

ב"ה *Torah* **Tidbits**

ISSUE 1636

NOV. 22ND 2025
ב' כסלו תשפ"ו

פרשת תולדת
PARSHAT TOLDOT



United
We Stand

OU
ישראל



The Wells We Still Offer
Rabbi Moshe Taragin
Page 46



Returning to Rebuild
Mrs. Leah Feinberg
Page 66



ויתן-לך האלקים מטל השמים

בראשית כ"ז:כ"ח

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT TOLDOT ZMANIM

CANDLES 4:01 PM • HAVDALA 5:16 PM • RABBEINU TAM 5:54 PM



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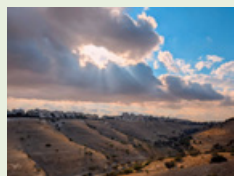


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Table of Contents

04	Dear Torah Tidbits Family Rabbi Avi Berman	40	Schedule OU Israel
08	The Soft Voice of the True Torah Personality Rabbi Moshe Hauer zt"l	46	The Wells We Still Offer Rabbi Moshe Taragin
12	Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary Rabbi Reuven Tradburks	52	Faith in the Future Promise Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider
16	"Friday Night with Grandpa" Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Weinreb	58	Giving a Tallit on a Sefer Torah to a Visitor Rabbi Daniel Mann
22	Between Prophecy and Oracle Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l	62	Peach of Mind Rabbi Gideon Weitzman
26	Probing the Prophets Rabbi Nachman Winkler	66	Returning to Rebuild Mrs. Leah Feinberg
30	Love and Awe Rabbi Shalom Rosner	70	After a Breakup: Helping the Heart Get Ready Again Aleeza Ben Shalom
32	Attributions and Acquisitions Rebbetzin Shira Smiles	74	The Y-Files Comic Netanel Epstein
36	Ya'alah Rabbi Judah Mischel	76	Torah 4 Teens by Teens Ezra Silton // David Ben Ishai
38	Simchat Shmuel Rabbi Sam Shor		

To read this week's articles by **Rebbetzin Dr. Adina Shmidman** and **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres** please see: www.TorahTidbits.com > Individual Articles



COVER IMAGE Photographed by Elisheva Derovan-Elbaz

I grew up in Los Angeles and made aliyah in 2005. This is a picture I took from my mirpeset in Maale Adumim. I am so grateful to get this view every day and to live in this beautiful land. This picture reminds me that Hashem is present in every aspect of our lives in Eretz Yisrael.



We continue to pray for the return of all the kedoshim from Gaza.



IMPORTANT REMINDERS



Earliest Kiddush Levana, 3 Days After Molad: 4 Kislev/Sun. night Nov. 23

7 Days After Molad: 8 Kislev/ Thurs. night Nov. 27

Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana until: 15 Kislev/Thurs. night Dec. 4



Rosh Chodesh is Thurs night Nov 20th, and Fri Nov 21st

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
Nov. 19 - 29 / 28 Marcheshvan - 9 Kislev

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:17-5:25
Sunrise	6:11-6:19
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	8:47-8:53
Magen Avraham	8:09-8:15
Sof Zman Tefila	9:39-9:44
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	11:24-11:27
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	11:54-11:57
Plag Mincha	3:32-3:30
Sunset (Including Elevation)	4:42-4:39



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	Toldot		Vayeitzei	
	Candles	Havdala	Candles	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	4:01	5:16	3:59	5:15
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	4:20	5:19	4:18	5:18
Beit Shemesh/RBS	4:20	5:17	4:18	5:16
Gush Etzion	4:17	5:16	4:15	5:15
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	4:17	5:17	4:15	5:15
Modiin/Chashmonaim	4:17	5:17	4:15	5:15
Netanya	4:17	5:16	4:15	5:15
Be'er Sheva	4:19	5:18	4:18	5:17
Rehovot	4:18	5:17	4:16	5:16
Petach Tikva	4:01	5:17	3:59	5:16
Ginot Shomron	4:16	5:16	4:14	5:15
Haifa / Zichron	4:05	5:15	4:03	5:14
Gush Shiloh	4:16	5:15	4:14	5:14
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	4:18	5:17	4:16	5:16
Givat Ze'ev	4:21	5:16	4:19	5:15
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	4:18	5:17	4:16	5:16
Ashkelon	4:19	5:19	4:18	5:18
Yad Binyamin	4:18	5:17	4:16	5:16
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	4:07	5:13	4:05	5:12
Golan	4:13	5:13	4:11	5:12
Nahariya/Maalot	4:14	5:14	4:12	5:13
Afula	4:15	5:14	4:13	5:13

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Toldot - 5:54 PM • Vayeitzei - 5:52 PM

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities;
40 mins in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat and Haifa)

Daf Yomi: Zevachim 69



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OU ISRAEL
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Last week, I wrote about my experience making *aliyah* over 40 years ago and what my parents did to inculcate the idea of the importance of the Land and the places in Eretz Yisrael. Some people wrote to me asking me how my parents were able to pick up and go when it wasn't so easy. To me, part of the answer has to be Bnei Akiva. My father was very involved in Bnei Akiva in America, with the encouragement of his parents, and it was a major influence on his life, spurring him to look into taking the plunge and coming to Israel.

I grew up going to Bnei Akiva in Kedumim and Mitzpeh Navo, Maaleh Adumim for a

number of years. When Shabbat Toldot would come around, I would get excited for Shabbat Irgun. I was never really able to get to the bottom of the name of "Shabbat Irgun," but unlike every Shabbat when most of the kids in my class would get together and go to a Peulah on Shabbat afternoon, Parshat Toldot had a month of preparation and hard work preparing a dance, painting a wall with a mural that had to do with the topic of that year and so much more. I was in 4th grade when I started, and I enjoyed the programming so much. I remember some of the lessons my *madrich* taught us, but more than that, I remember clearly the warmth and acceptance that my *madrich* and the other advisors showed me.

I never really stopped being involved in the informal education model. During my youth, I continued in Bnei Akiva as a Madrich, went to Or Etzion which is a Bnei Akiva yeshiva high school, and also went to Ariel which is another youth group. Youth groups succeed because they make sure that they operate beyond the standard educational curriculum. Often, its Shabbat activities take place in the later afternoon of Shabbat, and learning was not done because there would be an exam, but because you wanted to listen to those just a little older and a little wiser than you. It gave us values, and people to look up to.

As an adult, I ran NCSY in Vancouver and the North West of USA and Canada for 5 years and have had the privilege of being involved in Bnei Akiva Givat Ze'ev. I have informal Shabbat / Chag Onegs at my house in Givat Ze'ev

On the 1st yahrtzeit of Rabbi Meyer Fendel zt"l

We would like to invite the
community to an evening of

DIVREI TORAH, SIYUMIM AND REMEMBRANCE

Tuesday, November 25th
(the eve of 6 Kislev) at 7:30pm
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share this iluy neshama with you

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many times a year, where teenagers come over in order to have Torah programming on Friday night. With tons of food, nosh, rugelach, and candy, they are so happy to sit and discuss the parsha, or Jewish ethics, things we could learn from and be inspired by, and how we could become better leaders of the Jewish people.



This is the essence of informal education - being able to learn without having to sit down with a book in a classroom or in a Beit Midrash with structure and time and expectations. And clearly, it works. It's an interesting statistic that the numbers of high ranking officers in the IDF for example, are much higher, proportionally, among those who go to youth groups throughout their elementary school and high school, than those who don't.

Interestingly, only about 20% of the population actually go to youth groups. The vast majority don't. When we opened our OU Israel Youth Centers in twenty two different cities across Israel, we started it with the understanding that we have to create a different type of system, learning from NCSY in North America, and Bnei Akiva, regarding how to reach and have an honest conversation with teenagers today.

When teens feel out of sorts, disconnected from their community, what they're really looking for are friends and role models. For them to change their lives for the better, they need the support in a much closer way than some older teacher telling them what to do. And *madrichim* who help guide and have that ability to be that type of role model, to be that type of person that is going to really guide the next generation, have a tremendous

zechut. I look at NCSY advisors, I look at our Youth Center advisors, and I am blown away by the realization that they have a real part in shaping the future of the Jewish people.

We opened NCSY in Israel 10 years ago. It has been growing every year since. I continue to be inspired by the incredible team we have running NCSY Israel. They are all role models and remarkable individuals. This past weekend, we had 205 NCSYers from ninth to twelfth grade who got together in Kfar Etzion for an NCSY Shabbaton. I saw the amazing pictures and videos, both before and after Shabbat, and how amazingly it was run. I saw such a beautiful blend of English-speaking teenagers living in Israel, who come to NCSY in Israel and become even more passionate about Israel, the people of Israel, and the Torah of Israel.

The Regional Director of NCSY Israel, Rabbi Yosef Ginsberg, shared with me such a wonderful email that came in from a thankful

לעילוי נשמות

אברהם בן צבי ז"ל

Abraham Rubinstein ז"ל

On his 28th yearzeit 4 Kislev

Mark & Livia Rottenberg

mother of an attendee:

"I just wanted to take a moment to thank you as well as everyone else who worked so hard to make this NCSY Shabbaton a success. A parent of a teen mentioned that their teen has not stopped talking about it since she got home, and is already chatting with a bunch of kids that she met over the weekend. Aliyah is so hard for these teens and I can't tell you what a difference it makes in their lives for them to have the opportunity to meet other kids in the same boat! Thank you, thank you."

When you hear these stories, you get to understand the impact that NCSY can have on so many different teenagers' lives, and how they're going to make the right choices in becoming the true leaders that they could and should be for the Jewish people. Over the last two years, *Klal Yisrael* has lost too many of its leaders. We need our teens to grow into the leaders of the future, both in the Torah world and in the IDF, as well as many other leadership positions across the country. By encouraging and modeling leadership from a young age, they can believe in themselves and find roles and a way of life that is so meaningful and so purposeful.

So for those of you that are in Bnei Akiva and celebrating Shabbat Irgun this Shabbat, in Ariel, Ezra, NCSY or any other youth group out there, if you're reading this, then I say "*Kol Hakavod*" to you. I hope you enjoy the fun,

the games, and the food. But more than that, I hope you make sure to listen to the words of your advisors, listen to their lessons, and you will rise so high. And if you're an advisor or madrich in one of these youth groups, I hope you realize how crucial you are to the Jewish story as a role model for our youth. I hope you understand that you are constantly being looked at by the younger generation that is so desperately looking for people that they could look up to, and that you have that privilege of being in that position. So take advantage of it, and you will see the incredible fruits of your labor for many decades to come.

Hadar Goldin hy"d, whose body was returned this week after 11 years of Hamas captivity, served as an advisor in Bnei Akiva. For the last 11 years, in our OU Israel Teen Centers, we have taught Hadar's *derech* of learning Torah, of love for the Land of Israel, and of being *moser nefesh* for *Klal Yisrael*, to our youth.

His return home and proper burial has granted tremendous consolation to the entire nation, but especially to his family, his incredible parents, Simcha and Leah, who fought so hard on his behalf. I met them a number of times and I saw the endless fire in them to bring their son home. To see how many people came to the *levaya* to give respect and to thank him is really remarkable.

I want to wish you all *B'ezrat Hashem* a healthy winter. I thank *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* for the endless blessings He gives us. *B'ezrat Hashem*, we should be able to see the next generation becoming the leaders of tomorrow.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Rabbi Avi Berman

Executive Director, OU Israel

**Condolences to
Yossi Amsel and family
on the passing of his mother**

Mina Rivka Amsel a"h

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים



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RABBI MOSHE HAUER ZT"L

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Rabbi Moshe Hauer's zt"l divrei Torah were enthusiastically read each week by tens of thousands of readers of Torah Tidbits. His sudden death this past *Shemini Atzeret* came as a shock to our community and to the Jewish world at large. In the coming weeks and months we will honor Rabbi Hauer's memory by publishing some of his most compelling and thought-provoking divrei Torah. May the study of his exquisite words of Torah be a source of *chizuk* and bring blessing to his memory.

The Soft Voice of the True Torah Personality

In this piece, from 2024, Rabbi Hauer zt"l alludes to those who use strident voices when disagreeing with others, even when the substance of the disagreement is just. The voice of one truly influenced by the Torah is one that maintains its pleasantness in every interaction.

Torah was given to shape our personalities and to inform and uplift our every interaction, integrating our learning with our values and actions and producing people of wisdom, faith, and elevated character. These qualities are bundled into the single phrase "*hakol kol*

Yaakov, that voice is the distinct voice of Yaakov," describing a voice with three qualities: First, it was pleasant and appealing, *m'daber b'lshon tachanunim*, free of the gruff and demanding assertiveness characteristic of Eisav. Second, it was faithful, *shem shamayim shagur b'piv*, spurning human arrogance in favor of humble prayer and acknowledgment of our dependence on G-d. Finally, it was wise and searching as it engaged in the unending pursuit of the wisdom of Torah. The power of G-d and His Torah to shape man in His image is visible only when all these qualities come together in the Torah personality, as Rambam (Yesodei Hatorah 5:11) wrote, based on Yoma 86a:

When a Torah scholar conducts himself carefully, speaks pleasantly, relates well socially, greets people warmly, does not humiliate them even when he is humiliated by them, honors even those who disrespect him, is trustworthy, and does not while away

**Condolences to
Rabbi & Mrs. Shlomo Marcus
on the passing of their daughter**

TALI LIBA a"h

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

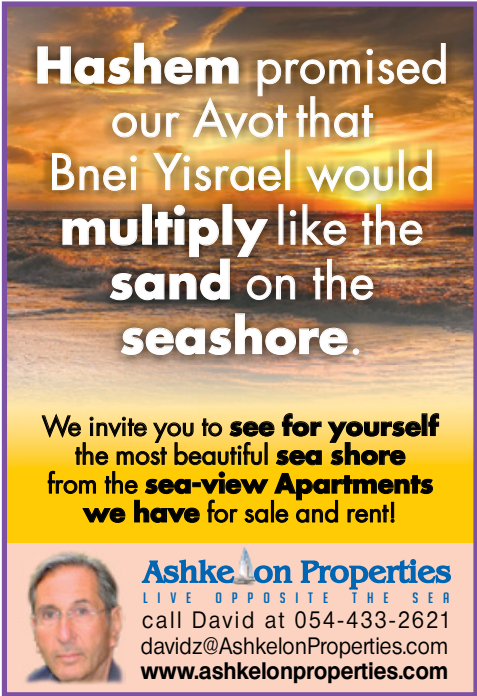
his time in idle social settings but is seen at all times studying Torah, wrapped in *tzitzit*, crowned with *tefillin*, carrying out all his deeds beyond the measure of the law in a way that does not seem alien and extreme and that leads others to praise him, love him, and find his deeds worthy of emulation - such a person sanctifies Hashem's name. The verse [Isaiah 49:3]: "And He said to me: Israel, you are My servant, in whom I will be glorified" refers to him.

Thus, even when Yaakov had to deceive his father so that he would be empowered by his blessings and prevent the dominance of his wicked brother Eisav, he could not and would not compromise on his characteristic humility, pleasantness, and refinement. While he disguised himself in Eisav's clothes and used the hairy goatskins to cover up the smooth skin on his arms, he chose to risk discovery rather than speak even for a few moments with his brothers' language and tone (see Rashi to Bereishit 27:21-22). Yaakov represented the ideal image of man whose beauty was reminiscent of that of Adam (Bava Batra 58a), the original person created in G-d's image and endowed with the uniquely human power of speech. That capacity was the ultimate tool of human relationship and must always reflect the *tzelem Elokim*, the divine image within us.

Yaakov even did his best towards Eisav. While he did what he had to do in taking from him the birthright and the blessings, he understood how justifiably angry Eisav was with him. Rather than "being angry back" and perpetuating the confrontation, Yaakov left for a while to allow things to calm down, and then – upon his return – made every effort to minimize their tensions

by humbling himself before Eisav and even claiming defeat rather than triumph (see parshat Vayishlach).

"*Hakol kol Yaakov*, that voice is the distinct voice of Yaakov." Torah scholars and all those who speak in the name of Torah bring honor to Torah when they display unrelenting humility and pleasantness, demonstrating gratitude rather than triumphalism, and refusing to adopt the voice of Eisav, the gruff, arrogant, and strident language and tone of the political battlefield. ■



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our Avot that
Bnei Yisrael would
multiply like the
sand on the
seashore.**

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OU... BEYOND KASHRUT

Teen First Responder Leadership Program

OU Israel's Gindi Teen First Responder Leadership Program is an initiative designed to equip OU Israel Teen Centers participants with emergency response skills while fostering leadership and community responsibility. The program includes hands-on trainings, professional seminars, and community service, ensuring participants gain experience in areas such as first aid, firefighting, and rescue operations. This program was created by OU Israel Teen Centers staff as a way to empower teens in the aftermath of October 7th. This year, there are 88 teens currently training in the program through structured sessions led by expert instructors and emergency service professionals. Its mission is to transform teens into proactive community leaders.

Each group has completed multiple training sessions, covering topics such as leadership, emergency response techniques, and volunteer work. The program collaborates with municipal partners including home front command and fire departments as well as organizations including Yedidim, Magen and Elisha Medical Training for certification in emergency response, first aid, and vehicle rescue.

Each week we share one of OU Israel's impactful programs helping English-speaking Olim with their Klita and impacting Israeli society.



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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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חיה פעסא בת אהרן זלמן הכהן ע"ה
Mother of Reuven Tradburks

PARSHAT TOLDOT

This is the one and only parsha of Yitzchak and Rivka's life. Rivka has twins, Esav and Yaakov. Yaakov buys the birthright from Esav. Yitzchak goes to Gerar in a famine, is told not to leave the Land, digs the wells Avraham dug and renews the pact with Avimelech. Yitzchak is elderly, plans to give the blessing to Esav but is deceived by Yaakov. Esav wants to kill Yaakov. Yaakov travels to Padan Aram so as not to marry a woman from Canaan.



1ST ALIYA (25:19-26:6)

Yitzchak is 40 when he marries Rivka. He prays for her as she is barren. She is troubled by her pregnancy and is told she has 2 nations in her womb. She bears them when Yitzchak is 60. Yitzchak loves Esav, Rivka loves Yaakov. Yaakov buys the birthright from Esav for a pot of lentil soup. Yitzchak journeys to Gerar in a famine.

May the learning from this issue of
Torah Tidbits be לע"נ

Pinchas Eedel ben Moshe z"l
פנחס אידל בן משה ז"ל
on his 9th Yahrtzeit - ז' כסלו תשע"ז

In honor of
his great devotion to daily learning

G-d tells him not to go to Egypt but to dwell in the Land, as it is promised to him.

This is the parsha of succession. Yitzchak has now taken Avraham's place, Rivka has taken Sarah's. And the next generation is born.

In this parsha, we need to work to read the stories in real time, with the figures not knowing what we know. We know the rest of the Torah; the promise to Avraham that his descendants will inherit the Land of Israel will take a long time to come true. In fact, the Torah ends and it still has not happened.

But that is with hindsight. It is hard for us to read the Torah as if we don't know what is going to happen next because we know the Torah so well. But we need to read the story of Yitzchak in his shoes. I propose here a way of reading the story in that way in an attempt to explain the events of the parsha in a unified thematic fashion.

Avraham was given a promise that his descendants will inherit the Land. Does Yitzchak assume that means him? That Yitzchak will be the first generation to begin to be rooted in the Land? He will begin the job of initiating the Jewish presence in the Land.

After all, Avraham told his servant that Yitzchak will not, under any circumstances, leave the Land of Israel if the wife he finds does not want to come to Israel. How is Yitzchak to understand that? I guess, because we are beginning the project of building the Land.

And now too. There is a famine. Everyone

runs to Egypt in a famine because the Nile is a reliable source of water and so Egypt escapes the famine. But here Yitzchak is told by G-d Himself – do not leave. Dwell in this Land.

This Divine command to not leave the Land follows Avraham's command to his servant to not take Yitzchak out of the Land when searching for a wife.

Yitzchak clearly gets the message from both his father and from G-d that his destiny is the Land of Israel. All of his actions need to be seen from his eyes; that his life's work is to root the people in this Land.

Yet, what about the dreadful prediction to Avraham that his children would be strangers in a strange land, afflicted there, and then would leave with great wealth? Yitzchak must assume that the dreadful prediction is a metaphor. You will be strangers in a strange land is how Avraham described himself in the Land of Israel – *ger v'toshav* – I am a stranger in the Land. And Avraham and Sarah suffered from infertility for 100 and 90 years respectively. Avraham was blessed with wealth. So the strangers in a strange land, afflicted, great wealth has all happened.

It could very well be that Yitzchak assumes that his job is to actualize the promises to Avraham, that his children will inherit this Land. Building the Jewish presence in the Land is a big job. It takes work. He sets out to build the Jewish nation in the Land. With both his sons. This project of nation building will need all hands on deck. It will need the varied talents of both his sons. Oh, how well we know that nation building needs spiritual power. And good soldiers too. Yaakov the man of spirit. And Esav, the powerful man of the field.

And perhaps Yaakov knows this as well.

He buys the birthright. The birthright is a benefit to one brother over the other. Not an exclusion. An added portion. Perhaps Yaakov too wants to prevail; not to the exclusion of Esav but to have the spirit prevail over power.



2ND ALIYA (26:7-12)

Yitzchak and Rivka are in Gerar.

He says she is his sister. Avimelech realizes she is his wife and challenges Yitzchak. Avimelech instructs all not to touch her. Yitzchak plants that year and the crop yield is 100-fold (meah shearim).

Yitzchak plants crops in a famine. And gets a 100-fold yield. That is not normal.

Wow, Yitzchak must think: the promise of the Jewish people settling this Land is coming true in my time. We are being blessed.

To build a state you need to begin planting – shepherds are not state builders. Farmers are. He plants. And what would you think if you planted in a famine and got a 100-fold yield? G-d is with me. My state building is being rewarded from above. Time to take more steps to build the state.



3RD ALIYA (26:13-22)

Yitzchak prospers greatly, with many flocks. He digs the wells Avraham dug but were filled in by the Philistines. Avimelech tells him to move away. He digs more wells of Avraham. Finally, when he digs wells that are not contested, he declares that he has been fruitful.

All the wells end well. That's 5 well diggings.

Why did the Philistines fill in the wells? That sounds quite odd.

These wells are for the wellbeing of the impending Jewish state. Yitzchak is intent on these wells; he is digging the wells for agriculture. The shepherd is transitioning

to agriculture; state building demands agriculture.

And the people of Gerar are onto him – they smell an adversary, intent on taking their land. Hence, they oppose his wells.



4TH ALIYA (26:23-29)

Yitzchak journeys to Beersheva.

G-d tells him not to fear, for He is with him as He was with Avraham. Yitzchak builds an altar and calls in G-d's name. Avimelech comes to renew the pact, though if any harm be done to him, the pact is off.

Why does Avimelech want this pact?

Avimelech is afraid that Yitzchak will harm him. He senses that a confrontation with Yitzchak is looming. He senses Yitzchak is preparing for a state, something Avraham did not do. And this state will be at Avimelech's expense. The pact is not lovey-dovey. It is a security pact. When you gain power, don't harm me.



5TH ALIYA (26:30–27:27)

Esav marries at 40 taking

Canaanite wives, to the consternation of Yitzchak and Rivka. Yitzchak is elderly. He instructs Esav to bring freshly caught venison after which he will bless him. Rivka interferes and instructs Yaakov to imitate Esav. Yitzchak is suspicious but Yaakov's disguise is convincing.

The story of Yitzchak wanting to bless Esav can be seen as the next chapter of his state building. Because, while Yitzchak seems to do all the things that Avraham did, this blessing has no precedent. Avraham did not bless his children at the end of his life. Why is Yitzchak doing this?

Yitzchak figures *both* his sons are going to lead the next generation of the Jewish people, the generation of state building. There

is no reason to think otherwise; they are twins, both born of the same mother. And they are complementary leaders. Yaakov is the thoughtful leader. But military power is not his thing. It is Esav's. A great pair. Spirit and power.

Yitzchak does not intend to bless just one son, but both. He intends to bless Esav in worldly matters, Esav's strength. To complement Yaakov, not replace him.

Rivka sees it all differently. Because she got that message when she was pregnant – 2 nations, not one. She does not accept Yitzchak's fanciful dream that state building has arrived. The Jewish future has a circuitous path before it gets to settling this Land. And that message that she received of two nations. Well, if the Jewish people is going to be one of these two of my children, not both, it isn't going to be Esav.



6TH ALIYA (27:28-28:4)

Yitzchak gives the blessing to Yaakov. Esav arrives soon after.

When the deception is discovered, Esav is incensed, intent on killing Yaakov. Rivka urges Yitzchak to send Yaakov to Padan Aram to find a wife – and save his life.

The blessing, intended for Esav, is for agricultural blessing from the heavens. And power. In Yitzchak's mind, the Jewish people will require economic success as well as military prowess. And that is the blessing to Esav – a perfect partner to Yaakov, the thoughtful leader.

Rivka's intervention, to avoid the blessing going to Esav, shapes Jewish history. And in this, Rivka follows in Sarah's footsteps. Sarah banished Yishmael and G-d told Avraham to listen to her. Rivka, in her way, banishes Esav. And Yitzchak knows that in the end she

is correct; that only one of their children will inherit the covenant, the other won't. The Jewish women prevail and chart the future of our people.



7TH ALIYA (28:5-9)

Esav sees that the Canaanite women he took are frowned upon.

He marries Yishmael's daughter.

Esav marries at 40, like Yitzchak. He wants to walk in his father's footsteps, claiming his father's legacy. He takes a daughter of Yishmael, in other words, his cousin, as Yitzchak married Rivka, his cousin. Just like his father.

But it is a hollow walk. It is imitation not replication. Checking off a box, not assumption of a legacy.

The parsha began with Esav selling the birthright and despising it. The parsha ends with a farcical attempt to recover that despised legacy by marrying someone at the same age and stage as his father. A hollow imitation. ■



STATS

6th of the 54 sedras; 6th of 12 in Bereshit.
Written on 172.7 lines, ranks 36th.
4 Parshiyot; 2 open, 2 closed.
106 pesukim, ranks 29 (9th in Bereshit).
1432 words, ranks 34 (10th in Bereshit).
5426 letters, ranks 33 (10th in Bereshit).



MITZVOT

None of the 613 mitzvot are in Toldot, however, as we mention often, there are Midot and values and other lessons to be learned. This is one of 17 mitzva-less sedras, 9 of which are in Sefer Bereshit, 3 in Shemot, none in Vayikra, 2 in Bamidbar, and 3 in Devarim.

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THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

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“Friday Night with Grandpa”

Veteran readers of this column are familiar with my paternal grandfather, Chaim Yitzchak Weinreb. He was an old-school Jew, with roots in the region of eastern Poland known as Galicia. He had studied under renowned Talmudists back in the old country, and his fervent wish was to see his grandchildren grow up to be dedicated Talmud students.

I was his oldest grandchild and discovered from a very early age just how determined he was to steer me in what he was convinced was the right direction. I particularly remember the time he visited my parents’ home when I was in the seventh or eighth grade. I had just received my report card and proudly showed it to him. I felt it was a pretty good report card, but for him, anything less than perfection was inadequate. After one glance,

he noticed just how uneven my academic performance was.

He spoke to me in Yiddish, unadulterated by English phrases—pure, old-fashioned Yiddish. He protested that my grades were spotty. “You did very well in *Chumash*, Bible, but not nearly as good in Talmud. How can one truly know the Bible if he is ignorant of Talmud?”

I responded defensively by saying that I saw no connection between the Bible portions of *Bereshit* that we were then studying and the tractate of *Bava Metzia*, our Talmud text that year. “The Chumash is full of great stories, but the Talmud is only about legal arguments, some of which are over my head.”

He smiled and said that if I would give him an hour on the upcoming Friday night, he would give me kugel and soda, teach me a song, and demonstrate how the Talmud elucidates the Bible, in an “amazing” way. Only he didn’t say “amazing,” he said “*vunderbar*.”

That Friday, true to his word, and he was always true to his word, he personally served me the kugel and soda, taught me a song that he had learned from the old rabbi of his now-extinct *shtetl*, and asked me to review with him a short passage in this week’s Torah portion, *Parshat Toldot* (Genesis 25:19-28:9).

You know the story. Esau, the older brother, comes in from the field, famished. He finds his younger brother, Jacob, cooking a pot of

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stew and asks for some of it. Jacob is willing to give it to him, but for a price. He demands that Esau first sell him his birthright; that is, the material and spiritual privileges that come with being the first-born. Translated literally, he says: “Sell me your birthright, *kayom*, like today!”

Whereas nowadays, kids will call their elderly grandfather *Zaidie* or *Saba*, we called ours Grandpa. Despite his old-fashioned demeanor, in many ways he was as American as apple pie. He asked me if I found anything problematic with the story.

I did. “The phrase ‘*kayom*’ seems strange, Grandpa. Why does Jacob insist that the sale should be ‘like today?’”

He responded, “Good! Maybe you have a *gemara kopp* [a Talmudic intellect] after all! But let’s see if you can ask a question on the whole transaction based on the Talmud texts you are now studying in school. Here’s your volume of Talmud. I’ll give you ten minutes to come up with a really good question.”

To say that I was frustrated would be putting it mildly. Not only was I going to be stuck studying all Friday night—I was actually being asked to think!

But one did not say no to Grandpa. So I opened the large book, pored over it and focused on the task with great concentration. I was searching for a connection between a fascinating story and what I then experienced as some very boring rules and regulations.

After some time, probably much more than the allotted ten minutes, I had an “aha” experience. I really got excited. “Grandpa! It can’t be! How could Jacob purchase the birthright from Esau? The privileges of the birthright are way off in the future. They include privileges like a dual portion of their inheritance

of their father Isaac’s estate, and Isaac was alive, if not entirely well, at that time. We studied in the Talmud that one cannot buy or sell objects or privileges which do not yet exist!”

My grandfather was thrilled, but no more than I was. Finally, I saw a connection between my Bible stories and the legal terminology of the Talmud that I had begun to resent.

He then sat back, asked me to relax, and took the role of the teacher. “If you reached page 16 of the tractate you are studying, you know this scenario. A fisherman wishes to sell the fish he will catch that today to a customer. He doesn’t have the fish yet. Can he sell them? Yes, answers the Talmud. He can sell them if he desperately needs the money to feed himself that day. But if he wishes to sell the fish he will catch in thirty days or in a year, he cannot do that. If one is desperate, he can sell even objects that he does not yet possess, even fish that are still in the sea.”

There is a logical rationale for this legal principle, which I will omit from this column in the interest of brevity. Suffice it to say that I now saw the connection between the story and the Talmudic principle:

“Of course Jacob said *kayom*. Sell me your birthright even though its privileges will not be realized until the distant future, but do so in your current state of desperation. Do so because you are famished, and in your desperation have the legal ability, much like the fisherman, to sell something which is now non-existent, because you need it for your urgent immediate needs. Sell me the birthright *kayom*.”

Grandpa was proud of me that day, but I was even prouder of myself. He told me

that the concept that I had discovered on my own was to be found in the commentary *Ohr HaChaim*, which he studied assiduously every Friday night.

He then leaned back, stared at me with his gentle blue eyes and said, “I am trying to think of a prize, a reward for your willingness to sit with me for a few hours on a Friday night, for exerting your young intellect, and for seeing the connection between the Written Torah, Scripture, and Oral Torah, Talmud.”

I sat there imagining all sorts of possible rewards, certain that he would ask for my input. Kugel and soda would have been acceptable, but lowest on my list of suggestions. I was thinking big bucks, or at least tickets to a baseball game.

Then he told me his idea. “From now on, every time I visit you, we will study together. And we will make it our business to discover connections. Our motto will be the verse in *Psalms* that says that God’s Torah is perfect, soothes the soul and brings joy to the heart.”

What a disappointment for a twelve-year-old. But today, many decades later, each time I sit down before a folio of Talmud, I experience Grandpa’s reward. I can now appreciate Grandpa’s willingness to risk his popularity with his grandchildren, instead using every means at his disposal to get us to sit and learn with him. ■

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לעילוי נשמות

פנחס בן יעקב אשר וגולדה בת ישראל דוד איז ע"ה ועזריאל בן אריה לייב ומעניה בת יצחק שרטור ע"ה

Between Prophecy and Oracle

Rebecca, hitherto infertile, became pregnant. Suffering acute pain, “she went to inquire of the Lord” [*vatelech lidrosh et Hashem*] (Bereishit 25:22). The explanation she received was that she was carrying twins who were contending in her womb. They were destined to do so long into the future:

Two nations are inside your womb;
Two peoples are to part from you.
One people will be stronger than the other,
And the older will serve the younger [*ve-rav ya'avod tsa'ir*]. (Bereishit 25:23)

Eventually the twins are born – first Esau, then (his hand grasping his brother's heel) Jacob. Mindful of the prophecy she has received, Rebecca favours the younger son, Jacob. Years later, she persuades him to cover himself in Esau's clothes and take the blessing Isaac intended to give his elder son. One verse of that blessing was “May nations serve you; may nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers and may your mother's

sons bow down to you.” (Bereishit 27:29) The prophecy has been fulfilled. Isaac's blessing can surely mean nothing less than what was disclosed to Rebecca before either child was born, namely that “the older will serve the younger.” The story has apparently reached closure, or so, at this stage, it seems.

But biblical narrative is not what it seems. Two events follow which subvert all that we had been led to expect. The first happens when Esau arrives and discovers that Jacob has cheated him out of his blessing. Moved by his anguish, Isaac gives him a benediction, one of whose clauses is:

By your sword you will live, And your brother you will serve;
But when you break loose, You will throw off his yoke from your neck. (Bereishit 27:40)

This is not what we had anticipated. The older will not serve the younger in perpetuity.

The second scene, many years later, occurs when the brothers meet after a long estrangement. Jacob is terrified of the encounter. He had fled from home years earlier because Esau had vowed to kill him. Only after a long series of preparations and a lonely wrestling match at night is he able to face Esau with some composure. He bows down to him seven times. Seven times he calls him “my lord.” Five

times he refers to himself as “your servant.” The roles have been reversed. Esau does not become the servant of Jacob. Instead, Jacob speaks of himself as the servant of Esau. But this cannot be. The words heard by Rebecca when “she went to inquire of the Lord” suggested precisely the opposite, that “the older will serve the younger.” We are faced with cognitive dissonance.

More precisely, we have here an example of one of the most remarkable of all the Torah’s narrative devices – the power of the future to transform our understanding of the past. This is the essence of Midrash. New situations retrospectively disclose new meanings in the text.¹ The present is never fully determined by the present. Sometimes it is only later that we understand now.

This is the significance of the great revelation of God to Moses in Shemot 33:33, where God says that only His back may be seen – meaning that His Presence can be seen only when we look back at the past; it can never be known or predicted in advance. The indeterminacy of meaning at any given moment is what gives the biblical text its openness to ongoing interpretation.

We now see that this was not an idea invented by the Sages. It already exists in the Torah itself. The words Rebecca heard – as will now become clear – seemed to mean one thing at the time. It later transpires that they meant something else.

The words *ve-rav yaavod tsair* seem simple: “the older will serve the younger.” Returning to them in the light of subsequent events, though, we discover that they are anything but clear. They contain multiple ambiguities.

1. Please see, for example the essay ‘*The Midrashic Imagination*’ by Michael Fishbane.



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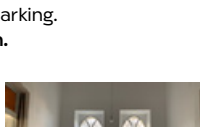
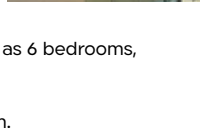
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The first (noted by Radak and R. Yosef ibn Kaspi) is that the word *et*, signalling the object of the verb, is missing. Normally in biblical Hebrew the subject precedes, and the object follows, the verb, but not always. In Job 14:19 for example, the words *avanim shachaku mayim* mean “water wears away stones,” not “stones wear away water.” Thus the phrase might mean “the older shall serve the younger” but it might also mean “the younger shall serve the older”. To be sure, the latter would be poetic Hebrew rather than conventional prose style, but that is what this utterance is: a poem.

The second is that *rav* and *tsa'ir* are not opposites, a fact disguised by the English translation of *rav* as “older.” The opposite of *tsa'ir* (“younger”) is *bechir* (“older” or “firstborn”). *Rav* does not mean “older.” It means “great” or possibly “chief.” This linking together of two terms as if they were polar opposites, which they are not – the opposites would have been *bechir/tsa'ir* or *rav/me'at* – further destabilises the meaning. Who was the *rav*? The elder? The leader? The chief? The more numerous? The word might mean any of these things.

The third – not part of the text but of later tradition – is the musical notation. The normal way of notating these three words would be

mercha-tipcha-sof passuk. This would support the reading, “the older shall serve the younger.” In fact, however, they are notated *tipcha-mercha-sof passuk* – suggesting, “the older, shall the younger serve”; in other words, “the younger shall serve the older.”

A later episode adds a yet another retrospective element of doubt. There is a second instance in Genesis of the birth of twins, to Tamar. The passage is clearly reminiscent of the story of Esau and Jacob:

When the time came for her to give birth, there were twins in her womb. As she was in labour one child put out a hand, so the midwife took a crimson thread and tied it to his wrist, saying, “This one came out first.” But he pulled his hand back and then his brother came out. She said, “How you have burst through!” So he was named Peretz. Then his brother came out with the crimson thread on his wrist. He was named Zerah. (*Bereishit* 38:27-30)

Who then was the elder? And what does this imply in the case of Esau and Jacob?² These multiple ambiguities are not accidental but integral to the text. The subtlety is such, that we do not notice them at first. Only later, when the narrative does not turn out as expected, are we forced to go back and notice what at first we missed: that the words Rebecca heard may mean “the older will serve the younger” or “the younger will serve the older.”

A number of things now become clear. The first is that this is a rare example in the Torah of an oracle as opposed to a prophecy (this is the probable meaning of the word *chiddot* in Bamidbar 12:8, speaking about Moses: “With him I speak mouth to mouth, openly and

2. See Rashi to Gen. 25:26 who suggests that Jacob was in fact the elder.



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not in *chiddor*" - usually translated as "dark speeches" or "riddles"). Oracles - a familiar form of supernatural communication in the ancient world - were normally obscure and cryptic, unlike the normal form of Israelite prophecy. This may well be the technical meaning of the phrase "she went to inquire of the Lord" which puzzled the medieval commentators.

The second – and this is fundamental to an understanding of Bereishit – is that the future is never as straightforward as we are led to believe. Abraham is promised many children but is 100 years old before Isaac is born. The patriarchs are promised a land but do not acquire it in their lifetimes. The Jewish journey - though it has a destination - is long and has many digressions and setbacks. Will Jacob serve or be served? We do not know. Only after a long, enigmatic struggle, alone at night, does Jacob receive the name Israel meaning, "he who struggles with God and with men and prevails."

The most important message of this text is both literary and theological. The future affects our understanding of the past. We are part of a story whose last chapter has not yet been written. That rests with us, as it rested with Jacob. ■

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“Shiviti Hashem L'negdi Tamid”

This week's parasha begins with the birth of the twin brothers, Eisav and Ya'akov, and their development, including their contrasting personalities and behaviors. Together with that, we are told of the strong emotions of both love and hate that accompany the relationships of parent to son and brother to brother. Yitzchak, we read, preferred the older brother, Eisav, while Rivka was fond of Ya'akov. The divergent views of the parents and of the brothers led to a rift in the family and, eventually, that split also led to Eisav's plan to murder his younger sibling. This tragic division would impact the lives of both brothers for many years.

Our Chazal used this theme of brotherly friction as the focus of our haftarah, a reading taken from the opening prakim of Malachi. The navi reviews the enmity that Edom, Eisav's descendants, had shown to Israel over many years but reassures the nation that, despite the punishments they had suffered in the hands of the Edomite enemy, and despite their ensuing doubts regarding G-d's relationship with them, Hashem still retains His love for them: “Ahavi etchem amar Hashem”, “I have loved you, says Hashem”. Further assuring the people of G-d's care for Israel over Edom, the prophet adds: “V'et Eisav saneiti”, “but I have despised Eisav”.

Mal'achi, the last of the prophets, lived some one hundred years after the destruction of the first Temple and remembered the perfidious behavior of Israel's “brother” nation, Edom, descendants of Eisav. It was they who, as mentioned in Tehillim, encouraged the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem: “Z'chor Hashem lv'nei Edom et yom Yerushalayim ha'omrim ‘ ‘aru, ‘aru ad hayesod bah’ ”- “Remember (the behavior) of Edom on the day (of the destruction) of Yerushalayim, when they said: ‘Destroy it! Destroy it down to its foundations!’ ” For this reason, the navi describes G-d's feelings toward the nation of Eisav as those of hatred and enmity, much as the feelings Eisav had toward Ya'akov in our parasha. In doing so, Hashem repays Eisav's hatred of Ya'akov with His own disgust toward Edom, responding to Edom's plea to destroy Jerusalem by ruining the land of Edom itself.

Nonetheless, although first reassuring the nation of G-d's love for Israel, Malachi chastises Israel's for their unbecoming attitude toward their Creator, the One to Whom they owe their very existence. The censure for such negative behavior was directed to the religious leaders who conducted the ritual service in the Mikdash, i.e., the Kohanim.

He reminds these leaders of how they offer

animals that were unsuitable as sacrifices and those unfit to be placed upon the mizbe'ach, the holy altar. Such dismissive attitude toward their service of G-d clearly reflected their contemptuous regard of Hashem Himself. Perhaps the most powerful condemnation of the Kohanim is reflected in G-d's refusal to accept such offering and their accompanying prayers, as Malachi challenges them: "Hayissa mikem panim?" - "Will He (now) show you favor?" Indeed, the navi further condemns their behavior by contrasting the respectful behavior of the pagan nations to their gods to the disdainful attitude of the Kohanim to Melech Mal'chei HaM'lachim. It is this theme that is emphasized in verses 11-12. And a most painful criticism - that we should well consider.

Sadly, we no longer have a Bet HaMikdash

in which to serve Hashem, nor Kohanim to direct the ritual service. How, then, do we serve G-d today? How can we take care to avoid any possible "disdainful" behavior toward Hashem?

I suggest that our "divine service" today is the observance of mitzvot and our communion with the Divine One through tefillah. Given that truth, we must be careful to avoid any careless performance of either of these fulfillments- to be fully aware of, and intent on, the fact that we are serving Hashem with these acts and, certainly at these times, to remember the words of Tehillim (16;8) "Shiviti Hashem l'negdi tamid" - "I set Hashem before me always." ■

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Love and Awe

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אֶת־יִצְחָק:

These are the descendants of Yitzhak, son of Avraham; Avraham begot Yitzhak (Bereishit 25:19).

Many commentaries note the seemingly redundant language of this pasuk. Why does the Torah need to state both that Yitzhak was the son of Avraham and that Avraham was the father of Yitzhak? The *Tov HaPeninim*, citing the *Arugat HaBosem*, derives a profound lesson from this repetition.

LOVE AND AWE

There are two primary ways in which a Jew serves Hashem: **Ahavah** (love) and **Yirah** (awe). *Yirah* expresses itself through restraint — taking care not to violate the prohibitions of the Torah, the *mitzvot lo ta'aseh*. *Ahavah*, on the other hand, is expressed through action — enthusiastically performing positive commandments, the *mitzvot aseh*, as an outpouring of love and desire to fulfill the Divine will.

HONOR AND REVERENCE

A similar dynamic appears in connection with the mitzvah of honoring one's parents (*kibbud av va'em*). The Torah commands both *kibbud* — כבד את אביך ואת אמך “Honor your father and your mother” (Shemot 20:12)—and *morah* — איש אמו ואביו תיראו “Every man shall revere his mother and his

father” (Vayikra 19:3). *Kibbud* reflects love, demonstrated through positive acts of care, such as bringing a parent food or assisting them. *Morah* expresses awe and respect, reflected in refraining from actions that diminish their honor, such as sitting in their seat or contradicting them.

A complete relationship—with parents or with Hashem — requires both aspects. Some people, cautious by nature, focus primarily on *yirah*, being scrupulous to avoid transgression. Such individuals may need to work on cultivating *ahavah*, performing mitzvot with joy, warmth, and enthusiasm. Others, naturally exuberant and optimistic, may excel in *ahavah* but must strengthen their sense of reverence and discipline, deepening their awareness of Hashem's omnipresence.

AVRAHAM AND YITZHAK

The *Zohar* teaches that the great personalities of Tanach embody specific spiritual attributes. Avraham personifies *ahavah*, as the verse states: זרע אברהם אוהבי - “Seed of Avraham, My beloved” (*Tehillim* 105:6). Avraham served Hashem with boundless love. Even the command of the Akeidah—so emotionally wrenching and incomprehensible — was met with eagerness. The Torah records that Avraham “arose early in the morning,” eager to fulfill God's will despite the personal cost.

Yitzhak, by contrast, represents *yirah*, as Yaakov is referred to as “*Pahad Yitzhak*” — “the Fear of Yitzhak” (*Bereishit* 31:42).

Yitzhak's life embodies awe, self-discipline, and total submission to Hashem's will.

True spiritual perfection, however, lies not in one quality alone, but in the *harmony* between them. The Torah describes Avraham and Yitzhak journeying together toward the Akeidah: וילכו שניהם יחדו — “The two of them walked together.” Each internalized the other's trait: Avraham's *ahavah* was tempered by *yirah*, and Yitzhak's *yirah* was infused with *ahavah*. Only through that balance could they fulfill Hashem's command in its fullest sense. At the conclusion of the Akeidah, Hashem declares, עתה ידעתי כי ירא אלוקים אתה, — “Now I know that you are a God-fearing man” — Avraham had achieved a perfect integration of love and awe.

THE LEGACY OF YITZHAK

Throughout *Parashat Toldot*, Yitzhak retraces his father's footsteps—digging the same wells and traveling through the same places. He is not merely repeating Avraham's actions but internalizing his father's quality of *ahavah* to complement his own *yirah*. This, perhaps, is why the Torah emphasizes: אברהם הוליד את יצחק - *Avraham begot Yitzhak*. Yitzhak was not only Avraham's biological son but also his spiritual heir, completing and perfecting both attributes within himself.

THE RHYTHM OF WORSHIP

It is striking that only Jews *shuckle*—swaying back and forth—while praying. Perhaps this movement reflects the dual rhythm of our relationship with Hashem. We lean forward in *ahavah*, yearning to draw close, and then we gently retreat in *yirah*, recognizing His infinite greatness. Our very posture embodies the sacred dance between closeness and awe, passion and humility.

CONCLUSION

A life of *avodat Hashem* requires the graceful interplay of *ahavah* and *yirah*. Love without awe can become casual; awe without love can become cold. But when they join together, the soul burns steadily — alive with reverence, yet warmed by affection.

May we, like Avraham and Yitzhak, walk together with Hashem, harmonizing joy and trembling, love and awe. Then we will truly fulfill the statement in Tehillim: 'עֲבַדוּ אֶת־ה' — “Serve Hashem with awe and rejoice with trembling” (*Tehillim* 2:11). ■



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Attributions and Acquisitions

At the end of his life, Yitzchak Avinu blesses his two sons Yaakov and Eisav. At first glance the *brachot* seem quite similar: To Yaakov he says, “*Ve’yiten lecha ha’Elokim mi’tal hashamayim u’mishmanei ha’aretz...*— And may Hashem give you of the dew of the heavens and of the fatness of the earth...” To Eisav, “*Hinei mi’shmanei ha’aretz yihiyeh moshavecha u’mital hashamayim mei’al...*— Behold, of the fatness of the earth shall be your dwelling and of the dew of the heavens from above.” (*Bereisheet* 27:28, 27:39) They are both blessed

with the fatness of the earth and the dew of the heavens, wherein lies the difference?

The Chafetz Chaim *zt”l* takes note of the order in which the *brachot* are expressed and sees significant meaning in the slight variation. For Yaakov Avinu, the dew is mentioned first, signifying the primacy of spirituality and Divine connection. Esav, on the other hand, relates strongly to the world of physicality and therefore, the “fatness of the earth” is listed first. Shlomo Hamel-ech teaches us, “*ish le’fi mahalalo*—a man according to his praise” (*Mishlei* 27:21). That is to say, listening to what a person praises and how he arranges his priorities offers a window into his inner desires and drives. By his very nature, a Jew belongs to the world of the spiritual, and is meant to use the physical world as a medium to achieve a more refined, sacred existence.

Rashi *zt”l* points out another difference between the two *brachot*. “*Ve’yiten lecha ha’Elokim*,” Yaakov Avinu will only receive



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these blessings from Hashem, expressed in the aspect of judgement, if he is deserving. Eisav, however, will receive the blessings whether or not he deserves them. This is echoed in the tefillah of Shlomo Hamelech when the Beit Hamikdash was first consecrated. He asks for Hashem to accept the tefillot of the nations, irrespective of their worthiness. This should resonate with us all; everything we receive is justified in the Divine scheme, and we must not focus on what we lack, for if we needed something, Hashem would surely grant it to us.

Further, adds Rav Shach zt”l, Hashem’s name is not even mentioned in the blessing given to Eisav. It seems that it is in Eisav’s own hands to access and control what he gets. By contrast, Yaakov Avinu is blessed with the words “*ve’yiten lecha— and* may Hashem give you.” The introduction of the word “and,” says Rashi, reflects Hashem’s continuous giving, directly connecting with His beloved children more and more, again and again.

These subtle differences direct us to reflect upon the great chasm between the lives of Yaakov Avinu and his brother Eisav. Yaakov Avinu attributes every blessing to the grace of Hashem, and is keenly aware to use each gift toward a spiritual connection. Eisav’s focus is physical comfort, convenience and pleasure, devoid of any spiritual connection.

Let us be mindful when speaking of our possessions and accomplishments, and be conscious to attribute it all to the Source. We must continually ask ourselves, when will our deeds reach the deeds of our forefathers? As we develop this greater awareness, we can more easily align our priorities with the elevated nature of our souls. ■

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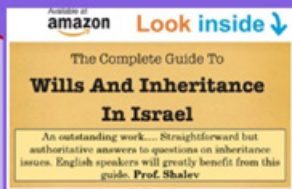
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Ya'alah

Rebbe Yoram Michael Abergel, zy'a, was the pillar of Torah of Netivot in southern Israel, a great *mezakhe ha-rabim*, talmid chacham, builder of Torah and kabbalist. The author of the ten volume *B'tzur Yarom* on Tanya, Rav Yoram spent his days and nights in the dedication of the Jewish people, learning and teaching Torah. He maintained an exhausting schedule of shiurim on Jewish thought, halacha and chasidus. These classes began three hours before dawn and continued late until the night.

A few times a week he would travel hundreds of kilometers, giving shiurim along the length and breadth of Eretz Yisrael. In addition, he was present for hours and hours of *kabbalat kahal*, meeting thousands of students and seekers, providing everyone he met with a jolt of energy and *chizuk*, a good word, guidance with a touch of *ru'ach ha-kodesh*, and a blessing of encouragement toward growth

and learning.

His Rabbanit and children, who objectively speaking bore the brunt of their father's incredible sacrifice for the Jewish people, often said that they never felt that they were missing their father while he was on the road. In fact, he saved his biggest smile for his home, and מיטב כוחו, "his primary strength", was spent at home leading the family in singing, giving over Torah, and playing games.

Born in the southern moshav of B'rosh to a traditional Moroccan family, Rav Abergel studied at the local "Beit Yehuda", the Bnei Akiva yeshiva in Kfar Maimon, before transferring to Yeshivat HaNegev. Over the years, he spent time as a shamash and student of the holy Baba Sali, Rav Ovadya Yosef and Rav Mordechai Eliyahu, providing Rav Yoram a unique foundation of Torah mastery which would support the vast empire of kollelim, yeshivot, and projects under his supervision.

One summer evening, the Rav arrived for a shiur in the Central Beit Knesset of the northern moshav, and was met by a small group of *avreichim* who sought to escort him from his car to the beit kneset. Up ahead, he caught a glimpse of a group of teenagers hanging around the entrance, dressed immodestly. Not wanting to make the unaware kids nor the *avreichim* uncomfortable, Rebbe Yoram asked his escorts if there was another entrance. "Yes, just behind the shul there is a *chatzeir*, a courtyard...although the gate is probably locked..." The men followed the Rav around back where indeed, they found a fence with a locked gate.

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Then and there, Reb Yoram, beard fully white and a grandfather many times over, hiked up his frock and began to scale the fence. “*HaRav! Kavod HaTorah!*” cried the *avreichem* nervously. As he deftly landed on the other side, Rav Yoram looked back at them with a mischievous smile. “You think I’m an old man? אני ילד מושב, I’m a moshav kid! A fence is not going to stop me from giving a shiur. *Ya’alah...*”

וַיַּעֲקֹב אִישׁ תָּם יָשֵׁב אֶהְלִים

“Yaakov was an innocent man, dwelling in tents.” (25:27)

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov explains the inner significance of Yaakov’s efforts to acquire the *bechora*, “blessing of the firstborn” in our sedra. A “firstborn”, he says, is one who sees things as though for the first time. Indeed, no matter how many times Yaakov experienced something, it was fresh and alive; he experienced it with newness, wonder and *temimus*. In cultivating *temimus*, Yaakov Avinu maintained a youthful state of innocence, purity and wonder into his old age. When our *Yiddishkeit* becomes stale, withered or fossilized, it is because Torah and mitzvos have become distanced from their Source. It is a sign that we have become distanced from *temimus*.

Whenever we experience the simple purity of unrestrained laughter, the natural amazement of a moment of wonder, the gallop of untethered joy, free of self-consciousness, we can attain a state of obliviousness to the cynicism, posturing and competitiveness of the adult world. We are channeling and connecting with our ‘inner child’. No matter how many times we fall away, we can again become the יָלֵד שְׂשֻׁעִים (Yirmiyahu, 31:20), the “delightful child” of the *Ribbono Shel Olam*, for no matter how old and sophisticated a

person may be, “The soul of a child still nestles within him.” The power to return and reveal this inner freedom is the power of *temimus*.

Reb Meir Michel Abehsera, descendant of Moroccan Torah sages and a devoted chassid of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, was renowned as a spiritual mentor and advocate of natural medicine and holistic health. A unique and beloved spiritual mentor, Reb Meir shared some of his original thoughts in memoir, *The Possible Man*:

I address myself to the adult, with the wish that at the same time, I will strike a chord with the child who dwells within the adult. The child’s nature is to want to be taken by the fable, though he knows you are keeping a moral or a lesson for the end. But to keep his attention you must be sure that the story’s chain of events flows easily into the moral and that you do not suddenly spell out the lesson too soon, spoiling everything. The child is willing to make himself even more childlike in order to make room for the wonder. He won’t allow his cleverness to interfere until the tale is completed. He knows the code of illusion. He knows it is the time for listening, not for questions.

The account of Yaakov Avinu’s birth and maturation in Parshas Toldos invites us to reengage the innocence and newness of the child who dwells within. May we always be filled with wonder, openness and *temimus*; may we listen and be attuned to the sweetness of Hashem’s message for us in the present moment. *Ya’alah!* ■

Jonathan Rosenblum, DPM

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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
DIRECTOR, TORAH INITIATIVES,
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Parshat Toldot opens with the birth and brief description of the youth and development of *Yaakov Avinu* and his twin brother *Eisav*. The verse describes the different trajectories of these twin boys:

וַיִּגְדְּלוּ הַנְּעָרִים וַיְהִי עֵשָׂו אִישׁ יָדָע צֹדֵד אִישׁ שֹׂדֵד
וַיֵּעָקֹב אִישׁ תָּם יֹשֵׁב אֹהֶלִים:

When the boys grew up, Eisav became a skillful hunter, a man of the outdoors; but Yaakov was a mild man who dwelled within the tents.

Why does the *Torah* describe *Yaakov* as *Yosheiv Ohalim*-staying within the tents, rather than the expression *Yosheiv B'Ohel*-dwelling within (his own) tent-a homebody?

The ***Sefat Emet***, the ***Gerrer Rebbe zy'a***, explains that *Yaakov Avinu* was totally focused on matters of holiness, rather than engaging with the potential impediments of the outside world, he remained focused, at home in the tents of *limud*-scholarship and *ruchniyut*-spirituality.

Rashi however points to a well known *Midrash* to answer this question:

יֹשֵׁב אֹהֶלִים. אֹהֶלֹךָ שֶׁל שָׁם וְאֹהֶלֹךָ שֶׁל עֵבֶר:

Dwelling in tents — the tent of

Sheim and the tent of *Eiver*-*Yaakov Avinu* spent his time learning together from **both** *Sheim* and *Eiver*.

In explaining this insight of *Rashi*, **Rabbi Berel Povarsky, shlita** one of the *Roshei Yeshiva* of *Yeshivat Ponovitch*, suggests that the reason that the *Torah* describes *Yaakov Avinu* as staying in multiple tents, in spending time learning from both *Sheim* and *Eiver*, is to demonstrate how one who is a true seeker of the *Torah's* wisdom, should pursue that wisdom. One who is truly interested in the beauty of *Torah*, will seek to learn and gain insights from all Sages. As the *gemara* in *Avoda Zara 19a* states:

Kol HaLomeid Torah MeiRav Echad, eino roeh siman bracha L'Olam-Whoever learns *Torah* from just one teacher, will not live to see any sign of blessing. Rav Povarsky suggests further, that the true way of *Torah* study is to learn from every single person, as the *Mishna* in *Pirkei Avot* with which we are all familiar states:

Eizeh Hu Chacham-*HaLomeid MiKol Adam*-Who is considered Wise? One who learns from every individual.

Yehi Ratzon, may each of us be blessed to heed this beautiful message, to strive to be true students of *Torah*, to be *Yosheiv Ohalim*, and to learn from one another.... ■

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THIS WEEK'S INSPIRATIONAL TORAH LEARNING

**SUNDAY
NOV 23**

7:30 PM

Men's Safrut (The Bais)
Rabbi Tzvi Mauner
7 Hartum Street,
2nd Floor



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**MONDAY
NOV 24**

8:30 PM

The Bais (for Men) - Semichat
Chaver Program Rav Elyada
Goldwicht@ **Bet Knesset**
Ohel Yitzchak
Keren Hayesod St.



OU Israel | Women's Division
2 Radak St., Rechavia

6:00-10:00PM

ATID Midrasha
(women in their 20's)

7:00-9:00PM

Dorot Choir Session with
Hadassah Jacob

8:00-9:00PM

The Jewish Roots
of Thankfulness - A
Thanksgiving Shiur

**TUESDAY
NOV 25**

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COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN BAKAA

Classes @ Bet Knesset Nitzanim, 3 Asher Street, Bakaa

9:20 AM

Understanding Tefila

Rabbi Yossi Goldin (Resumes Dec. 2)

11:25 AM

Pshat in the Parsha

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin

10:15 AM

Rambam: Letters & Introductions

Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

12:20 PM

Unlocking the Messages of Chazal

Rabbi Shai Finkelstein

TORAH TUESDAYS WITH THE WOMEN'S DIVISION

Classes @ Beit Knesset HaNassi, 24 Ussishkin St. Rechavia

9:15AM

Torah Tapestries Parsha Shiur

Mrs. Shira Smiles

10:15AM

Sefer Bereishit:

Exploring the Middot of the Avot

Mrs. Leah Feinberg

MODIIN-THE BAIS

Men's Programs in Modiin Yeshivat Hesder Meir Harel,
Emek Beit Shean 53, Modiin

10:00AM -2:00PM

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Rabbi Avi Herzog

1:00PM- NEW!!!

Modiin Lunch and Learn with **Rabbi Aschi Dick** - Masamerica Offices,
28 Dam HaMacabbiim St, 3rd Floor, Shiur followed by mincha at 1:45pm

7:30 PM Men's Safrut in **MODIIN** Rabbi Phil Schajer

7:30 PM Men's Safrut in **BEIT SHEMESH** Rabbi Elie Levi

This Week's Inspirational Torah Learning with OU Israel

**WEDNESDAY
NOV 26**

COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN RECHAVIA

@ Bet Knesset HaNassi,
24 Ussishkin St., Rechavia

9:15AM

Holy Poetry

Rabbi Dr. Aaron Adler

10:20 AM

Organ Donation in Halacha **Rabbi
Aschi Dick** (Rabbi Anthony
Manning will resume Dec. 3)

11:25 AM

Modern Masters **Rabbi Sam Shor**
(Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider will
resume Dec. 10)

12:30PM

Jews in the Middle Ages:
External Threats and Internal
Development
Dr. Deborah Polster

**THURSDAY
NOV 27**

COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN ARNONA

Classes @ Bet Knesset Shai Agnon,
11 Rechov Leib Yaffe, Arnona

9:15 AM

Parshat HaShavua

Rabbi Ari Kahn

10:30AM

Parashat Hashavua

Rabbi Baruch Taub

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FRIDAY:

4:20 pm Tefila @ The Patio, followed by Chicken Soup Kiddush

8:30 PM Oneg Shabbat-Tisch, niggunim, Torah at Janovsky
Residence, Rechov Avnei Eitan 7

SHABBAT DAY:

8:30 AM Tefila @ The Patio. Rabbi Shor will give the drasha
before Musaf

11:00AM Kiddush

12:00 PM Community Lunch followed by Shiur:
Chanuka: Kindling the Lights of Mashiach
Mincha will follow the shiur

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FRIDAY :

7:30 PM Oneg Shabbat - Welcoming Remarks
Aleeza Ben Shalom, Torah Tidbits contributor, followed by Tisch, Wine-Tasting, Niggunim & Shiur: *Noach, Yaakov and the Chashmonaim-The Backstory of the Nes Pach HaShemen.* @Ben Shalom Residence, Alon 33

SHABBAT DAY:

12:00 PM Community Kiddush and Shiur: *Sod HaSevivan*
Followed by Community Lunch @Heichal Yehudit, near 38 Hatzfira St.

MOTZA'SH:

7:30 PM Melava Malka and shiur: *Tashlich in Tevet: Unlocking the Spiritual Potential of Chanuka* @ Neve Michael, near Hadarim St. 43

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The Wells We Still Offer

Avraham was a revolutionary, roaming the length and breadth of the Land of Israel, proclaiming his daring vision of faith in Hashem and a life shaped by moral experience. Wherever he traveled, he built *mizbeichot* that functioned like open-air podiums—public platforms from which he shared his teachings. Over his lifetime, Avraham erected four such *mizbeichot*: two in the north, one in the south, and of course the fateful altar on Har HaMoriah at the moment of the Akeidah.

Yitzchak lived a different kind of life. He built only a single *mizbei'ach*—ironically, in the same region where Avraham had raised one of his four, in Be'er Sheva. His great mission was not putting up altars but the steady, unglamorous work of digging wells. He opened three new wells and reopened the many wells his father had dug, which the Plishtim had spitefully sealed.

FROM JOURNEY TO SETTLEMENT

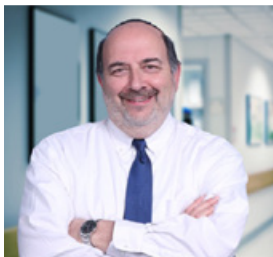
Wells are iconic for Yitzchak because he is the first of the Avot to begin entrenching himself in the Land. Avraham lived as a wanderer, moving across the countryside in search of fresh pasture for his flocks whenever the grazing thinned. That nomadic rhythm enabled him to encounter many different people, but it also meant he never fully secured lasting ownership of the Land. He moved from mountain to mountain, from region to region, always on the “road,” never rooted in one place.

Yitzchak lives a far more settled life, never leaving Israel and spending most of his years around Gerar and nearby Be'er Sheva. In his effort to anchor our future in the Land, he cultivates fields and becomes a man of the soil rather than a wanderer drifting from mountaintop to mountaintop. His wells embody this shift. By digging deep into the earth, he begins to root our people—literally and figuratively—into the Land that will one day become our national home.

IDEAS TAKING ROOT

By digging wells, Yitzchak isn't only rooting us in the Land of Israel; he is also rooting the great ideas Avraham introduced. His physical work in the soil becomes a metaphor for a different kind of labor. Yitzchak begins the steady embedding of Avraham's ideals in our

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national memory. Every revolution endures only if the next generation can institutionalize its ideals. Yitzchak has no interest in reinventing the wheel. He uncovers the same wells his father had dug and restores their original names.

It takes steady character to take revolutionary ideas and anchor them in lasting practice. His wells symbolize not only anchoring us in the soil of Israel, but also anchoring Avraham's teachings in the consciousness of our people.

WELLS AND MIKHASH

However, the wells also carry a historical undertone. Their story unfolds precisely between two defining moments: Esav surrendering the bechora to Ya'akov and Rivka redirecting Yitzchak's berachot. When the narrative of the wells is framed by the transfer of berachot and the choice of bechor, it is clear that this episode bears deeper long-term symbolic weight. This symbolic layer becomes even clearer through the Ramban's interpretation.

The Ramban notes that Yitzchak's three great wells parallel the three Batei Mikdash that his descendants would one day bring into the world. A *mizbeiach* can elevate and inspire, but its impact is confined to the space around it.

A well functions differently. Its water spreads outward, sustaining fields and lives far beyond its edge. For that reason, a well—not a *mizbeiach*—becomes the symbol of the future Mikdash. The Mikdash was never meant to serve as a private sanctuary. Its influence flowed far beyond its courtyard, shaping people and cultures even at a distance.

Among the three Avot, Yitzchak expresses Jewish sovereignty and the golden era of national autonomy rooted in the Mikdash.

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Avraham was the trailblazer, and his story reflects the early formation of our identity—from the descent to Egypt through the rescue from Mitzrayim, the giving of the Torah, and the years in the desert. Yitzchak embodies the central stage of our past, the period of self-rule anchored in Yerushalayim and its sacred Mikdash. Ya'akov captures the final chapter—our long passage through exile, moving from place to place just as he himself traveled from region to region.

Yitzchak's three wells reflect the two Batei Mikdash our nation built during that golden era, and the future Beit HaMikdash we will yet deliver to history at its culmination. Each well carries its own name, and, as the Ramban explains, each one reflects the fate of a particular Mikdash—how it was received, the challenges it confronted, and







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the circumstances that brought it to an end. Taken together, the names offer a small, concentrated telling of the Mikdash's larger story.

TWO ERAS OF RESISTANCE

The first well Yitzchak dug was named *Esek*, born in conflict and endless strife. It mirrors the First Beit HaMikdash, which we were forced to defend against wave upon wave of hostility. Just as the Plishtim refused to grant Yitzchak the space to secure his water, the nations surrounding us in the First Mikdash era resisted us. From the start, the First Mikdash confronted a region unwilling to welcome the presence of Hashem into the world.

The second well, *Sitnah*, carries even darker overtones. Though the word literally suggests obstruction, it also hints at simmering hatred and deep antagonism. This name reflects the Second Beit HaMikdash—a house built amid resistance and marked early on by rising hostility toward Jews. In the opening chapters of Sefer Ezra, the Mikdash had already been authorized by Koresh, and we were slowly returning to our homeland. Yet enemies of Jewish settlement wrote letters of “sitnah” to the Persian king, urging him to halt our national restoration. Because they lived under the Persian Empire, our enemies could not attack us directly, but they could weaponize

Persian authority to suffocate our return and stall the rebuilding of the Mikdash.

The entire Second Temple era unfolded beneath this cloud of confrontation. Its launch was fraught, its history scarred by those who sought to undermine it, and its end brought us into a long and bitter exile. For this reason, Yitzchak's second well is called *Sitnah*—a name that suits a Mikdash built amid tension and resistance, and whose end led directly into our long, bitter galut.

SPACE AND PROSPERITY

The third and final well Yitzchak uncovers is named *Rechovot*. True to its name, it points toward the future Third Beit HaMikdash, a time marked by broad expansion. Our borders will widen, and our homeland will reach dimensions we have never yet known.

Yet the name holds a second layer: not only spaciousness, but flourishing. “We will be fruitful in the Land,” Yitzchak declares—hinting at the broader prosperity that these waters brought forth. So it will be in the future. The Third Mikdash will not merely enlarge the borders of Israel; it will enrich the entire world. A humanity that finally encounters Hashem and submits to His kingship will taste prosperity and stability. Through that encounter, the world will be steadier and more whole.

At first glance, these two currents—national expansion and universal prosperity—seem to run in different directions. One speaks of Israel's growth as a homeland; the other of humanity's uplift. Yet the two are inseparable. As we settle this Land and invite the presence of Hashem into history, the world is elevated with us. Through that encounter, all nations discover renewed vitality and enduring blessing.



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It is unfortunate that Avimelech and the people of the Plishtim could not look past their jealousy. Yitzchak's wells were meant to bring benefit to the region, not to threaten anyone. Had they recognized his sincerity, they would have supported his efforts, and the entire area could have flourished. The waterways he opened might even have helped them withstand the devastating famines that struck a few generations later.

Instead, their resentment pushed them to sabotage their own future by blocking the wells. A similar irony surrounds the Batei Mikdash. Chazal teach that had the nations realized how vital the Mikdash was for the stability of the entire world, they would have protected it rather than attempting, again and again, to bring it down.

Avimelech could not move beyond his hostility toward Yitzchak to benefit from the water he offered. And throughout history, nations have similarly failed to see how much we hoped to strengthen their world—whether through the spiritual impact of the Batei Mikdash they destroyed or through the many ways we tried to build and sustain the societies around us.

MODERN ECHOES

This pattern has repeated itself in different forms throughout history.

About eight years ago, the city of Cape Town in South Africa faced a severe water shortage. The countdown to Day Zero, when the taps would be shut, approached. Israel was willing to offer water technology, but the authorities decided they could not take assistance and life-saving water options from the Jewish state. It was a scene taken straight out of Parshat Toldot.

A similar dynamic has surfaced again in

recent weeks.

During the past few weeks, Iran has faced a similar crisis, with severe water shortages threatening daily life in Tehran. We are ready to offer the people of Iran whatever water assistance we can—support that could genuinely save lives. But the regime is too consumed with its hatred of Jews and its plans against Israel to notice, let alone accept, our good intentions.

According to the Ramban, Yitzchak's wells symbolize the three Batei Mikdash. Yet they also point to something broader: our effort to carve out space for human betterment, and the repeated inability of those who despise us to benefit from what we offer, blinded by anger and jealousy.

Some patterns persist. It seems we will have to wait for the third Beit HaMikdash—*Rehovot* in the language of Yitzchak's third well—when Hashem's unmistakable presence will quiet hatred and allow the spiritual wellspring of the Mikdash to strengthen human flourishing. ■



OU Press is honored to partner with Rabbi Moshe Taragin on his new volume in Hebrew regarding the recent war ('Emunah B'toch Hahastara). This remarkable book is also available in English, **"Dark Clouds Above, Faith Below"**

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Faith in the Future Promise

(Midot HaRa'aya: Emunah # 11)

“That worldview, which will become apparent to all in the future, when the world will be renewed and emerge from its crushed state, when illumination will flow freely, without any blemish, is in truth the Jewish worldview even now...People of understanding go about it and taste at all times tidbits of sweetness of that higher delight to be disseminated by the universal enlightenment of the future.”
(Midot HaRa'aya, Emunah #11)

Rav Kook, in his powerful prose, is speaking about faith in the promised perfection of the future. Perhaps an effective way to illuminate this notion is to cite a teaching from Rabbi Soloveitchik who articulated a similar concept. He said that a Jew

experiences a distinctive concept of “time consciousness.” What he meant by that is that the Jew re-experiences past events in our history (**Retrospection**); and simultaneously places great value on the present moment as being precious and a sacred possession (**Appreciation**); and alongside these two sectors of time a Jew lives with “one foot” in the future, not as some distant point but as that future that is within reach and a future that directly shapes one’s present perspective and actions (**Anticipation**). (Reflections of the Rav)

One finds throughout Rav Kook’s writing the special emphasis he placed on the third component, to borrow the term which Rav Soloveitchik chose, “Anticipation.” “Anticipating salvation refines the life of a person, it expands a person’s wisdom, it enhances a person’s spirituality” (*Orot Hakodesh* 3, p. 353).

The well-known Talmudic passage concerning the specific questions a Jew will be asked by the heavenly court after passing from this world suggests that “awaiting the salvation” is of utmost importance. Rav Kook, in his commentary on this passage, employs the allegory of a watchman who vigilantly stands guard waiting days, months and even years, to see any sign or disturbance that requires his attention. He never leaves his post. However, perhaps more importantly, the guard, upon seeing something of note, must act upon it. Rav Kook said that the same is true regarding anticipating the redemption. The Jew must constantly be on guard to see if there is any




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movement that might need a response. And as soon as there is, an immediate and an intelligent reaction is called for and must be put into action. (*Ain Aya, Shabbat*, Chapter 2, *piska* 164).

Rav Kook expresses his unwavering confidence and faith that the Jewish people will take note of the signposts of the redemption which is unfolding: “The redemption continues. The redemption from Egypt and the complete redemption of the future are one unending action: the action of the strong hand and the outstretched arm, which began in Egypt and works through all the eventualities. Moses and Elijah are redeemers in a single redemption; the beginner and the ender, the opener and the closer together fill the unit. **The spirit of Israel hears the sound of the movements, the redemptive actions**, brought through all the eventualities until the sprouting of redemption will be complete, in all its plenitude and goodness. (*Orot, Yisrael U'techiyato*, chapter 28)

ZECHER LE'CHURBAN - ZECHER LE'MIKDASH

Jewish law established a category of practices and rituals to be observed in order to mourn the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. This category of *zecher le'churban* observances include the custom of leaving a small portion of one's home unfinished. This category of *zecher le'churban* is intended to be solemn and mournful. However, Rabbi Soloveitchik clarified that there is a similar but distinctive category with which we memorialize the destruction, called *zecher le'mikdash* which are meant to be educational and uplifting. They are meant to ignite an inner spiritual desire to once again restore those days.

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salt on the table when eating bread. The use of salt is a reminder of salt which was placed on the altar along with the sacrifices brought in the Beit Hamikdash. The use of salt is not meant to be mournful. Rather, it serves as a regular reminder and perhaps bolsters are longing to once again see the restitution of the rites of the holy *avodah* (service in the Temple).

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik's esteemed forebear, the Netziv of Volozhin, offered a distinctive reason for the custom of many to wear the white *Kittel* at the night of the Pesach Seder. When the paschal offering was eaten in Temple times, the law required that fine clothing be worn by all those that would partake in the holy meat of the *korban Pesach*. The custom was to wear white linen garments. The *Kittel* is meant to symbolize this dress. This custom is another example of a practice which is *zecher le'mikdash* in which one's yearning

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for the Temple's rebuilding is awakened and a taste of the future is felt in real time (*Hag-gadat Ha'Netziv Imrei Shefer, Introduction*). It is noteworthy that Rav Kook, in describing a Pesach Seder that he shared with the Netziv as a young man in the Volozhin Yeshiva, remembered the Netziv sharing this novel insight at the start of the Seder. Apparently the notion of longing for the Land and the Temple's rebuilding contained in this minhag left an impact on the mind and heart of Rav Kook. (Ibid. p. 309)

CHANUKAH MENORAH - ZECHER L'MIKDASH

Rav Kook suggested that the multiple branches and lights of the Menorah should be viewed as a symbol for the nation of Israel's multiple spiritual gifts: Torah, wisdom, morality, prophecy, justice, and compassion. These unique qualities are inherent in the people of Israel. These "lights" appear distinct and divided, leading, at times, to strife between the multiple camps. It is natural that each branch emphasizes their own principle and promotes it as being supreme. However, such competitiveness leads to internal friction among the nation of Israel.

Rav Kook believed that these internal conflicts will not exist forever. As we inch closer to the redemption, it will become clear that the

disparate lights actually share a common root and are really all part of one resplendent light.

This exalted vision, said Rav Kook, is reflected in the language of the *bracha* we recite over the lighting. The *bracha* recited is *l'hadlik ner* (to light a candle), in the singular (not *neirot*, in plural). The blessing we recite hints to the glorious future of the nation when brotherhood and the blending of disparate ideals will become a reality and will be fully celebrated. (*Olat Re'iyah* vol. 1, p.435)

In this sense, the lighting of the Chanukah Menorah represents the spark of the future lighting and an envisioning of the Menorah being lit once again in the Beit Hamikdash in Jerusalem.

FEELING THE LACK

"If a person comes along and says that they experience all the light of the Torah and mitzvot in the current time period, do not believe them. It is a sign that such a person does not understand the depths of *Tzfiyat Yeshuah* / anticipating redemption." (O. Orot Yisrael 7:6)

Rav Kook, in the teaching above, highlights the fact that a Jew, sensitive to a lack in true mitzvah performance in the absence of the Temple, is one who lives with a palpable yearning for the "geulah shlemah." Perhaps a good example of this is one who observes the "Sefirat HaOmer." Following the count each night for forty nine days, it is customary to recite a prayer for the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash. Rabbi Soloveitchik points out that praying for the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash is generally not said following the observance of any other mitzvah. Why here for Sefirat HaOmer? One is to recognize the deficiency in our counting the Omer in our day. The central component of the mitzvah, namely the offering of the Omer (barley) on

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the *mizbeach*, cannot be carried out without the Temple and the altar in place. (See Mesorat HaRav Siddur, p. 322-324).

RAV KOOK'S LONGING

It is known that during the first years that Rav Kook lived in Jerusalem, he regularly recited *Tikkun Chatzot*, the midnight prayer over the destruction of the Temple, at the Kotel. Rav Kook's childhood friend Avraham Sho'ar described how they would recite *Tikkun Chatzot* together during the Three Weeks: Every night at midnight, Avraham Yitzchak (Kook) would close the Talmud. We would descend the bimah, where we learned at night, and stand near the large furnace, remove our shoes, and sit on the floor to recite *Tikkun Chatzot* - two young boys weeping over the destruction.

"I once asked him in my childish naivete, 'Why do you weep so intensely during the reciting of *Tikkun Chatzot*? I also love Eretz Yisrael and my soul, too, yearns to immigrate to the precious Land.'" His answer, spoken with natural innocence, startled me into silence: 'You are not a *kohen*. I am a *kohen*!'" (Celebration of the Soul, Neriya, translation Jaffe, pp. 250-251)

Rav Kook, from a young age, internalized the longing for the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash and in a personal way, as a

kohen, envisioned a day that would bring him and of the people of Israel back to Jerusalem and witness the fulfillment of the *geula shlema* (full redemption).

LESSONS FOR LIFE:

- Create a permanent "brightness adjustment" to a dark situation.
- Add a prayer for the long-term welfare and safety of the world
- Thank God for living at this time in history. Think of the possibilities, blessings and opportunities that we have, which earlier generations couldn't have even dreamed of. ■



Rabbi Goldscheider's most recent OU Press Publication, "Torah United" on the weekly Parsha, can be ordered directly from Rabbi Goldscheider at aarong@ouisrael.org at a special price for Torah Tidbits readers.

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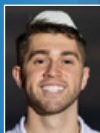
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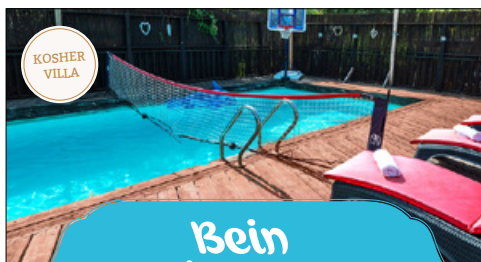
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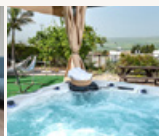
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Giving a Tallit on a Sefer Torah to a Visitor

Question: In the makeshift *shul* we were using, the only available *tallit* was draped over a *sefer Torah* in the *aron kodesh*. Was it justified to remove it to give to a visitor who forgot to bring his *tallit*? Which purpose is more important?

Answer: There is no need to use a *tallit* to wrap a *sefer Torah*. Certainly, when it is in the *aron kodesh*, it is uncommon to drape anything on a *sefer Torah* other than its mantle; the *aron* provides the necessary honor and/or protection. It is more common that when it is being transported or placed down for a while, we like to cover it, which is probably a combination of protection and honor. When this is done, it is common to use a *tallit*, which

presumably gives more honor to the *sefer Torah* by not only covering it, but doing it with a particularly honorable object. However, even if the *sefer Torah* was being kept out of the *aron*, any respectable covering would be fine. Therefore, the *tallit*'s purpose for covering the *sefer Torah* is not a significant factor.

On the other hand, there is not a serious halachic requirement to wear a *tallit* during *davening*. It is possible that it is important for one *davening Shacharit* to show he is fulfilling the *mitzva* of *tzitzit*, which is mentioned as part of the *tefilla* (compare to Berachot 14b, see Tosafot ad loc.), but this is fundamentally accomplished by his pair of *tzitzit*. Indeed, if wearing a *tallit* during *Shacharit* were particularly important, Ashkenazim would not have the *minhag* that single men do not wear them (see Living the Halachic Process III, F-7). Still, the *minhag* of those who wear a *tallit* has some significance, as does the human element of a visitor being embarrassed or feeling that he is missing something. Therefore, the "greater purpose" is likely to be for the visitor.

What still deserves attention is the matter of taking something away from a *sefer Torah* to be used for a person. If the *tallit* is designated for ongoing use for the *sefer Torah*, it becomes sanctified as a *tashmish kedusha*, which should not be used for matters of lower *kedusha* (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 154:6), irrespective of the *mitzva* importance of the new usage. A *tashmish kedusha* has higher *kedusha* than an object used for a *mitzva* (Megilla 26b).

However, an object does not become a

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tashmish kedusha by being used on a temporary basis (Mishna Berura 154:11), and even when it is more permanent, an understanding that it should not be set aside for the *kedusha* sometimes works (see Shulchan Aruch ibid. 8). So, one should check whether the nature of the designation of this *tallit* for the *sefer Torah* was intended to be ongoing before using it for other things.

Another question is of situational disgrace to the *sefer Torah* by taking the *tallit* directly from the *sefer Torah* to a person's back. We find halachic precedent for this concern from the matter of taking a light from a Chanuka candle (other than the *shamash*) to use to light another (Shabbat 22b). Using the candle for something else can be *bizuy* (degradation of a) *mitzva*. While we fundamentally allow this, because it is for the purpose of the *mitzva*, there are various opinions about cases that are arguably less *mitzva*-tied (Shulchan Aruch and Rama, OC 674:1). The Rama makes a distinction that is instructive for us. After the candle has been lit long enough for the *mitzva*

to be completed, it becomes permitted to use it. It is difficult to determine whether halachically, during use that does not sanctify it long term, *bizuy* to the *sefer Torah* applies, but we would have recommended the following "compromise," which seems balanced and safe for the letter and spirit of the law.

Remove the *tallit* when the *sefer* is in the *aron*, and, if possible, replace it with another nice cloth if the congregation wants it covered. After a few minutes, give the no-longer-in-use *tallit* to the visitor, and after *davening*, do not return the *tallit* immediately to the *sefer Torah*, thereby lessening the image of the visitor taking the "*sefer Torah's tallit*." If, at some point, someone returns it, that is fine. ■

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Peace of Mind

Last time we started discussing whether a husband can be present during childbirth. We saw that the Talmud (Shabbat 128b) permits lighting a candle if the woman giving birth requests it. This is even if she cannot see and requires the candle for the benefit of the midwife. This is due to a concept called *ituvei daata*, the peace of mind of the woman giving birth.

Our Sages recognized that the process of birth was a dangerous one and that the woman's psychological welfare can have an impact on the outcome. If she is frightened and pressured there is a more present danger. Therefore, the Talmud permits and obligates performing all tasks that can alleviate her concern and fear.

It should be pointed out that this is the halacha; the woman giving birth is considered to be in danger, both physical and psychological, and we must alleviate her fear and give her the best medical treatment available. This is the case even if it involves compromising other halachic principles, such as the observation of the laws of Shabbat. Even if modern medicine claims that childbirth is not dangerous, or that there is no medical reason to illuminate the room, the halacha would still permit it. Of course, if medicine promoted a particular act as being conducive to a healthy birth, the halacha would permit and even encourage it.

The psychological needs of the woman are determined by her and her alone. Even though another woman does not need the lighting or her husband's presence, if the woman in question says that she does need it, we must comply with her request. Obviously, there are limitations to what can be permitted and what the halacha requires and what requests are granted, but if the woman asks for something that is logical, acceptable and normative, the halacha would permit it.

In Rabbi Henkin's responsa, *Bnei Banim*, that is now being published in English, he states that the woman giving birth is a special case, unlike other ill individuals. While we are obligated to alleviate the pain and anguish of all sick patients, the woman giving birth is unique. We must take into account her psychological state, more than any other ailing person. Even a simple and basic request must be honored.

This obviously has ramifications on our question of the permissibility of the husband being present during the birth.

More on this next time. ■

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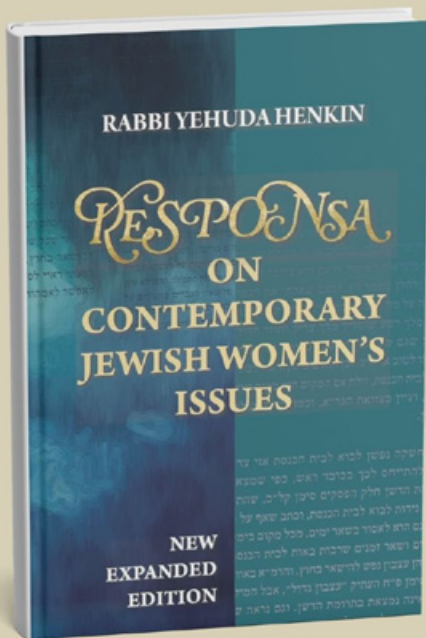
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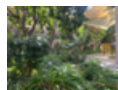
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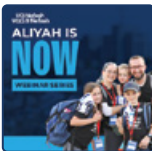
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For more details and to nominate: **WWW.NBN.ORG.IL/MAOR**

Nominations must be submitted no later than **November 30, 2025.**

Prizes will be awarded at the Nefesh B'Nefesh Aliyah Campus in Jerusalem on Sunday, December 21, 2025.





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Returning to Rebuild

Sefer Ezra spans the time period between the end of Sefer Daniel and the miracle of Purim, and continues from there through the rebuilding of the Second Temple. While Daniel exemplifies the yearning for Jerusalem of the early exiles, in Esther we encounter an assimilated people who have no qualms about attending the feast of Achashverosh. At the time of the initial Aliyah described in Sefer Ezra, which took place several years before the Purim story, only about five percent of the Jewish diaspora responded to King Cyrus's call for the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. A Yemenite legend tells of Ezra himself visiting Yemen to rally the people to return to Israel; when the people refused to join his

mission, he cursed them, declaring that the Jewish community never prosper in Yemen. They responded with a counter curse, that Ezra himself should die and be buried outside the Land of Israel. According to legend, both curses were fulfilled. Similar stories of Ezra trying unsuccessfully to assemble the Jewish people for their return to Israel are told of the communities in Toledo, Spain and Worms, Germany. Throughout the diaspora, Ezra met with resistance from Jews who were complacent in their exile, who had built homes and communities that provided comforts they were loath to leave behind in order to do the hard work of rebuilding a land that had lain desolate for seventy years.

This phenomenon has repeated itself throughout history. Just a few short weeks ago we read at the end of Parashat Noach that Terach set out with his family to reach the Land of Canaan. When he reached the metropolis of Haran, he decided to settle there. Terach was the first to forfeit the spiritual benefits of the Land of Israel in favor of the creature comforts offered by the bright lights of the big city.

The Talmud (Yoma 9b) recounts an incident in which Resh Lakish was swimming in the Jordan river and Rava bar bar Hana offered him a hand to help him out. Resh Lakish recoiled and said, 'You hateful Babylonian Jews! Had you ascended in force in the days of Ezra rather than only as a small minority, we would now be experiencing the full revelation of Divine Glory. Because of you we only merited to experience a partial revelation.'

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Centuries later, Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi expressed a similar idea as a question posed by the Khazar king regarding the Jews of the medieval era: “You have not made Israel your goal, though you say in your prayers על רחם ציון כי היא בית חיינו - Have mercy on Zion for she is our life’s home, and you believe that the Divine Presence will return to Israel... [Yet] I see that all your knee-bending and bowing towards Israel is merely insincere flattery...” To which the Haver replied, “You have shamed me, King of Khazar. It is this very sin that held us back from achieving full redemption through the Second Temple... Perhaps this is what Shlomo HaMelech meant when he said, ‘I am asleep but my heart is awake,’ in that he compared diaspora Jewry to one who is asleep... ‘My beloved sent his hand through the keyhole’ refers to Ezra, Nehemiah and the other prophets who exhorted the people to return, until some finally agreed... if we had been prepared to greet the Presence of G-d wholeheartedly and with a longing soul, we would have encountered G-d as miraculously as our ancestors in Egypt.”

In 1956, Rav Soloveitchik echoed the Kuzari: “Can we not hear, in our own concern for the peace and security of the land of Israel today, the knocking of the Beloved pleading with His love that she let Him enter? He has already been knocking for more than eight years and still has not received a proper response; nevertheless, He continues to knock... Would that we not miss the moment!”

As we learn Sefer Ezra, let us take note of the numerous parallels between the Return to Zion of Ezra’s generation and our own time. We pray that the Jews of today’s diaspora heed the call of Ezra and open the door to the knock of the Beloved, so that we may

see the full revelation of Hashem’s Presence speedily in our time. ■

Mrs. Leah Feinberg is a master educator who taught at the SKA High School for Girls in Hewlett for twenty-one years, also serving as Tanach Department chairperson and New Teacher Mentor. Leah is currently on the faculty of the OU Israel Center and has taught in all three cycles of the OU Women’s Initiative Nach Yomi program

In the **OU Women’s Initiative Nach Yomi series**, currently in its third cycle, women scholars deliver a daily shiur on the books of Prophets (Neviim) and Writings (Ketuvim) at the pace of a chapter a day. Shiurim are geared toward learners of all levels who would like to participate in the two-year Nach Yomi study cycle. Visit the OU Women’s Initiative to register for additional content.



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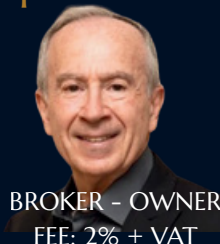
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Healing First, Dating After: Supporting Singles Post-Relationship

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Ora asks:

My candidate recently ended a long relationship. He told me he's ready to move on and hear new suggestions, but I'm not so sure. Each time I suggest someone, he finds vague reasons to reject the idea. It feels like he's just looking for excuses to say no. How can I really help him?

Aleeza answers:

When someone comes out of a long relationship, even if they say they're ready, the heart often needs more time than the mind admits. Ending something significant leaves a space that doesn't fill instantly. And

sometimes, the fear of being hurt again shows up as a quick rejection.

First, let's validate: he's not wrong for feeling hesitant. This is how Hashem created the world when we lose something meaningful, we need a process of healing. The question is not just *"Is he ready to date?"* but *"Is he ready to open his heart again?"* Those are very different things.

So how can you help? Gently. With patience. Instead of only suggesting matches, invite him to reflect on what he learned from his last relationship. Ask: *What worked well? What would you like to build differently next time?* This helps shift his focus from "what I don't want" to "what I truly want to create."

You can also remind him: dating is not about finding someone perfect, it's about finding someone who is perfectly imperfect for you. If

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he's using small flaws as reasons to reject, that may be fear of making the same mistake twice so he's ruling out people who may remind him of what didn't work previously.

After making three suggestions and receiving three no's, let him know that you don't have any other relevant suggestions at this time. Let him know you've made thoughtful solid suggestions and you believe they have potential. Pause your suggestions and give him a moment to reflect. An endless supply of match suggestions will just prove you're throwing spaghetti at the wall rather than making targeted suggestions.

May Hashem bless him with clarity, healing, and the courage to say yes when the right person comes along. And may you be blessed with spot on suggestions.

Aleeza ■



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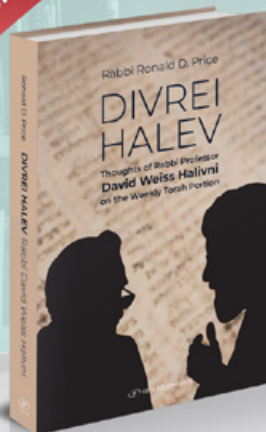
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Yoni thanks Hashem for having
 the opportunity of having Tziporah in
 his life, to learn of her caring, patience and
 happiness, to overcome her challenges. May
 Tziporah's Neshama be a light onto the world,
 in a time of darkness, and may her Neshama
 shine to Gan Eden. Yoni misses Tziporah with
 tears in his eyes, as Hashem gave him a gift, a
 crown jewel, now he returns her to Hashem.

With thanks and Toda. Love, Yoni

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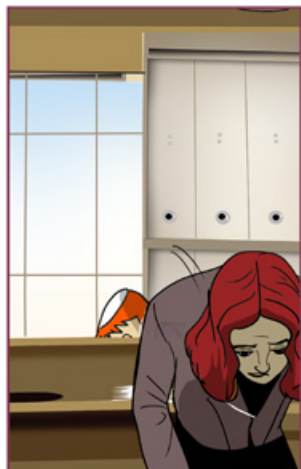


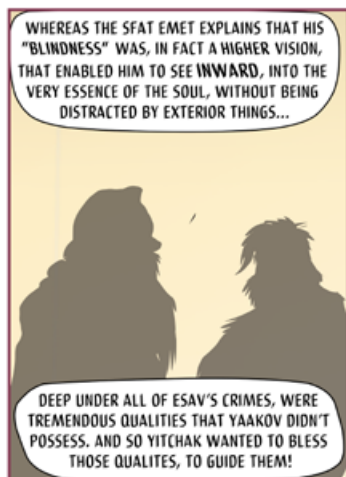
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LEARNING FROM AVIMELECH'S TESHUVA

Parshat Toldot has many parallels to Parshat Vayera, including parallels between Avraham and Yitzchak - through the birth of two children and the need to choose one of them, going down to Avimelech in Gerar, settling around Be'er Sheva, and more.

I would like to focus on one difference between Avraham's and Yitzchak's journeys in Gerar. We know that Eretz Kna'an was full of forbidden relationships. Both Avraham and Yitzchak had to lie about their wives, saying that they were their sisters. There is, however, a small but significant difference between the two stories. In Parshat Vayera, Avimelech immediately takes Sarah into his home, and Hashem and Avraham teach Avimelech a lesson. In our parsha, the same situation repeats itself - except this time, Rivkah is not taken to Avimelech and is able to remain with Yitzchak for several months.

Through Avimelech's teshuva, we can see how Avraham elevated the world around him over time, fulfilling Hashem's promise: "ונברכו בך כל משפחות האדמה"

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THE PATH OF TRUTH AND TRUST

In Parshat Toldot, we read about Yaakov and Esav, two brothers who couldn't be more different. Esav is a hunter who acts quickly, while Yaakov is thoughtful and focused on the future. When their father Yitzchak is old and blind, Yaakov, helped by his mother Rivkah, tricks him into giving the blessing meant for Esav. Even though Yaakov's intentions may have been good, his mistake was not trusting that Hashem's plan would unfold honestly and at the right time.

Because of this, Yaakov must flee from home, and his family becomes divided. His choice teaches us that even when we pursue something right or important, *how* we achieve it matters deeply. Sometimes, doing the honest and patient thing is harder, but it leads to true peace and blessing. Toldot reminds us that trust in Hashem and truth in our actions will always guide us to the blessings meant for us. ■



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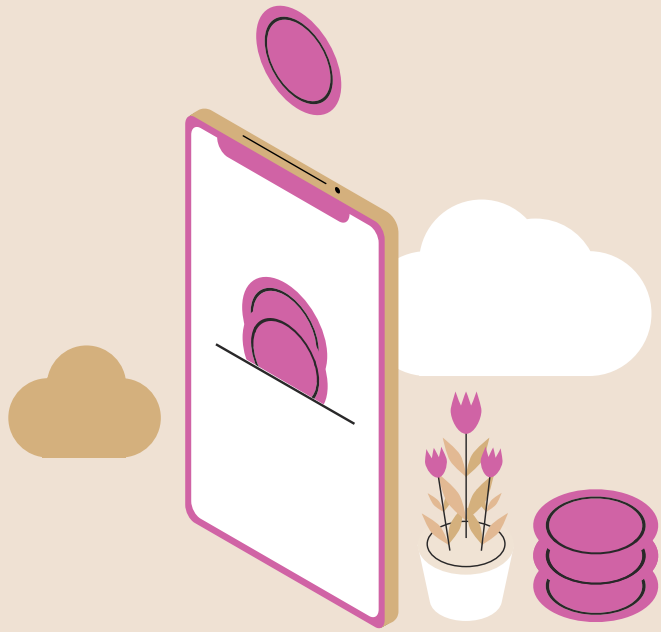
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