I would sometimes see you walk outside, smell the flowers, marvel at the birds, or just smile at no one. I began to see the beauty of the world through your eyes. I realized that you were my sister and that I had grown to love you.

After that, we again became friends. I would buy you toys and give you all the love that a sister could give. And you would reward me by smiling and hugging me.

But I guess you were never really meant for us. On your tenth birthday, you felt severe headaches. The doctor's diagnosis: leukemia.

I remember our last conversation. You said that if you die, and if

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## Kollel Happenings

### DERECH HASHEM

Join Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher for a philosophical series on "Derech Hashem", a sefer by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatoo. Discover and delve into the vital understanding of Hashem's world. The women's class is on Mondays at EDOS.



### A DEEPER LOOK

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issues, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Sunday nights 7:40-8:30 pm at Kollel, 1516 Xavier, and Tuesday nights at Aish Denver 8-9 pm.



### TRUST THY FATHER

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers for "Trust thy Father," a series based on Chovos Ha'Levavos/Duties of the Heart. Discover and delve into vital Jewish concepts of Bitachon. The classes takes place on Tuesdays, from 7:55-8:25 a.m., at Aish. For more info, email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org) or call 303-820-2855.

## Interpersonal Issues Safeguarding a Lost Object

If the item is quite valuable, the finder should do a background check regardless of whether the claimant is suspicious or not. Here, too, if he cannot ascertain the reliability of the

claimant, he cannot return the item. Adapted with permission from "The Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Pinchas Bodner (Feldheim Publishers)

## Ask the Rabbi Greek Victory

Josh from Melbourne wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

My name is Josh and I go to Bialik College, Melbourne, Australia. I just wanted to ask you a few questions about Chanukah. Why is Chanukah so important? What is the main feature of Chanukah? What do you think would happen if the Greeks were successful in the battle against the Maccabees? Why were the Maccabees chosen to fight the Greeks? Thank you for your time and I hope to hear from you soon. From your Jewish friend, Josh.

Dear Josh,

Chanukah is so important because it means the victory of Torah over Greek philosophy.

Unlike previous pagan ideas so revolting to Jews, Greek paganism was bound up with beauty, art and philosophy. Therefore, it captured the imagination of many Jews. Many Jews became "Greekified," or "Hellenists."

This may surprise you, but the

Greeks did win. You see, there was a battle and there was a war. The Maccabees won the battle and were able to hold on for a while, but eventually they succumbed to Pompeii's conquest 80 years later.

But the miracle of the oil inspired us to realize that G-d is with us no matter what. Without that inspiration, the Jewish People might not have been able to survive future periods of even greater persecution.

Why the Maccabees? Because their father Mattisyahu's faith in G-d gave him the courage to stand up against power and corruption. The name Maccabee comes from the Hebrew acronym "Mi Camocha B'eilim Hashem" - "who amongst the mighty is like You, G-d?" Although the Maccabee's military victory didn't last, the miraculous events of the war and the oil inscribed the message of faith and loyalty indelibly into the Jewish soul.

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## Stories for the Soul

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I need help, I could send a note to heaven by tying it on the string of a balloon.

That last night, with my tears flowing freely, I watched the bravest girl I had ever known finally stop breathing. You were my source of inspiration. You made me realize that the most important thing in this life is to continue loving without asking why or how and without setting any limit. Thank you,

my little sister, for everything.

As wives of Yaakov, Rochel and Leah seemed to be in competition, but they were actually extremely loving sisters who sacrificed for each other. Despite trials and tribulations, sisters have a powerful innate bond of love.

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Baruch Lederman.