

## COMMENTARIES OF THE DUBNO MAGGID

### PARASHAS VAYEITZEI

In this week's parashah, the Torah relates (Bereishis 29:31): "And Hashem saw that Leah was disfavored, and he opened her womb, while Rachel was barren." The Maggid notes that under the regular laws that govern creation, a woman's womb is naturally open and ready for childbearing, so that the world can continue operating in the normal manner. It is a woman's womb being *closed* that is out of the ordinary; thus, regarding Chanah, it is written that Hashem closed her womb (Shmuel Alef 1:5). Accordingly, the Maggid asks: Why did Hashem have to take special steps to open Leah's womb?

The Maggid develops his answer with a parable. In a certain small town, it was set down, by order of the regional governors, that the town's affairs would be managed by a group of three superintendents. One of the men of the city strongly desired to be a member of this group of leaders, but the regional governors did not want to put him in this position. So the man traveled to the city where the baron of the province lived, and brought the baron a gift to gain his favor. He succeeded in inducing the baron to order that he be appointed as one of the leaders. The baron wrote a letter to his local agent in the town ordering that one of the current leaders should be removed from his position and that the man who approached him be put in his place. The implementation of the order was delayed, and in the meantime a scandal arose in the town that led the regional governors to put the three town leaders in jail. Afterward, the man who had approached the baron presented himself to the baron's local agent and gave him the letter that the baron had written him. The agent said, "Alright, so it will be, you will be one of the three town leaders." He then ordered that the man be put in jail, and that one of the imprisoned town leaders be released.

The parallel is as follows. Hashem decreed, for hidden reasons known only to Him, that the matriarchs of the Jewish People initially be barren. Avraham had only one wife, Sarah [Hagar was only a concubine], and Hashem closed her womb for a long time. Yitzchak likewise had only one wife, Rivkah, and Hashem initially closed her womb as well. But Yaakov had two wives, Leah and Rachel, and Hashem's decree called for the primary wife to have her womb closed. Since Leah assumed the position of primary wife, the decree of a closed womb was directed toward her. But Yaakov introduced a new element into the situation: He showed Rachel more love than Leah, and regarded Rachel as his primary wife. As a result, the Divine decree called for Leah's womb to be opened and Rachel's closed. Thus the Torah writes: "And Hashem saw that Leah was disfavored, and he opened her womb, while Rachel was barren."

This explanation, the Maggid says, is reflected in a Midrash expounding on the verse. The Midrash states (*Bereishis Rabbah* 71:2):

*And Hashem saw that Leah was disfavored (שנואה) – that she was designated for the enemy (שונא) [Eisav]. ... While Rachel was barren (עקרה) – she was the principal lady of the house (עיקרה של בית).*

Yaakov disfavored Leah in that he regarded her as a subsidiary wife – that she should have been Eisav's wife rather than his. He considered Rachel his principal wife, the *עיקרה של בית*. In so doing, He caused Rachel to be barren – an *עקרה*.