

# Indelible Impressions

The Ralbag explains that the reason that the Torah emphasized the fact that Leah and Rochel attributed having their children to Hashem, was in order to publicize their greatness and belief in Hashem, despite having grown up in a house of non-believers. He further states, that it is this belief that allowed them to merit bearing the Shevatim.

It is common practice to shower praise on Hashem upon the occasion of the birth of a baby. We have all attended many shabbos kiddushim in honor of such occasions. This is the accepted norm, and does not seem to be a reflection of one's righteousness. Thus the derivation from the Ralbag requires further clarification; how does praising Hashem in this situation indicate anything special or unique?

The Ralbag can be understood through appreciating the power of the influence of our environment. A person's environment plays a pivotal role in his attitudes and beliefs. Therefore, for someone to grow up in an atmosphere of idol worship and reject it, this itself declares his inner greatness. Based on this idea we can understand the Ralbag. Leah and Rochel grew up in the house of Lavan and were constantly exposed to ideas that were

antithetical to the belief in Hashem. Therefore, their rejection of the beliefs that they were raised with and infused in them, along with their proactive praising Hashem, is so significant, it truly bespeaks their greatness!

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*"If being exposed to negative influences in our youth can be so detrimental...exposing our families to a positive environment and influences can be so powerful"*

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However, this Ralbag still seems puzzling. Granted Leah and Rochel were exposed to Lavan, and were raised in an environment of idol worship. However, they were married to Yaakov Avinu, and thus exposed to a life filled with Emunah and Bitachon in Hashem. They were envired by one of the most influential personalities to ever exist. With this in mind, it is once again difficult to understand why Leah and Rochel's praising of Hashem deserves such accolades.

We can extrapolate a powerful insight from here. Despite Leah and Rochel spending so many years being influenced positively by Yaakov, in which they themselves rejected the teachings of their father, the negative influence that they were exposed to in their youth made such an indelible impression that even at this point in their lives they were rewarded for the seemingly basic act of praising Hashem for their children!

In our society there is no shortage of negative influences. We are constantly bombarded with concepts and ideologies that are contrary to everything we believe. Based on this Ralbag, it is clear that maintaining our belief system and sensitivities is no small feat, and is under such a constant threat. We can't rely on the fact that our families are exposed to such positive influences in our shuls and Yeshivos. Even Yaakov Avinu couldn't remove the challenge that Leah and Rochel faced! We therefore need to be vigilant and do everything we can to protect ourselves and our families from exposure to influences that are contrary to a Torah way of life. On the flipside, if being exposed to negative influences in our youth can be so detrimental, because we are so impressionable, exposing our families to a positive environment and influences can be so powerful in positioning them for success.

BASED ON THE WEEKLY SHMUSS GIVEN BY HARAV SHAYA COHEN, ROSH HAYESHIVA ZICHRON ARYEH

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנוח  
לעילוי נשמת הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר  
לרפואה שלמה רפאל חיים דוב בן ריסא שושנה