

The Torah discusses rivalries.

כִּי יִתְהַלֵּךְ לְאִישׁ שְׂפִתִּים הַאֲחַת אֲהֹבָה וְהַאֲחַת שְׁנוֹאָה וַיַּלְדוּ־לָוּ בָּנִים הַאֲהֹבָה וְהַשְּׁנוֹאָה וְהִיא הַבָּנוֹ הַבָּכָר לְשָׁנִיאָה:

“Because it will be that a man will have two wives, one that he gives to and one that he considers his rival (lit. loves and hates), and they both give him children, sons from the loved one and the rival one, and it will be that the rival one gave him his eldest (lit. bechor).” (Devarim 21:15).

Does the word mean hate? And if so, does this mean every time a person has multiple wives—or colleagues or friends—that one is loved and one is hated?

The pasuk uses the words love and hate in the form of **אהב** and **שנא**. Love means to give. When one loves someone else, they give to that person. If one loves a friend, he does not expect the friend to provide for him. instead, he gives things to that friend. As the Mishneh teaches, “Acquire for yourself a friend.” (Avos 1:6). This means giving to that person makes him a friend to you. What then, does **שנא** mean?

The word does not mean hate. There are better words in the Torah for something or someone he does not like. **תעב** despise is one of them. “You shall not despise Edom for they are your kin.” (Devarim 23:8). “The Egyptians were unable to dine a bread-meal with the Hebrews because it was an abdominal thing for the Egyptians.” (Bereishis 43:32). Similarly, shepherding sheep was despicable to the Egyptians. (Ibid 46:34). Yaakov gets Esav to sell the birthright. “And Esav was vexed over the birthright.” (Ibid 25:34). The word there is **בז**. Later, when Esav finds out that Yaakov received the blessings for wealth he hates Yaakov. The word used is **נישטם**. That word is more akin to hate. It means to bear a grudge or have animosity. As it was sung about Dovid HaMelech, “From the voice of my enemy, from the distress of the wicked, because they accuse me of sin, with anger they hate me.” (Tehillim 55:4). Additionally, there, the word for “enemy” is **אויב**. It is the same word as “When you come upon your enemy’s ox.” (Shmos 23:4).

There are terms like **נאס** which means to reject like when Bnei Yisroel rejected the Torah. (Vayikra 26:15). There is the term **קע** loathe, like when Rivkah loathed herself over the wives that Esav took. (Bereishis 27:46). When a person takes a wife and no longer wants to be married to her, he gives her a *get*. The Torah says, “she no longer finds favor in his eyes.” (Devarim 24:1). These are terms for dislike.

“And Hashem noticed that because Leah was *sanuah*.” (Bereishis 29:31). It does not say Yaakov hated her. *Sanuah* means she was a rival to Rochel or to Yaakov’s goals. As the pasuk before says, “And he also loved Rochel, apart from Leah.” (Ibid 29:30). Yaakov loved both of his wives. However, his main goal was to marry Rochel. Leah was

not Yaakov's intended purpose. He may have loved her and treated her equally, but for the intention of keeping the tradition alive and making the Brochos given to Avraham, Yitzchok, and to him a reality, it was going to be through Rochel. At least, that is how Yaakov saw it. The next pasuk teaches that Leah was to give him children first. She named Shimon after this turn of events. (Ibid 29:33).

Before her family sent her off to marry Yitzchok, they blessed Rivkah saying, "May you grow into a thousand myriad, and your children shall inherit the gates of their rivals." (Ibid 24:60). After the incidents with the wells, Avimelech came to make peace with Yitzchok. Yitzchok asks him, why have you come "since you have been my rival?" (Ibid 26:27). "And Yosef had a dream [about his future] and he told it to his brothers. And [their reaction was] to add more rivalry between them and him." (Ibid 37:5). The Torah explains their rivalry. "'Do you mean to be king over us? Do you mean to rule over us?' And they added more rivalry to him, over the dream and its matters." (Ibid 37:8). They did not hate or despise Yosef. That may have been a feeling. However, their actions later – "here comes the dreamer" (ibid 37:19) – was motivated by rivalry. Yosef was already a rival to Bilah and Zilpah's children, as they were not considered first in line. (See ibid 37:2). Leah's children felt the rivalry grow to them, too, after the dreams.

When the new king in Egypt was afraid that Bnei Yisroel would grow he said, "Perhaps they will join our rivals and start a war." (Shmos 1:10). Not that they would join enemies as there is no war yet. Simply, join the rivals and start a war. Moshe was to seek men who were "capable, God-fearing, and rivals to ill-gotten gains." (Ibid 18:21). This is also an important part in adjudicating a person who killed accidentally, determining if he was ever a rival of the victim. (Devarim 4:42).

This translation of soneh is also seen when looking at the root of the word. שָׁנָה is the root word for "year." One year is a rival to the one previous and the next one. It also is the root for teeth = shen. Two sets of teeth that are opposite each other. It is the word for two - shnayim. This is the first example of two numbers that can be rivals. It is also the root word in Mishneh like Mishneh Torah or Mishnayos- the companion Torah. Not necessarily a bad rival but it is a different sent than the other set. Devarim stands out as Moshe's first-person narrative, a rival to the four books of Torah that are third person narratives. Mishnayos is a rival, so to speak, to the Written Torah. Just as one year to the next, one number to the next, and one type of Torah to the next are rivals but not enemies, so too, that is that the Torah means by soneh.

The Torah is teaching that every relationship one has is either a loved one or a rival. It could be completely opposite to love, like an enemy or one that is despised. However, even relationships that are not hateful, if they are not loving there is a rivalry. A rivalry is just an opposite point of view. A person can have a friend that he loves and friend that is a rival. They do not have the same goal or the same viewpoint. There can still be honor, respect, and affection. It is just someone who sees things differently than you. Or someone you do not give much to. It is important to keep this in perspective and not make the habit of causing rivals to become enemies.