

Addie:

Today we are doing a dvar Torah about Vayetze. This is about Jacob wanting to marry Rachel but having to go through Laban first. Jacob had to work for seven years for Laban so he could marry Rachel. After the seven years was up, Jacob realized he had been tricked into marrying Leah. He was furious at Laban for tricking him because Laban wanted to marry his eldest daughter first.

Stella:

Laban and Jacob made a deal that if Jacob worked another seven years, he could marry Rachel as well. You might notice that this story is told in the perspective of the men, but how do you think the women would have thought about all of this?

Anna:

We think that fathers should not be able to make decisions for their daughters. In the story of Jacob and Laban, Laban tricks Jacob into marrying Leah and he had total control over what his daughters did. Rachel should have been able to choose for herself who she wanted to marry. Women and girls are not objects and should have just as many rights as anybody else. Fathers in the time of Jacob and Laban did not make these decisions for their sons and they should not have made decisions for their daughters either.

Eilat:

All people are created equally and all people should have choices. Therefore, women should be able to choose who they marry. If one of us were in this position, we would feel like property, not people. Family honor was more important to Laban than his own children, so he forced Leah to marry first. We do not believe that this was the right thing to do.

Shea:

This matters today because we learn that it is important for women to have rights and make their own choices. Every person should have the freedom to make their own choices, not just men.

Julia:

Although the story is told in the perspective of men, how do you think the women in this story felt?

Millie:

Let's step back a minute to last week's parsha

Ethan:

Once there were two brothers, Jacob and Esau. Esau was older and therefore gets the birthright of his father Isaac. But Jacob's mother wanted him to take the blessing. So he tricked his blind father into giving him the blessing and runs away to escape his brother who now wants to kill him.

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Asher Levy:

He travels to the house of his uncle Laban and immediately falls in love with his cousin Rachel. He works for seven years to marry her only to be tricked into marrying her sister. He worked seven more years to marry Rachel.

Millie:

It's kind of weird that the Jewish religion started with a guy who tricked his dad into taking away his brother's birthright.

We had so many questions about this story.

Ian M.:

How did Laban know to give payback to Jacob? Would Esau really have killed him? Did Rachel love Jacob the same? How did Leah feel about Jacob not loving her?

Liyam

Why did Jacob want to marry Rachel so much? And if he really wanted to marry Rachel, why did he have babies with Leah? Why did Laban make him work seven more years? Also, I think Rachel and Leah should have confronted their dad. Since they didn't have freedom of choosing who to marry, did they have any other kinds of freedom?

Elijah:

And we were angry at some of the characters in this story, especially Jacob.

Kai

I think Jacob deserved it. He was stupid for being tricked.

Max

Jacob should not have been allowed to get married at all!

Sam M:

But we also felt compassion for them.

Eli

I feel bad for Leah. She married against her will.

Jaden

I feel bad for Jacob. I think if he worked for seven years he should be able to marry Rachel. Although he did trick his brother he should not be punished that much. I feel bad for Rachel, too.

Asher K.

I feel bad for both Rachel and Leah.

Sam M:

And some of us thought the story taught a lesson: what goes around comes around.

Toby:

Karma says that what goes around comes around. For example, someone who is generally positive will make more friends and be happier in the long run.

Noam:

Someone who is unkind and negative toward others will have negativity come back to them. For example, if you are mean to your sister, you may have a friend be mean to you. In rabbinic teaching, this idea is called *middah k'neged middah*, measure for measure.

Lila:

The story of Jacob and Esau fits this interpretation. Jacob stole Esau's birthright by trickery and then was tricked into working fourteen years to marry Rachel.

Zoe:

Whether karma exists or not, it might be a good idea to teach that it does. In determining whether something is the right thing to do, we generally look at the potential benefits and consequences and find out which one outweighs the other.

Cal:

If you believe that there will be consequences – what goes around comes around – it can positively affect choices and decisions that could otherwise put people in suboptimal situations. This can help people learn before they have to learn the hard way.

Riley:

But on the other hand, teaching karma or *middah k'neged middah* could be harmful. If something bad happens to someone they could think that they did something wrong and it was their fault. It could lower self esteem.

Dahlia:

Also, if someone does something bad, but they change and apologize and right their wrong, but something bad happens to them, they might think, "what's the use of changing?" if the universe still treats me like a bad person?

Rafi

Our patriarch Jacob is a mixed character. He tries to find his redemption by working seven years for the woman he loved, and then he himself becomes tricked.

Jonah:

In the end, God gave Jacob protection. Jacob did so much for love. Hopefully, Jacob's overall dedication was to God because Jacob put so much trust in God. We've all had to trust and rely on love sometimes.