ב"ה

Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1684

NOVEMBER 14TH 2026
ד' כסלו תשפ"ז

TOLDOT - תולדות



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The Responsibility of Transmission
Rabbi Shalom Rosner Page 36



You Don't Have to Love Everything About Him
Ayelet Glatt Page 72

Shagririm Balev



וּיִתֶּן־לְךָ אֶת־בִּרְכַת אַבְרָהָם לְךָ וּלְזַרְעֲךָ

בראשית כ"ח:ד'

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT TOLDOT ZMANIM

CANDLES **4:05 PM** • HAVDALA **5:19 PM** • RABBEINU TAM **5:57 PM**

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IMPORTANT REMINDERS

Earliest Kiddush Levana 3 Days After Molad: Thu Nov 12
7 Days After Molad: Mon Nov 16
Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana until: Mon Nov 23



COVER PAGE Photographed by **Shoshana Barak**

I took this photo in Mitzpe Ramon at the Sculpture Garden. It was a special trip with my family while our Savta was visiting us from Canada. One of my closet friends Efrat entered my photo into this contest without telling me! I was really surprised, happy, and honoured, when she told me. I'm so proud of her and so happy that she is my friend! I made aliyah when I was 12 with my family on August 16th, 2017. We lived in Crown Heights, New York, and then in Thornhill, ON Canada. I now live in Karnei Shomron. This photo symbolizes the long journey we take in life. Our life is the winding road, the Derech Hashem has us on. The desert sands are the endless possibilities Hashem gives us in our life and the choices we make. The bus is where we sit with our family and friends who join us in the journey.

CANDLE LIGHTING
AND HAVDALA TIMES



	TOLDOT		VAYEITZEI	
	Candles	Havdala	Candles	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	4:05	5:19	4:02	5:16
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	4:23	5:22	4:20	5:19
Beit Shemesh/RBS	4:24	5:20	4:21	5:17
Gush Etzion	4:21	5:20	4:18	5:17
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	4:21	5:20	4:18	5:17
Modiin/Chashmonaim	4:21	5:20	4:18	5:17
Netanya	4:21	5:20	4:17	5:17
Be'er Sheva	4:23	5:21	4:20	5:19
Rehovot	4:22	5:20	4:18	5:18
Petach Tikva	4:05	5:20	4:02	5:17
Ginot Shomron	4:20	5:19	4:17	5:16
Haifa / Zichron	4:10	5:19	4:06	5:16
Gush Shiloh	4:20	5:18	4:16	5:15
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	4:22	5:20	4:18	5:18
Givat Zeev	4:25	5:19	4:21	5:16
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	4:21	5:20	4:18	5:17
Ashkelon	4:23	5:22	4:20	5:19
Yad Binyamin	4:22	5:21	4:19	5:18
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	4:11	5:16	4:08	5:13
Golan	4:17	5:16	4:14	5:13
Nahariya/Maalot	4:08	5:18	4:04	5:15
Afula	4:19	5:18	4:15	5:15

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Toldot - 5:57 PM • Vayeitzei - 5:54 PM

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

Daf Yomi: Bechoros 57

OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM
Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
Nov. 11 - 21 | 1 - 11 Kislev

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:11-5:19
Sunrise	6:03-6:12
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	8:43-8:48
Magen Avraham	8:06-8:10
Sof Zman Tefila (According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	9:36-9:40
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	11:22-11:24
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	11:52-11:54
Plag Mincha	3:35-3:31
Sunset (Including Elevation)	4:46-4:41

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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
Executive Director, OU Israel | aberman@ouisrael.org

Since October 7th, something has shifted in the relationship between Jews on both sides of the Atlantic. On one side, our brothers and sisters abroad have showed such endless support for their family in Israel. Seeing what the Jewish people here were going through, they have stepped up in a big way and have showed their willingness to help in any way they could. We have seen so many Diaspora Jews coming to volunteer in the IDF, coming to join in National Service, and there is such a strong feeling of family between the two sides of the ocean.

It has also led, on the other side, to many requests for me to come speak to Israeli groups about Diaspora Jewry in general, and North American Jewry in particular. These Israeli groups are interested in understanding more about their fellow Jews overseas, especially after seeing and feeling that warm embrace after October 7th.

One such group was of community leaders from the Har Chevron Regional Council. The Har Chevron region covers about a million *dunams*, roughly five percent of the size of the State of Israel. It is made up of many *yishuvim*, stretching from Adora in the north all the way down toward Yatir and Tene Omarim, which are only 25 to 30 minutes from Be'er Sheva. It is an enormous expanse of land.

It was an honor to host them in our OU Israel offices, where they found out more about OU Israel and all about the work we do in Israel helping *olim* settle and feel at home here, as well as about our work with helping teens at risk. They were so moved by what they saw that they invited the entire OU Israel team to come spend a day in the beautiful region of Har Chevron.

That was about eight months ago. The outing was canceled because of the war with Iran, and then it took time simply to find a day that worked for as many of us as possible. Finally, this past Sunday, forty members of the OU Israel team went down together: our English-speaking team, our Hebrew-speaking team, program staff, IT and finance, all the different departments, led by our Director of Human Resources, Sara Berelowitz. It was a fascinating and emotionally uplifting day.

We began with a fascinating visit to Susya. Susya is an ancient Jewish city where approximately 3,000 Jews lived. Dozens of *mikvaot* have been found there, along with a shul built in a shape similar to the *Beit HaMikdash*. Its mosaic floor has words written in Hebrew, including *Shalom al Yisrael*, "Peace upon Israel," and there are *menorot* and other Jewish

In Loving Memory of

Elisheva (Gralla) Pokroy a"h
ישפה אלישבע בת נחמיה ע"ה

Beloved Wife, Daughter, Mother,
Grandmother, Sister, Aunt
On her 3rd Yartzheit - 9 Kislev

Pokroy, Gralla, Rappaport,
Strausz and Harris Families

symbols carved all over. We watched incredible videos explaining the fascinating city that existed there for hundreds of years, built up in the aftermath of the destruction of the second *Beit HaMikdash* and the exile of Jews from Yerushalayim.

From there we went to visit the beautiful farm of a wonderful woman named Dalia, where she runs workshops. She teaches people how to take food from grain to bread, about the *mitzvot hateluyot ba'aretz* (the commandments connected to the Land), and how so many of the basic Shabbat laws are tied to farm work. She also shared her personal story with us. She and her husband, Yair *Hy"d*, built up the farm together, and 25 years ago he was murdered by Hamas terrorists. But Dalia, together with her nine children, kept on building. She is an inspiration and a real symbol of Israeli resilience.

We then had a delicious lunch in the visitor center of Drimia, an OU-certified winery. We heard from Rabbi Yonatan Korach, our OU *mashgiach* for the winery, together with representatives of the winery who told us its story. What we heard was so much more than the story of a winery. It was an uplifting and inspiring Zionist story, one of people with a deep love for *Eretz Yisrael*, dedicated to building up the Land, planting its vineyards, and bringing forth its incredible fruits. We also heard from Ayala, representing the Har Chevron Regional Council, about the many different things the region offers, its *yishuvim* and their histories. Because of their close proximity to Be'er Sheva, some of the *yishuvim* are drawing people who work at Soroka Medical Center and at the university, so there is a lot of growth happening now.







They are building many new apartments in many of the *yishuvim* and are looking for more *olim* to come and join them.

Over the course of our time there, I had the opportunity to speak to the staff. I told them that I think Drimia is a beautiful name for a winery (it is the name of a flower that grows in Israel and elsewhere). But since our group was made up of English speakers and Hebrew speakers, I suggested

taking half the word in English and half the word in Hebrew. In English, the first half is "dream." In Hebrew, the end is spelled *yud-heh*, which is one of *Hashem*'s names.

So I told them that the name tells a story of Hebrew and English together. For *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* had a dream, so to speak, of seeing His sons and daughters come back to the Land of Israel. For so many years, that was also the dream of the Jewish people around the world: to come closer to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, to come back to the Land of Israel, and to live His Torah in His land. So, I told them, this winery and our visit truly represents the "dream of God," of building up the land, of putting in the infrastructure, of planting vines and producing the incredible fruits of the land.

With us in the group were two OU employees who recently made *aliyah*: Atarah, who made *aliyah* two months ago and lives in Rechovot, and Aliza, who made *aliyah* just three weeks ago and lives in Yerushalayim. I specifically pointed them out, because we at OU Israel get to see this dream happen every single day. While we still have a lot more to *daven* for, the fact that we can read about our forefathers and mothers in the Torah and then *walk where they walked*, and imagine the sights they saw, that is truly a dream.

From there, the whole staff went together to *Maarat HaMachpela*. Right before walking in, we all stood together and took a group picture, as we had done in Susya, and we looked into this week's *parsha*. And then, of course, we *davened*, praying for our soldiers, our children and family, for those wounded, and those who have dealt with terrible loss. As I wrote last week, in *Parshat Chayei Sarah* the Torah puts great emphasis on the *shidduch* of Yitzchak Avinu, and so there where our matriarchs and patriarchs are buried, we *davened* for all those who need *shidduchim*. In this week's *parsha*, we read, "Yitzchak *davened* to *Hashem* opposite his wife, because she was barren" (Bereishit 25:21). And so we *davened* for all those who want to have children and, unfortunately, have not yet been successful.

We saw the new roof on *Maarat HaMachpela* that was recently put up. It is absolutely stunning, and it makes *Maarat HaMachpela* so much more comfortable to *daven* in. We also saw all the remnants of Shabbat *Parshat Chayei Sarah*, when tens of thousands of people went down, as every year, to Chevron, including a number of my own children.

It was truly a beautiful day, a day on which we connected to the Land, the people, the Torah and our tradition. I cannot thank our incredible OU team enough for dedicating a full day to it, even though all of our schedules are so packed, with so much happening. Spending a day together and bonding was so meaningful. So many separate divisions in OU Israel were able to see each other, walk with each other, talk, connect, bond, and get excited and emotional about what they were seeing together.

I have no doubt that the inspiration, renewed energy and enthusiasm that our team brought back from this incredible day will be felt throughout OU Israel. It will give all of us even greater strength

Condolences to
Pesach Derdiger and family
on the passing of his

SISTER a"h

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

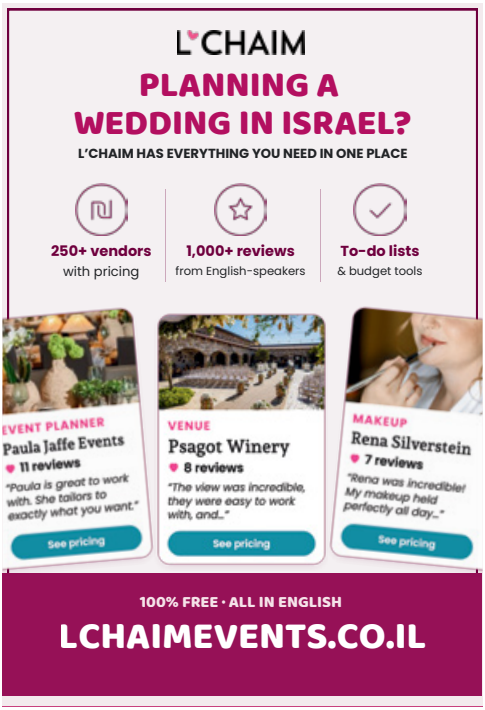
and motivation to continue serving the people who turn to us, strengthening each and every one of our programs and making them better and better. Ultimately, it is the thousands of *olim*, teens, families and communities we serve across Israel who will benefit from the inspiration our team experienced together in Har Chevron.

I encourage all of you to go down to this beautiful part of *Eretz Yisrael* and enjoy it, because it really is stunning. Even though we had cold weather and rain, it was beyond incredible. Everyone had a phenomenal time and came back rejuvenated and excited.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

Rabbi Avi Berman
Executive Director, OU Israel







New! Each week in Torah Tidbits!



Hilchot Shabbat Q&A

with Rabbi Eli Ozarowski



Question: Is it permitted to place our pet dog in a specific room of the house on Shabbat when we have guests, or is that a problem of *tzad* (trapping)?

Answer: Yes. It is permitted to place a domesticated pet dog in a closed room on Shabbat, provided that it is accustomed to living in the house and is comfortable being there.

Explanation: *Tzad* (trapping) is one of the thirty-nine *melachot* prohibited on Shabbat, if one traps the animal in a manner in which one can trap it within one grab (Rambam, Shabbat 10:20; Mishnah Berurah 316:4). *Tzad* is also violated on a rabbinic level in any case where one traps a wild animal and confines it loosely, even if one cannot trap it in one grab (Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 316:1 and Mishnah Berurah 316:5).

However, animals that are fully domesticated and accustomed to human control are not subject to the prohibition of *tzad*, since they do not resist being confined and are generally comfortable under human care (Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 316:12; Mishnah Berurah 316:52). Similarly, a pet dog that is accustomed to being with its owner is not subject to the prohibition of *tzad* (R. Karelitz, quoted in *Torat HaMelachot* 5:118, 122). Therefore, one may place a pet dog or cat in a closed room or cage on Shabbat (even if otherwise one could not have trapped it in one grab), since confining such domesticated animals does not constitute *tzad* (ibid.; *Piskei Teshuvot* 316:22).

It should be noted that there may be a number of situations where even a pet is subject to *tzad*, such as if was just purchased and tries to escape, or if it struggles when a different person who is not the owner tries to grab it (see Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 316:12 and "The 39 Melochos," p.868).

Rabbi Eli Ozarowski serves as editor of the Tzurba M'Rabanan English halacha series, as well as the editor of the written material for the Semichas Chaver halacha program. He is also the author of the OU's Torat Imecha Halacha Series for women and a translator for the Steinsaltz Mishna series. Rabbi Ozarowski received semicha from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) and holds an M.A. from the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration. He lives in Mitzpeh Yericho with his wife, Zemira, who serves as Director of the Women's Division at OU Israel, together with their nine children. Rabbi Ozarowski gives many shiurim in the community and is also frequently consulted on halachic matters.



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Beneath the Surface

"And Isaac loved Esav because [his] game was in his mouth, but Rebecca loved Jacob (Bereishis 25:28)."

Families are complex, and the families of our Matriarchs and Patriarchs were no exception. Children don't always follow in the footsteps of their parents and often make different choices, cultivating a distinct life path. Nonetheless, the job of a parent is to love and appreciate their child for who the child is and not for whom the parents want them to be. But this is far easier said than done. How does one genuinely love a child when the child makes choices that bring the parent pain?

And so, the Torah tells us that Yitzchak loved Esav. We must assume that Yitzchak and Rivka each loved both of their children, yet each had a unique relationship with a particular child. Rivka's connection with Yaakov is understandable. Yaakov was holy and genuine, he was the clear heir to the Abrahamitic legacy. He was a source of wonderful and ongoing *nachas*. But what was the nature of the connection between Yitzchak and Esav? It would appear they were worlds apart, yet Yitzchak has incredible love for his first-born son. What was "loveable" about Esav?

Of all our Patriarchs we know the least about Yitzchak. While we are told of the *Akeyda* (*binding of Yitzchak*) and Yitzchak's willingness to offer himself upon the altar of God, this event is really looked at through the lens of Avraham's selfless dedication to God. All we know about Yitzchak is that he dug wells. Though we are taught so little about Yitzchak's life, the Torah goes into great detail about his well-digging activities. Why?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe provides an incredible insight. To benefit from the beautiful and sustaining, subterranean waters you must be willing to dig. You must take out your shovel, bend your back and take away shovelful of dirt after shovelful of dirt until you find the refreshing waters. This is a metaphor for the self. We each possess a beautiful wellspring of holiness and spiritual beauty. However, often this holiness is obscured by layers of "dirt." There is dirt from the bad decisions we make, there is dirt from negative life-experiences, there is the dirt of failure and set-backs. All this dirt sits on top of my well and covers my inner waters. We must find the courage to dig, to haul away the earth though changing and adjusting certain behaviors and habits. This was the great strength of Isaac; he was a digger. He was able to dig through the layers of dirt and find the beautiful waters of holiness in himself and in others. When the world looked at Esav they saw one thing – dirt.

Yitzchak saw the dirt which covered his son, but he also saw the beautiful waters of holiness which were surging beneath the layer upon layer of thick dirt and grime. He loved his son, because he was able to see the waters and not just the dirt.

We must all become well-diggers and utilize this skill in all our relationships. We need to love our children for who they are and not for who we want them to be. Even if our children get covered in dirt, we must appreciate that the waters still run deep and are ever-present. We must strive to see the good in others and recognize that even when people hurt us, there is still good within that individual. We must try to focus on the water and not the dirt. We must look for the water within ourselves. We cannot define ourselves by the dirt of our indiscretions or misdeeds. We must remember that no matter how much dirt we have piled on ourselves, the inner waters never dry up, they are always present, waiting to be discovered. ■

Rabbi Shmuel Silber has served the Orthodox Union (OU) as its Executive Vice President since November 2026. As the executive vice president, Rabbi Silber is responsible for representing the OU's vision on both Torah and public policy, and providing hashkafic and halachic guidance within the organization and beyond. Prior to joining the OU, Rabbi Silber served for 23 years as the rabbi of Suburban Orthodox Congregation Toras Chaim, building it into one of Baltimore's most vibrant and dynamic kehillahs. Rabbi Silber is also the founder and dean of the Institute for Jewish Continuity (IJC), which provides contemporary Torah learning with Chassidic influences for adults at all levels. As the Founding Rabbi of the Berger Towers community in Katamonim, Jerusalem, Rabbi Silber oversees the community's rabbinic leadership and hashkafic direction. Rabbi Silber received semicha from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary at Yeshiva University and holds a master's degree in secondary Jewish education from the Azrieli Graduate School.







OU... BEYOND KASHRUT

The People Behind the Programs

Each week, this column highlights the incredible programs of OU Israel, the lives they touch, and the impact they make. But this week, we wanted to shine a spotlight on something a little different: the people behind it all.

This past week, the OU Israel team came together for a special Yom Gibush in Har Chevron. Hebrew speakers and English speakers, staff from OU Kosher and IT, the Zula and our Teen Centers, and across our Anglo in Israel Division programs. Lifelong Israelis and colleagues who made Aliyah less than three weeks ago. Different backgrounds, different roles, but all part of one OU Israel family.

> *"Wow, this was so needed. I have felt so busy recently, and being able to connect to the land and the tzaddikim gave me what I needed to continue."*
>
> **Rabbi Ian Schwartz** Program Director, Frontline Support

It was a wonderful opportunity to step away from our daily routines, strengthen our connections, share laughter, and recharge together.

Because behind every program and every life changed are people who bring their hearts, energy, and dedication to this work each day. And when we come together, we return with renewed koach to continue making a difference.

Different programs. One shared mission. One OU Israel.

Each week, we share one OU Israel initiative empowering lives and communities in our homeland, supporting English-speaking *olim* in their *klita* and supporting Israel's most vulnerable teens to rebuild trust, confidence, and a future.

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ALIYA BY ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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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. 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 taken Sarah's. And the next generation is born.



This succession is not prosaic. It is the succession of the covenant. Avraham was promised that his children will inherit the Land of Israel. When you get a promise like that from G-d, nothing else really matters in life. All of life will revolve around that promise.

And in particular, who are these children who will inherit the Land? And when will this promise happen?

Yitzchak and Rivka must be preoccupied with these questions. They must be looking for hints as to who and when this fabulous Divine promise will happen.

If they searched for hints as to who, they would compare themselves to Avraham and Sarah. Avraham had two children, Yitzchak and Yishmael. One is in, one is out. Yitzchak in, Yishmael out. So, is that how it's going to be for us? We have two children, Yaakov and Esav. Is one in and one out?

But hold on, Avraham had two children. But Sarah did not. She had Yitzchak. All of her children are part of the covenant. Yitzchak. Perhaps, thinks Yitzchak, all of Rivka's children, both Yaakov and Esav are in. Maybe.

The first story we hear of the children is the sale of the birthright by Esav to Yaakov. Yaakov is cooking lentils. Esav asks for some of that red, red dish. Hence his name is Edom, red. He is not called Edom because he was born with reddish complexion. No,

at birth he is named Esav, from the word "Asu", like ready made. He was a mature baby, hence called Esav. The red name, Edom, comes now because of the lentil soup.

That is not a compliment. He is called Red, Edom, because he was impulsive, impetuous, selling a valued position in the family. For a bowl of red lentils. The name Edom is not at all a compliment.

Yaakov and Esav may be assuming that unlike the first generation where one was in and one was out, we are both going to be in, because we are both from the same mother. Okay. But who will be dominant, who will be the leader? Naturally, the first born has seniority. Selling the birthright is thumbing your nose at the entire Jewish venture.

If Yitzchak figures both of his children are in, then he has a bit of a problem with the impulsive one, the one who thumbs his nose at our heritage, selling his birthright. And for what? A bowl of lentils.

Now, the other question preoccupying Yitzchak and Rivka is when will this grand venture of settling the Land occur? Is it imminent? Or is it only after the 400 years that Avraham was told?

There is a famine. Everyone runs to Egypt in a famine because the Nile is a reliable source of water allowing Egypt to escape famines. 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; don't leave this Land. Why not? Could it be that settling the Land seems imminent?

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 with infertility for 100 and 90 years respectively; that was a terrible affliction. Avraham was blessed with wealth. So, sounds like the strangers in a strange land, afflicted, great wealth has all happened.

It could very well be that Yitzchak assumes that the promises are imminent. His children will inherit this Land. 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 not only spiritual power but 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 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. What would you think if you planted in a famine and got a 100-fold yield? G-d is with me. Settling the Land 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. He spurned the birthright, thumbing his nose at the Jewish enterprise. Then married women of this land, the very thing Avraham was adamant to avoid.



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. 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. ■

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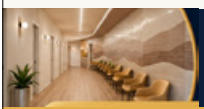
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THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB
OU Executive Vice President, Emeritus

"Zion's Despisers and the Book of Bereshit"

Zion has always had its despisers. Recently, their numbers have increased. Anti-Zionism has been adopted as a fervent cause by a frightening variety of individuals and groups.

What is particularly disturbing is the anti-Zionism of sectors of our own nation, including liberal or secular Jews and some elements of the so-called Ultra-Orthodox *Charedim*.

As regular readers of my weekly Torah column know very well, I often draw upon my own experiences and reminiscences to express my thoughts and opinions. But I also am careful to draw upon traditional, if lesser known, rabbinic commentators.

This week, I will reflect upon how my family and my wife's family have shaped my own ardent Zionism. I will then proceed to one example of an encounter with a group puzzled by the anti-Zionism of certain otherwise devout Jews.

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My parents and maternal grandparents were meticulously observant Orthodox Jews, a challenge in their times. In many ways, they were typical Yankees—very Americanized in their work, lifestyle, and politics. They contributed to Zionist charities and cheered the birth of the State of Israel. But Zionism was not their priority.

My paternal grandparents were different. The term "*Charedim*" was unknown then, but they were religiously devout in every aspect of their lives. My grandfather was a *shochet*, a synagogue supervisor, and a secretary and scribe for a Chassidic Rebbe of great renown. He constantly studied Torah with me, and the topics he stressed were *ahavat Torah, ahavat Yisrael, ahavat Eretz Yisrael*—love of Torah, love of fellow Jews, and love of the Land of Israel. I was, therefore, not surprised to learn at his funeral that he had invested his meager earnings in the purchase of a burial plot on Jerusalem's *Har HaMenuchot*. He passed away in 1970, a time when such an arrangement was far less common than it is today.

I turn next to my wife Chavi's grandparents. One grandfather was a famous Chassidic Rebbe with many followers whom he convinced to leave Poland and emigrate

to what was then Palestine. He visited the Land of Israel from Poland several times in the pre-Holocaust years and dedicated many of his musical compositions to themes of Return to Zion. He escaped the Holocaust and spent several years in the United States, but as soon as he could, he departed for Israel and lies buried on the Mount of Olives.

Chavi's other grandfather and grandmother are buried nearby on that holy mountain. They both came there before World War I. As a very young man, her grandfather left Poland on his own and trekked—on foot, by boat, and by donkey—through central Europe, across the Mediterranean, through Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon, until he reached Jerusalem.

All of these relatives lived fully Chassidic lives, with the observances, melodies, stories, and dress that entailed. By today's terminology, they were *Charedim*, yet they were devoted Zionists to the core.

I should add that when I was courting Chavi, her maternal grandfather insisted on interviewing me privately. He wanted to determine if I was sufficiently Zionistic to marry his "favorite" granddaughter. *Baruch Hashem*, I passed his test.

I hesitate, however, to share with you my experiences with religiously committed Jews who are anti-Zionist. I appreciate and even admire many of their beliefs and practices. But I am increasingly perturbed, especially very recently, by their anti-Zionist demonstrations and accusations. I share with you but one anecdote from when I served as Executive Vice President of the Orthodox Union.

As a matter of principle, and carefully following the guidelines set by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, of blessed memory, the Orthodox Union works closely with non-Jewish clergy to achieve certain common causes. We were instructed to avoid theological topics and carefully limited the agenda of our meetings to matters of common concern. One of our main objectives was to join in advocating state aid for parochial schools.

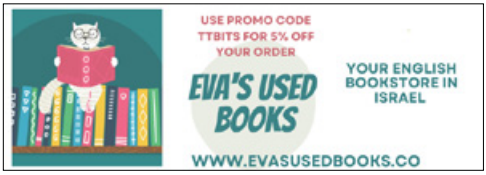
In planning for one of those meetings, the Catholic leadership asked for an explanation of the behavior, then in the news, of *Charedim*. They inquired, "How can they be anti-Zionist? After all, isn't Zionism a requirement of all who believe in the Bible? Don't the prophets foretell the Return of the Jewish people to Zion?"

It was my good fortune to be chosen by our group to educate the bishops as to the anti-Zionism of a group of fundamentalist Jews. Not an easy task!

But enough anecdotal material.

Permit me to share some traditional commentary to conclude my digression. May I introduce you to Rav Dovid Tzvi Hoffman, of blessed memory (1843-1921). He was Dean of the Hildesheim Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin, a major Halachic authority, and the author of a magnificent array of Talmudic and Biblical studies. His *yahrzeit* was recently, on the 19th day of Cheshvan.

He wrote on the various *chumashim*, notably on Leviticus/*Vayikra*. He also wrote several volumes in German, one on Genesis/*Bereshit*. That volume went untranslated for quite some time until a Hebrew



translation became available in the 1970s. The exceptionally capable translator was a man named Asher Wasserteil.

The work appears in two volumes. In his introduction to the volume, which includes this week's Torah portion, *Toldot*, the translator gathers numerous quotations of Rav Hoffmann's perspective on the book of *Bereshit*.

First, the translator's opening remarks: "It seems to me that the author's dominant theme is the centrality of the Land of Israel in the Book of Genesis. It is as if the entire book of *Bereshit* is a song of love and praise to the Glorious Land."

He then shares some quotes from Rav Hoffman's masterpiece. Here's one:

"Abraham understood the importance of his journey to this Land and to none other. It was not a random destination. The Lord chose it, and only it! It was predetermined as the ultimate destination of His people. It was the place, the only place, that His people could achieve a land from which to spread the Lord's glory to all the inhabitants of Earth. Natural beauty, diverse surroundings, fertile ground, plentiful water. The ideal environment for Divine abundant blessing."

These eloquent words are the basis of Rav Hoffman's commentary, climaxing in the request of both Jacob and Joseph to return to the Land of Israel, if only to be buried there.

For Rav Hoffman, Zionism is the opening theme of the Bible. For this leader of Central European Jewry during the turn of the twentieth century, anti-Zionism differs drastically from the sacred beginning of our Torah. ■



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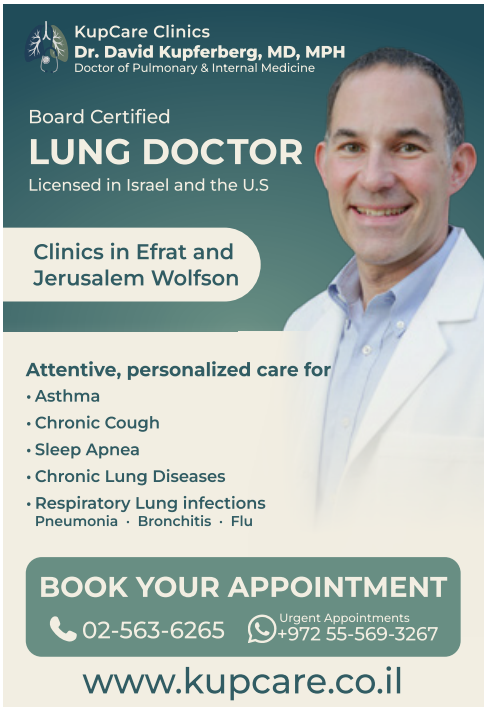
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Chosenness and its Discontents

It is one of the most emotionally affecting scenes in the Torah. Jacob, dressed in Esau's clothes, has taken Esau's blessing. He leaves and, shortly thereafter, Esau enters. What is remarkable is not what happens next but how the Torah describes it, its use of language and narrative art:

Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had just left his father Isaac, when his brother Esau came back from the hunt. He too had prepared delicious food and he brought it to his father. And he said to his father, "Let my father sit up and eat some of his son's game, so that your soul may bless me."

"Who are you?" asked his father Isaac.

"I am your son, your firstborn, Esau," he replied.

Isaac was seized with a violent fit of trembling. "Who then was it that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it all before you came, and I blessed him - and he will be blessed."

When Esau heard his father's words, he burst into a loud and bitter cry. He said to his father, "Bless me, me too, my father!"

"Your brother came in deceit and took your blessing," he replied.

Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob [= heel-grasper]? Twice he has supplanted me. He took my birthright, and now he has taken my blessing." And then, "Do you not have any blessing left for me?" ... And Esau wept aloud. (Gen. 27:30-38)

In general, the Torah is sparing in its details, especially about the emotional state of its characters. Its descriptions are understated, leaving the reader to supply what the text omits (what the characters look like, their location, body language and so on). Emmanuel Levinas was surely correct in seeing this as an invitation to Midrash, summoning the reader to complete the text in dialogue with the written word. The Torah is more like radio than television, actively enlisting the imaginative participation of its hearers. So we are dealing here with a passage unusual in its literary explicitness and psychological depth of drama.

As readers, we feel with - and for - Isaac and Esau. We are drawn into their subjective states. We enter into Isaac's dawning realisation that he has been deceived. We identify too with Esau, whose first thought is not betrayal or desire for revenge but simple, sharp, and shocking disappointment ("Bless me - me too, my father"). Then comes Isaac's helplessness ("So what can I possibly do for you, my son?") and Esau's weeping - all the more poignant given what we know of him, that he is a man of the fields, rough in some ways, impetuous in others, not a man given (as Joseph will later be) to tears. The scene of the two of them together,

father and son, deceived and disappointed, robbed of what should have been a moment of great tenderness and intimacy (son feeding father, father blessing son) is deeply affecting. We can imagine the painting Rembrandt might have made of it.

Why this detail? The question is unavoidable. In Torah, form follows function. Nothing is accidental. If there is a marked stylistic feature to a given text, it is there for a reason. Our sympathies are drawn throughout the chapter to Esau, rather than Jacob. It is not that we feel that Esau was the rightful heir of the covenant; that history has taken a wrong turn; that things should have been otherwise. Manifestly this is not so. Rebecca favours Jacob, and in Bereishit, mothers know their children better than do their fathers. Esau - the hunter, the man who "despised his birthright" once he had sold it - was clearly not destined to be the faithful follower of an invisible, transcendent God. The Abrahamic covenant must surely pass through Jacob, the child described as "a quiet man, staying among the tents." Why then does the Torah go out of its way, using unusual stylistic devices, to enlist our sympathies with Esau, to enter his world and see things from his perspective? Before we can answer this, we must first take a wider look at what we know of him and his descendants from the rest of the Torah.

The first is that Esau does receive a blessing from Isaac:

Of the cream of the land your home shall be, of the dew of heaven above. 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. (Gen. 27:39-40)

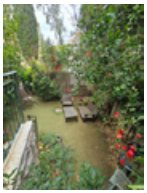


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The "cream of the land" and the "dew of heaven" are not so circumscribed, implies Isaac, that there will not be enough for both of you. This is a blessing both sons can enjoy without the one diminishing the other. As for Jacob's supremacy, it will last only as long as he does not misuse it. If he acts with unwarranted high-handedness, Esau will simply "throw his yoke off" his neck. There is a basis here for coexistence.

The second insight comes when Esau 'marries out,' taking two Hittite girls as wives. This was "a source of bitterness" to Isaac and Rebecca, and provides her with the necessary pretext to reconcile Isaac with Jacob, as well as giving Jacob a legitimate excuse to leave home.[1] Esau's reaction is interesting. He "understood that the Canaanite girls were displeasing to his father Isaac" and tries to ameliorate the situation by taking a third wife - Machlath, daughter of Ishmael. The gesture fails for two obvious reasons: he does not divorce the other wives, and he has not internalised the fact that Ishmael, too, has been rejected as an heir to the Abrahamic covenant. Esau is not overly endowed with intelligence, but he cares for his father and does not wish to cause him distress.

The third passage comes twenty-two years later, when the brothers finally meet again. This is one of the great passages of the Torah, full of depths and resonances. But the surface narrative is clear (and there is a rabbinic principle: "Scripture does not depart from its plain meaning"). Jacob is full of fear in advance of the encounter - fear that leads him to make elaborate preparations (involving prayer, diplomacy and war) as well as a wrestling match, alone at night, with an unnamed adversary. Yet when they finally meet, Esau runs to meet Jacob, embraces him, weeps, and shows none of the hostility he had once harboured. The internal drama is played out entirely within the soul of Jacob. Esau, true to character, is swift to anger, equally swift to forget. When Jacob, pleading with him to accept a gift of cattle and flocks, uses the deeply significant phrase, "please accept my blessing" - with its reference back to that event twenty-two years earlier - Esau shows no sign of understanding what he is hinting at. Esau does not harbour a grudge, not because he forgives but because he forgets. He is not an Absalom.

The fourth passage (in Bereishit 36) is the list of Esau's descendants. At first glance it is no different from the many other genealogies in Bereishit, but it contains two significant pieces of information, one explicit, the other implicit. The first is the statement, "These are the kings who ruled in the land of Edom before any king reigned in Israel." The second is the contrast between the closing verse of chapter 36 and the opening verse of chapter 37: "These are the tribes of Esau, each with its own settlements in its hereditary lands [*eretz achuzatam*] . . . Meanwhile, Jacob lived in the land where his father had lived as an alien [*be-eretz megurei aviv*]." The implication could not be clearer. Esau's descendants establish themselves geographically and politically long before Jacob's. Not for them the twists and turns of covenantal history - exile, slavery, redemption, and the wilderness years. Both may eventually inherit the

1. "I loathe my life because of those Hittite women," she tells Isaac. "If Jacob marries such a Hittite woman like them… why should I go on living?" (Gen. 27:46).

cream of the land and the dew of heaven, but for one the route is straightforward, for the other, anything but.

The fifth insight, much later, concerns the nature of the relationship between the Israelites and Edomites. Here two verses in particular stand out. The first is God's instruction to the Israelites:

You are passing by the borders of your brothers, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. Although they fear you, be very careful not to provoke them. I will not give you even one foot of their land, since I have given Mount Seir as Esau's inheritance. (Deut. 2:4–5)

The second is the no less emphatic command:

Do not abhor an Edomite, since he is your brother. (Deut. 23:7)

There is nothing in these commands to remind us of the eternal strife between the two nations predicted before their birth ("Two nations are in your womb . . . one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger"). During the biblical era there were periodic tensions and shifting fortunes in the relationship between Edom and Israel.[2] But normatively, the Israelites were commanded to respect both the Edomites and their land.

Putting these facts together, what are we to infer? At the simplest level, there is a humanity here that defies all stereotypes and conventional categorisations. Esau is a child loved by his father, who loves him in return. So striking is this that, despite the generally negative evaluation of Esau in the midrashic literature, this fact shines through:

Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel said: no man

2. See II Samuel 8:14; II Kings 8:20.

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ever honoured his father as I did mine, yet I found that Esau honoured his father even more than I did.

There is a marked tendency on the part of the Midrash to separate biblical characters into the wholly good and wholly bad, and for this there are good pedagogic reasons, as R. Zvi Hirsch Chajes points out in his *Mavo ha-Aggadot* (printed at the beginning of standard editions of *Ein Yaakov*). To serve effectively as role-models, biblical heroes must be seen as consistently heroic, and non-heroes as systematic villains.

Yet beneath this overlay of Midrash, the Torah teaches a different and equally important message, albeit one that demands a certain maturity to appreciate. Namely, even heroes have their faults and non-heroes their virtues, and those virtues are important to God. "The Holy One, blessed be He, does not withhold the reward of any creature," said the Sages. The Esau who emerges from the Torah has none of Abraham's faith, Isaac's steadfastness or Jacob's persistence. He is carved of an altogether coarser grain. But he is not without his humanity, his filial loyalty and a decent if quick-tempered disposition.

This too is part of the Torah's message. Just as we cannot predict God's actions in advance ("I will be who I will be," "I will have mercy and show kindness to whomever I desire"), so we cannot predict in advance where God's image will shine in the affairs of humankind. It was the sectarians of Qumran, not the rabbis, who divided humanity into the "children of light" and the "children of darkness". Such anthropological dualism is as alien to Judaism as is theological dualism.

There is, however, something far more fundamental at stake in the story of Esau. It has to do with the very concept of chosenness itself. The book of Bereishit is, among other things, a profound meditation on what it means to be chosen and what it means not to be chosen. There can be no doubt that chosenness has deep psychological consequences on both sides of the equation. To be chosen means - as Jacob discovers - a life of high demands and great hardship ("Few and evil have been the days of my life" he says to Pharaoh). But not to be chosen is also deeply disturbing. We see this time and again - on the two occasions in which Hagar is sent away, in the relations between Joseph and his brothers, but most explicitly in the case of Leah and Rachel:

[Jacob] also married Rachel, and he loved Rachel more than Leah . . . [God] saw that Leah was hated [*senuah*]. . .

I have translated this last phrase literally to give it its full, shocking force in the Hebrew. Leah, of course, was not hated. She merely felt rejected. Yet the sense of rejection cuts deep, so deep that the Torah does not hesitate to compare it to the feeling of being hated. And one who feels rejected may hate in return. That is why the brothers "hate" Joseph (the verb is used three times - a significant repetition - in chapter 37).

Love chooses. But choice creates estrangement, which leads to tension, which can sometimes erupt into conflict and sometimes (potentially or actually) violence. This is a theme signalled almost at the beginning of the biblical narrative, where God's choice of Abel's offering and not Cain's leads to fratricide.

Something of the deepest possible consequence is being intimated in the story of

Esau. The choice of one does not mean the rejection of the other. Esau is not chosen, but he is also not rejected. He too will have his blessing, his heritage, his land. He too will have children who become kings, who will rule and not be ruled. He too will have his virtues recognised, above all his love and respect for his father. It is no accident that our sympathies are drawn to him, as if to say for all time to all humanity: not all are chosen for the rigours, spiritual and existential, of the Abrahamic covenant, but all are precious to God, each has his or her place in the scheme of things, each has his or her virtues, talents, gifts, and each is precious in the eyes of God. As God will later tell Jonah: "You are concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow . . . Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?" (Jonah 4:10-11)

Or as the Psalm puts it:

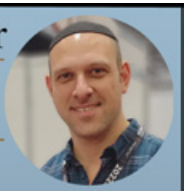
"The Lord is good to all; He has compassion on all He has made."

(Ps. 145:9)

To be chosen does not mean that others are unchosen. To be secure in one's relationship with God does not depend on negating the possibility that others too may have a (different) relationship with Him. Jacob was loved by his mother, Esau by his father; but what of God who is neither father nor mother, but both and more than both? In truth, we can only know our own relationship with our parents. We can never know another's. Am I loved more than my brothers or sisters? Less? Once asked, the question cannot but lead to sibling rivalry (one of the central themes of Bereishit). But the question is an invalid question. It should not need to be asked. A good parent loves all their children and never thinks of giving one 'less' love. Love is not quantifiable. It rejects comparisons. Jacob is Jacob, heir to the covenant. Esau is Esau, doing what he does, being what he is, enjoying his own heritage and blessing. What a simple truth and how beautifully, subtly, it is conveyed. It is one of the Torah's most profound messages to humanity - and how deeply (in an age of "the clash of civilisations") the world needs to hear it today. ■

Rabbi Sacks zt"l was the Former Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth. These weekly teachings are part of his 'Covenant & Conversation' series on the weekly Torah teaching. With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel. Visit www.RabbiSacks.org for more.

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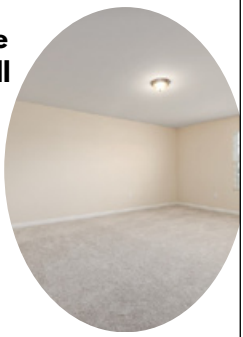
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Avraham Holid et Yitzchak: The Responsibility of Transmission

Yitzchak, of course, remains an important figure in Parashat Toldot. We see him reopening the wells that Avraham had dug and giving them the same names. But in many ways, Yitzchak remains the most mysterious of the Avot. The Torah tells us relatively little about his inner life. And yet the parsha opens with a remarkable description of his birth:

וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת יִצְחָק בֶּן־אַבְרָהָם, אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד אֶת־יִצְחָק

These are the descendants of Yitzchak, the son of Avraham; Avraham fathered Yitzchak.[1]

The second half of the verse seems almost unnecessary. We already know that Yitzchak was the son of Avraham. Why does the Torah repeat that Avraham fathered Yitzchak?

Rashi offers two explanations. First: אברהם הוליד את יצחק- לאחר שקרא הקדוש ברוך הוא שמו אברהם, אחר כך הוליד את יצחק. The Torah is emphasizing that it was specifically **Avraham**, not Avram, who fathered Yitzchak.

Rashi's second explanation is even more striking. The people of the generation were skeptical about Yitzchak's parentage. They claimed that Yitzchak was actually the son of Avimelech, since Sarah had been taken to Avimelech's palace and had miraculously remained without children until that point. Therefore, Hashem made Yitzchak's appearance unmistakably similar to Avraham's:

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik[2] focuses on a different aspect of the verse, specifically on the word הוליד (*holid*), fathered.

HOLID IS MORE THAN GIVING BIRTH

The Rav points out that when the Torah describes the descendants of Yishmael, it uses different language: **וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת יִשְׁמָעֵאל בֶּן־אַבְרָהָם, אֲשֶׁר הָגָר הַמִּצְרִית שִׁפְחַת שָׂרָה לְאַבְרָהָם.** These are the descendants of Yishmael, the son of Avraham, whom Hagar the Egyptian maidservant of Sarah bore to Avraham.[3] The Torah uses the language of ילד - **yalda**, "she gave birth," when describing Hagar and Yishmael.

But when describing Avraham and Yitzchak, the Torah deliberately says

1. Bereshit 25:19



2. Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, *Masoret HaRav*
3. Bereshit 25:12

Avraham holid. Et Yitzchak.

Rav Soloveitchik understands this distinction as representing two fundamentally different models of continuity. **Yalda** describes biological continuity. **Holid** describes something much greater: the transmission of an identity, a mission, and a way of life.

Avraham did not merely have Yitzchak. Avraham created Yitzchak. He transmitted to him the covenant that he himself had received. The descendants of Yishmael would multiply, expand, and spread geographically. Their continuity would be largely a natural process of reproduction and expansion. The story of Yitzchak and his descendants, however, is entirely different. Their continuity comes through struggle.

Yitzchak and Rivka have only two children, and even their pregnancy is painful and complicated. Yaakov is forced to leave his home. He spends years away from his family, first in the house of Lavan and later struggling to establish his own family and identity. The covenantal family does not simply grow. It struggles to grow. That is precisely because Jewish continuity is not simply biological. It is educational. It requires effort, sacrifice, and transmission.

THE ה OF AVRAHAM AND SARAH

Rav Soloveitchik develops this idea further through the addition of the letter ה to the names of Avraham and Sarah. Avram became: אַבְרָהָם and Sarai became: שָׂרָה. The addition of the ה represented a transformation in their identity and mission. They were no longer merely individuals. They became the father and mother of a nation. That transformation changed the meaning of parenthood itself. Prior to the transformation, fatherhood and motherhood are natural, biological institutions. However, once Avraham and Sarah become the parents of the Jewish nation, parenthood acquires another dimension: the responsibility to teach. The Torah's command: "Be fruitful and multiply", does not end with birth. Rather it begins with birth. Having a child is not the completion of the parent's responsibility. It is the beginning of a lifelong responsibility to shape, educate, guide, and transmit.

This is perhaps the meaning of the Torah's description of Avraham: אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד אֶת־יִצְחָק. Avraham didn't merely bring Yitzchak into the world. He brought Avraham's world into Yitzchak. He gave him his values, his faith, his commitment, and his mission.

JEWISH CONTINUITY IS NOT AUTOMATIC

This distinction helps explain something fundamental about Jewish history. Biological continuity is relatively easy. People have children, and children have children. But Jewish continuity is different. A child does not automatically inherit a commitment to Torah simply because his parents are committed to Torah. The Jewish tradition must be transmitted.

That is why the Rambam, at the beginning of *Hilchot Avodah Zarah*, describes



Avraham's mission not merely as discovering monotheism for himself, but as teaching it to others and creating a community that would continue his beliefs. Avraham discovered Hashem. But he also understood that discovery alone was insufficient. He had to **transmit** that discovery. That transmission reached Yitzchak.

A LIFELONG RESPONSIBILITY

There is an important lesson here for parents and grandparents. We sometimes think that raising children means providing them with the right opportunities: a good education, a good school, financial security and a stable home. All of those things are important. But the Torah is asking something deeper. What are we transmitting? What part of ourselves will our children carry with them? Will they inherit our love of Torah? Our sensitivity toward other people? Our commitment to chesed? Our integrity? Our relationship with Hashem? Our ability to persevere when life becomes difficult? These things cannot simply be taught in a classroom. They are transmitted through example. That is the meaning of הוליד. It is not enough to bring a child into the world. We have to bring the world of our values into the child. ■





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8:30 pm	Semichat Chaver Program	**Rav Elyada Goldwicht**	Bet Knesset Ohel Yitzchak, Keren Hayesod St. (The Bais)

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17

9:15 am	**Women's Division** Torah Tapesteries	**Shira Smiles**	Beit Knesset Hanassi, Ussishkin 24
9:20 am	The First "Jew"	**Rabbi James Kennard**	**Community Beit Midrash Program** Kehilat Nitzanim, 3 Asher St., Bakaa
10:10 am	Rambam: Letters and Introductions	**Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz**	
11:25 am	P'shat in the Parsha	**Rabbi Shmuel Goldin**	
12:20 PM	Unlocking the Messages of Chazal	**Rabbi Shai Finkelstein**	

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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18

9:15 am	Rav Soloveitchik on the Parsha	**Rabbi Dr. Aaron Adler**	**Community Beit Midrash Program** Beit Knesset HaNassi, 24 Ussishkin St., Rechavia
10:20 am	From Text to Tachlis	**Rabbi Jeremy Perlow**	
11:25 am	Building Character and Midot: Rav Kook on Pirkei Avot	**Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider**	
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THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19

9:15 am	Parshat Hashavua	**Rabbi Ari Kahn**	**Community Beit Midrash Program** Bet Knesset Shai Agnon, 11 Leib Yaffe St., Arnona
10:30 am	Parshat Hashavua	**Rabbi Baruch Taub**	
11:25 am	Modern Masters	**Rabbi Sam Shor**	
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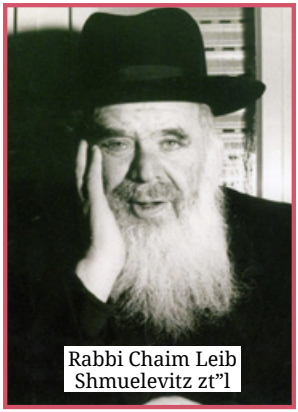


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"Vayomer Eisav el Yakov haliteini na min ha'adom ha'adom hazeh ki ayef anochi... vayomer Yakov michra kayom et bechoratcha li vayomer Eisav hinei anochi holech lamut ve'lamah zeh li bechorah voyomer Yakov hishav'ah li kayom vayishava lo vayimkor et bechorato le'Yakov ve'Yakov natan le'Eisav lechem u'nezid adashim vayochal vayesht vayakam vayeilach ***vayivez Eisav et habechorah*** —And Esav said to Yakov, "Pour into [me] some of this red, red [pottage], for I am faint"...And Yakov said, "Sell me as of this day your birthright." Esav replied, "Behold, I am going to die; so why do I need this birthright?" And Yakov said, "Swear to me as of this day"; so he swore to him, and he sold his birthright to Yakov. And Yakov gave Esav bread and a pottage of lentils, and he ate and drank and arose and left, **and Esav despised the birthright."** *(Bereisheet* 25:30-34*)*


Rabbi Chaim Leib Shmuelevitz zt"l

How is selling the first-born rights to Esav for a bowl of lentil soup and some bread a valid sale? Is not its eternal nature far more valuable than a meal, however hearty, that is consumed and gone within moments?

A number of commentators, Seforno and Rashbam among them, suggest that although it is not recorded in the Torah, Yakov must have paid a sizable sum to obtain the rights of the first born. The lentils were simply a physical representation of a credible financial transaction.

However, we can find an alternative approach if we look in *Sichot Mussar* by Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz *zt"l.* There, he grapples with the following question; how can anyone possess material abundance if the value of each mitzvah is infinitely greater than any container within the physical dimensions of our world? Rav Shmuelevitz therefore suggests that the reward one would receive for a good deed is commensurate with the value one places on that mitzvah. Thus, it is conceivable to receive a finite reward for a mitzvah if one does not value the true magnitude of the mitzvah. With this approach, we can understand the Torah's emphasis on Eisav's attitude, "and Esav despised the birthright;" in doing so, Eisav equated the value of the firstborn rights with a bowl of

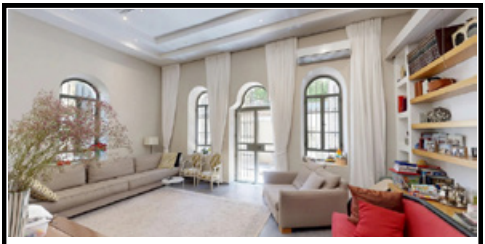
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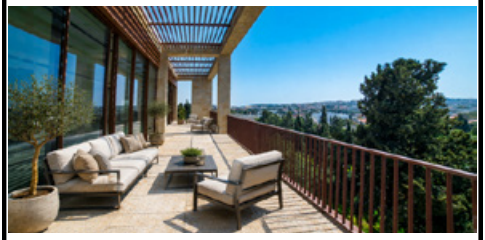
lentil soup and bread.

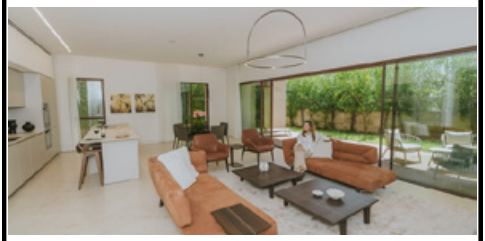
Similarly, the Ramban explains that the value of a mitzvah is proportional to the mindset of the one doing the mitzvah. One whose mitzvah observance is solely transactional will reap the benefits of just that — a contractual compensation. However, if one's focus is to connect to Hashem through the mitzvah, then he will enjoy the benefits in the next world, delighting in eternity. In this way, one's attitude toward the mitzvah determines the reward, whether in this world or the next one, or perhaps even in both worlds.

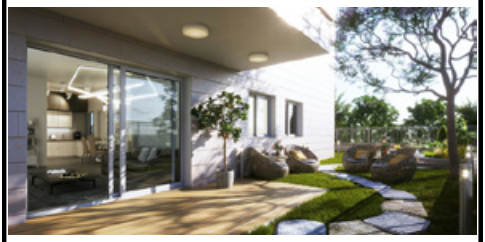
Let us honestly contemplate, how much value do we place on the spiritual facets of our lives? Where are we selling eternity for lentil soup, and how can we redirect our priorities? ■




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RABBI JUDAH MISCHEL
Executive Director, Camp HASC
Author of Baderech series

Sincerity

Festive gatherings at 770 Eastern Parkway in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, Chabad-Lubavitch world headquarters are, and have always been, lively, meaningful and full of holy excitement. Sometimes, the thousands of men present wearing long black kapotehs and the highly charged atmosphere create a bit of a confusing hullaballoo. Once, for a moment, a young boy got mixed up in a crowd of celebrating chasidim; father and son lost track of one another. Thinking he had found his father, the child innocently grabbed hold of the Lubavitcher Rebbe's hand and wiped his dirty face on the sleeve of the Rebbe's *kapoteh*.


Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l

The next day, the Rebbe received a note from the mother of the child, begging forgiveness, saying she was embarrassed and "pained" at what had happened. The mother soon received her note back with a question mark and exclamation point inscribed after the word "pained". The Rebbe wrote at the bottom, "On the contrary: He brought me great pleasure. One cannot begin to measure the heartfulness, simplicity, innocence, and sincerity of a child — if only half these qualities could be found in adults."



וַיִּגְדְּלוּ הַנְּעָרִים וַיְהִי עֵשָׂו אִישׁ יֹדֵעַ צַיִד אִישׁ שָׂדֶה וְיַעֲקֹב אִישׁ תָּם יֹשֵׁב אֹהָלִים

"And the young men grew up... Eisav was a skilful hunter, a man of the field, while Yaakov was an *ish tam*, a 'wholesome man', a dweller in tents" (25:27).

The Hebrew word *tam*, sometimes translated as 'perfect', is more accurately 'innocent' — while implying simplicity, purity, wholeheartedness, sincerity, and completeness.

Temimus is our foundation and touchstone, the pathway of the righteous. While Yaakov Avinu is called *ish tam* in our *sedra*, he is not the first to embody this holy trait: Hashem also praises Noach as an *ish tzadik tamim*, Avraham Avinu is encouraged to walk with God and be *tamim*, and Yitzchak Avinu manifests *temimus* at the *Akeidah*.

In the teachings of Maharal of Prague (*Nesivos Olam*, Nesiv haTemimus), *temimus* is considered a most desirable *midah*, referred to as שיא החיים, 'the apex of life'

and a primary goal in character development — our purpose in this world.

The challenge and opportunity Hashem lays before us is one of striving toward *temimus,* accurately translated as 'sincerity' or 'wholeness'. The common mistranslation of *temimus* as 'perfection' can be severely damaging to our spiritual growth and personal development. The *Ribbono shel Olam* neither desires nor expects 'perfection' of us; the entire system of *teshuvah* and the possibility of forgiveness is based on inevitable sins and mistakes. Human beings are necessarily 'imperfect', and so the drive to be perfect veers away from the way Hashem created us. Not only is a perfectionist image unattainable, a 'need' to attain it is unhealthy. Lurking behind such narcissism is often low self-esteem, a *lack* of wholeness. Perfectionism and true *temimus* are actually opposites.

On the verse defining Yaakov Avinu as an *ish tam,* Rashi comments: כְּלִבּוֹ כֵּן פִּיו, "... as in his heart, so in his lips". Yaakov was a person who spoke what he thought; he simply could not lie. His words and his thoughts were completely connected. This is one way that he revealed complete *temimus*, integrity, and *sheleimus,* wholeheartedness. This is also how Yaakov embodied the Midah of *Tiferes*, which is a quality of *k'lil,* 'bringing together' or connectivity.

Rebbe Nachman explains the inner significance of Yaakov's efforts to acquire the *bechora,* 'blessing of the firstborn'. On a deeper level, to be a 'firstborn' means to see things as though for the 'first' time. Yaakov experienced life with newness, wonder, innocence and *temimus.*

Rebbe Zusha of Anipoli taught that there are three things we can learn from an infant: how to laugh, how to cry, and how to keep constantly busy. For children, everything is natural and new, often learned or experienced for the first time. Curiosity, openness and simple enjoyment pervade their consciousness. Indeed, if we were to open our hearts and enter the internal stance of *temimus,* these qualities could be found in us adults as well.

May the birth of Yaakov Avinu this week awaken in us a renewed commitment toward cultivating *temimus* in our own lives and *avodas Hashem,* Jewish practice. May we let go of perfectionism and merit to serve God in simplicity, sincerity, earnestness, and wholeheartedness.

Excerpt from newly released **Baderech: Along the Path of the Torah**, (Mosaica Press). ■

Rav Judah Mischel is executive director of Camp HASC, the Hebrew Academy for Special Children. He is the founder of Tzama Nafshi and the author of the "Baderech" series. Rav Judah lives in Ramat Beit Shemesh with his wife Ora and their family.

Mazal Tov to
Deena & Steve Sattler and family
on the birth of a grandson





SIMCHAT SHMUEL

RABBI SAM SHOR
Director, Torah Initiatives, OU Israel

Parshat Toldot includes the challenging episode of *Rivka Imeinu*, disguising her son *Yaakov* as his older brother *Eisav*, in order to seemingly deceive an elderly and frail *Yitzchak* to bestow upon *Yaakov,* the blessings of the first born. What is the significance of this troubling episode? How could it be that *Yaakov Avinu* would come to receive these blessings in such a way? How could it be that *Rivka* would facilitate this entire episode?


Rav Moshe Weinberger

In the subsequent *pesukim*, *Eisav* approaches his father, having prepared his favorite foods, in anticipation that his father will indeed bless him, he is shocked to hear *Yitzchak's* reply:

"*Ba Achicha* ***B'Mirma,*** *vayikach birchatecha-" Your Brother came cunningly, and took your blessing. "*

The ***Ateret Yehoshua of Dzhikov, zy'a*** offers a fascinating insight- the word ***B'mirma*** is equal in numerical value to the word ***afikoman.***

When *Eisav* approaches his father with this meal, *Yitzchak* answers him that it is *Pesach* night, and I have already eaten a meal which your brother served me, which included the *Afikoman*- I therefore am no longer allowed to eat from your meal, as one is prohibited to eat any additional food on *Pesach* night, once they have consumed the *Afikoman.*

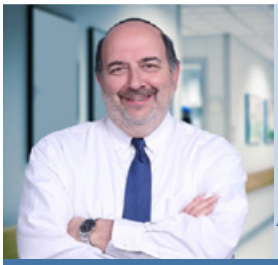
This novel approach of course takes into account the midrashic suggestion that each of the *Avot* fulfilled the entire *Torah* through *ruach hakodesh,* even though they had not received the *Torah* and were not commanded to do so.

Rabbi Moshe Weinberger, *shlita* points out that on the *Seder* night, the *matza* which is set aside as the *Afikoman,* is one half of the *matza* which is broken for *Yachatz,* at the beginning of the *Seder.* ***Yachatz,*** as explained by Rabbi Weinberger, is an acronym for the words: ***Yadav, Chelkat Tzavarav***- his hands and the smooth of his neck- a reference to the parts of *Yaakov's* body, which *Rivka* covered with fur to disguise him as *Eisav!*

So what are we to learn from both this episode of disguise and deception, as well as its connection to the *Afikoman of Layl HaSeder?*

On the *Seder* night, many have the custom that the *Afikoman* is hidden for the children to find, or to take it and "steal it" in exchange for a finder's fee or present

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upon its return. Rabbi Weinberger points out that there is an important message hidden within this custom. *Yaakov Avinu,* the ultimate *Ish Emet*, did not feel it was right for him to receive the blessing, he was not the *bechor* and therefore did not see himself as deserving to be blessed accordingly.

So too, many of us may feel that we are unworthy or not deserving to learn the depths of *Torah,* to delve into *penimiut hatorah*- the inner secrets of *Torah.* Rabbi Weinberger suggests that on the *Layl HaSeder*, we too must step out of our comfort zone like *Yaakov Avinu* and hide or steal the *Afikoman,* to realize that yes we too, are worthy to learn the secrets of *Torah,* and experience the *Layl HaSeder,* the night of redemption, in the deepest way, to feel that redemption within us, and believe that we are worthy to be redeemed.

Reb Tzadok HaKohein MiLublin zy'a, in a powerful teaching in *Tzidkat HaTzadik* taught:

כשם שצריך אדם להאמין בהש"י כך צריך אח"כ להאמין בעצמו.

Just as a person is required to believe in Hashem, so too is he afterwards required to believe in himself.

The ***Lubavitcher Rebbe zy'a*** emphasized that even when we have doubts, even when we are unsure about our own motives or capabilities, we can begin doing something meaningful rather than waiting for complete inner certainty. We do not always discover our strength before we act. Sometimes we discover it through the act itself.

Shabbat Shalom! ■

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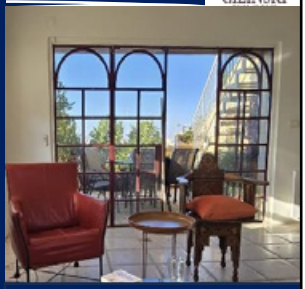
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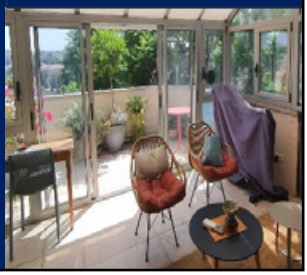
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L'zecher Nishmat **Imma Morasi Shulamis bat HaRav Shmuel Tzvi Halevi a"h**

THE AKEIDAH SEQUEL

וַיְהִי כִּי זָקֵן יִצְחָק וַתִּכְהֶיָן עֵינָיו מֵרְאֹת וַיִּקְרָא אֶת עֵשָׂו בְּנוֹ הַגָּדֹל וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו בְּנִי וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הִנֵּנִי: (כ"ז:א)

It came to pass when Yitzchak was old, and his eyes were too dim to see, that he called Esav his elder son, and he said to him, "My son," and he said to him, "Here I am."

רש"י: "וַתִּכְהֶיָן" - בַּעֲשָׁנָן שֶׁל אֵלּוּ. דָּבָר אַחֵר כְּשֶׁנֶּעֱקַד עַל גַּבֵּי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְהָיָה אָבִיו רוֹצֶה לְשָׁחֳטוֹ, בְּאוֹתָהּ שָׁעָה נִפְתְּחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְרָאוּ מַלְאֲכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת וְהָיוּ בוֹכִים, וְיָרְדוּ דִּמְעוֹתֵיהֶם וְנָפְלוּ עַל עֵינָיו, לְפִיכָךְ כָּהוּ עֵינָיו. דָּבָר אַחֵר כְּדֵי שֶׁיִּטֹּל יַעֲקֹב אֶת הַבְּרָכוֹת:

"Were too dim." – Because of the smoke of these [wives of Esav] (who would burn [incense] to the idols) (Midrash Tanchuma, Toldos 8; Pesiktha Rabbasi 12). Another explanation: When Yitzchak was bound on the altar, and his father was about to slaughter him, the heavens opened, and the ministering angels saw and wept, and their tears fell upon Yitzchak's eyes. As a result, his eyes became dim (Bereshis Rabbah 65:6). A third explanation: to enable Yaakov to take the blessings (Bereshis Rabbah 65:8).

Yitzchak's eyes had grown dim – "vatich'hena einav mei'ros." On a simple level, we assume this to be a symptom of his declining health. His eyesight faded, as happens in old age. But Rashi offers a very different explanation. He traces Yitzchak's blindness back to the Akeidah.

According to Rashi, when Yitzchak was bound on the altar, the heavens opened, angels gathered, and they wept. Their tears fell into Yitzchak's eyes and began the process that would eventually leave him blind. This detail does not appear in Parshas Vayeira. Rashi inserts it here, in Toldos. Why does Rashi introduce this explanation here rather than in Parshas Vayeira?

Rashi is not just explaining a medical condition. He is forcing us to read the berachos through the lens of the Akeidah. Yitzchak's blindness during the blessing scene is not incidental. It is a residue of the Akeidah. The Berachos are a sequel to the Akeidah.

The Akeidah was the moment of selection – of choosing Yitzchak over Yishmael. Toldos is the next act – choosing Yaakov over Esav. In both cases, a father stands at the center of a decision he does not fully control. In both cases, a child is chosen through a process that is morally unsettling. And in both cases, the hand guiding events is divine rather than human.

Once you see Toldos as Akeidah Part II, the parallels begin to surface. Animals are prepared. Knives are mentioned explicitly. Yitzchak commands Esav: "sa na kelecha, taly'cha v'kasht'cha." The Torah does not

need to highlight the tools, but it does. Smell plays a central role – re'ach – just as it does in a korban. And most importantly, the drama unfolds not in public but in an inner chamber, where something decisive happens before Hashem.

There is another striking parallel. Who stands behind the scenes at the Akeidah? Sarah. It is Sarah who insists that Yishmael be removed, who clears the way for Yitzchak to become the sole heir. Without Sarah, Yishmael remains an option. Who stands behind the scenes in Toldos? Rivkah. "Kol asher tomar eilecha Rivkah, shma b'kolah" – "Whatever Rivkah tells you to do you must listen to her." Rashi is telling us: read these stories together.

This connection also helps us confront a difficult question in Toldos: How could Rivkah and Yaakov act against Yitzchak? Even if Esav is disqualified, Yitzchak surely deserves agency. The answer Rashi is pushing us toward is not an easy one: the story of the Berachos, like the Akeidah, unfolds under divine direction. Just as we do not fully resolve the morality of the Akeidah, we should not pretend that the moral questions raised by Toldos are easily resolved. These are moments where Hashem advances history through human agents, even when the human actions feel fraught.

Rivkah herself signals this. When she repeats Yitzchak's instructions to Yaakov about receiving the berachos, she adds a phrase Yitzchak never said: "lifnei Hashem" (27:7). This is no incidental addition. Rivkah understands that what is about to take place unfolds before Hashem. It is more than a private family maneuver. That awareness, rooted in her ruach hakodesh, changes how the entire scene must be read.

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CHANGING ESAV, ONE WORD AT A TIME

וְעַתָּה שָׂא נָא כֵלֶיךָ תֶּלְיְךָ וְקַשְׁתֶּךָ וְצֵא הַשָּׂדֶה וְצוּדָה לִי צָיִד: (כ"ז:ג)

And now, please take your tools, your quiver and bow, and go out into the open and hunt me some game.

רש"י: "שָׂא נָא" - לְשׁוֹן הַשְׁחָזָה, כְּאוֹתָהּ שֶׁשָּׁנִינוּ אֵין מַשְׁחִיזִין אֶת הַסַּכִּין, אֲבָל מַשִּׁיאָהּ עַל גַּבֵּי חֲבֶרְתָּהּ (ביצה כ"ח), חַדֵּד סַכִּינְךָ וּשְׁחֹט יָפֶה, שֶׁלֹּא תַאֲכִילֵנִי נְבֵלָה (בראשית רבה):

"Please take." – The word שא means sharpen, similar to what we learn in the Mishnah (Beitzah 28a): "One may not sharpen the knife in the usual manner but one may sharpen it by passing it (משיאין) over another." (Yitzchak said to Esav:) "Sharpen your knife and slaughter an animal well (according to the regulations) so that you not give me neveilah to eat."

Yitzchak asks Esav to go out and hunt for him. He wants food. He tells him: "v'tzuda li tzayid." I'm hungry – go bring me something to eat. That part is simple and straightforward. But if we listen carefully to how Yitzchak speaks, we notice something unusual. He doesn't describe the hunt in the language you would expect. He

doesn't say "sword." He doesn't say "knife." He doesn't say "kill." Instead, he speaks in a roundabout, softened way. The question is why Yitzchak chooses this particular language.

What is he really saying? Very plainly, he's telling Esav: take out your knife, your sword, your weapon, sharpen them, and go hunt a deer. Go kill an animal and bring me food. That's the reality of hunting in that world. But Yitzchak refuses to speak that way. Instead, he says, "V'ata sa na keilecha" – take your tools. And that word jumps out at us. Your tools? What tools? A screwdriver? A power drill? Tweezers? What exactly does keilecha mean here as opposed to sword and knife?

Then the pasuk adds another word, "telyecha." Taf-lamed-yud-chaf. Rashi explains that this means a sword. Why is a sword called telyecha? Because you hang it up. Every sword had a handle. You come home, take off your coat, and hang up your sword. That's the word Yitzchak chooses.

And then he adds "sa na." Take it. But Rashi explains that doesn't just mean "take." It's lashon hashchaza – meaning to sharpen. Rashi even brings a proof from a Gemara in Beitzah where a similar word is used to describe sharpening a blade. Yitzchak is clearly referring to weapons and hunting, but he deliberately avoids more violent language.



So, let's step back and ask the obvious question. Why all this euphemism? Why not just say what he means? Take your sword, sharpen it, and go hunt. Why does Yitzchak insist on this roundabout language? The answer is that Yitzchak knows his son. Whatever larger calculations he had about the berachos – and there are many ways to understand that – one thing is certain: He knows who Esav is. Esav is rough. He's aggressive. He's violent. He's a hunter. And hunting in those days wasn't setting a trap and waiting patiently. It was hand-to-hand. It was dangerous and bloody. It required strength, aggression, and a certain kind of cunning.

Rav Amital used to point out that this same cunning is why Esav's head ends up in the Me'aras HaMachpelah. There was something sharp there, something audacious, something able to think beyond the box. Those traits can be destructive, but they can also be powerful if they're properly redirected. Yitzchak sees that complexity. He sees Esav's flaws, but he also sees his potential. And instead of rejecting him outright, Yitzchak tries, quietly and gently, to shape him.

That's why Yitzchak's soft language matters. Instead of speaking in gory, violent terms, Yitzchak softens the speech. He doesn't say sword; he says tools. He doesn't say kill; he says bring me food. Yitzchak recognizes Esav for who he is, yet he deliberately softens the language. He is trying to sand down Esav's rough edges, gradually softening his aggressive personality while allowing his strengths to develop. His words and his language plays a role in

that process.

So, the takeaway for us is to pay attention to our language. Language shapes character. It trains us to see ourselves in certain ways. If Yitzchak is careful not to speak in violent terms, it's because he's trying to draw Esav toward something gentler, even as his son remains who he is.

AN UNCOMFORTABLE DINNER TABLE

וַיְשַׁלַּח יִצְחָק אֶת יַעֲקֹב וַיֵּלֶךְ פַּדֶּנָה אֲרָם אֶל לָבָן בֶּן בְּתוּאֵל הָאֲרַמִּי אֲחִי רִבְקָה אֵם יַעֲקֹב וְעֵשָׂו: (כ"ח:ה)

And Yitzchak sent Yaakov, and he went to Padan Aram, to Lavan the son of Besuel the Arami, the brother of Rivkah, the mother of Yaakov and Esav.

רש"י: "אֵם יַעֲקֹב וְעֵשָׂו" - אֵינִי יוֹדֵעַ מַה מְּלַמְּדֵנוּ:

"The mother of Yaakov and Esav." – I do not know what this teaches us.

At the very end of Parshas Toldos, there is a small Rashi that I find endlessly striking – one of my favorites precisely because of how unusual it is.

The pasuk describes Yaakov being sent away: "Vayishlach Yitzchak es Yaakov, vayelech Padan Aram, el Lavan ben Besuel haArami, achi Rivkah, eim Yaakov v'Esav." The Torah seems almost excessive in its identifiers. Lavan is the son of Besuel the Arami, the brother of Rivkah – and Rivkah is identified not only as the mother of Yaakov, but also as the mother of Esav. Rashi pauses and says something rare: "Eini yode'a ma melamdeinu" – I do not know what this teaches us.

That sentence alone is remarkable. Rashi is willing to say, "I don't know."



Rav Amital used to say that one of the most important sentences a teacher can utter is exactly this one. A teacher must be intellectually honest and willing to admit when he does not know something.

And yet, even while respecting Rashi's humility and his willingness to say that he doesn't know how to interpret this verbosity, it is hard not to feel that the Torah itself is signaling something. Why emphasize that Rivkah is "eim Yaakov v'Esav" at this precise moment?

By the end of the parshah, Rivkah acted with clarity. She intervened decisively, even daringly, to redirect the berachos. Her decision to redirect the berachos raises difficult moral questions. But once Yaakov leaves, what remains is not a clear cut resolution. This is a family that must find some way to go on. Rivkah, Yitzchak, and Esav are still there together. The tension does



not evaporate. Despite everything that has happened, Rivkah, Yitzchak, and Esav must continue living together.

And that may be the point. Despite everything, Rivkah does not cease to be Esav's mother. The Torah insists on that identity. She is not only eim Yaakov; she remains eim Esav. Even after hard choices are made, even after one child is sent away and another is left behind, parenthood is not revoked. Her decision to favor Yaakov does not mean she has stopped caring about Esav.

This is not meant to be sentimental. Esav is not absolved, and his violence is not erased. But neither is he written out of the family story. Rivkah continues to sit at the table with Esav, even when it is painful, even when nothing feels resolved. That is part of moral responsibility.

In a similar vein Chazal describe Avraham continuing to visit Yishmael after sending him away, traveling to Be'er Lachai Ro'i. Sometimes parents must make difficult decisions about their children, but those decisions do not necessarily end their responsibility toward them.

It is conceivable that this lingering bond matters years later and help avert a bloodbath. When Esav encounters Yaakov again in Parshas Vayishlach, the meeting is tense and dangerous – but it does not end in bloodshed. Perhaps part of that restraint flows from the fact that Esav never fully lost his place within the family, never fully severed ties with his parents while they were still alive.

Perhaps the Torah emphasizes eim Yaakov v'Esav to remind us that Rivkah remained the mother of both children. Rivkah was guided by ruach hakodesh. She acted with conviction. But she remained a mother to both sons. Even when Rivkah acts decisively, she does not abandon her responsibility toward Esav.

Rashi says he does not know what this teaches us. I would not claim to know what Rashi did not. But the Torah may be reminding us that even after making difficult decisions, parents remain responsible for all their children. Perhaps that is why the Torah reminds us that Rivkah was the mother of both Yaakov and Esav. ■



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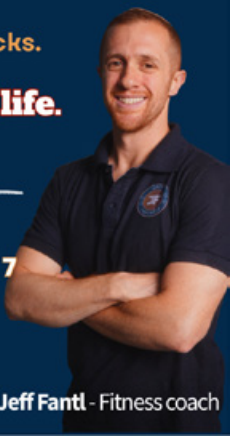
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Before the Rebuke

Some of the hardest conversations we have are with the people we love most. We see what needs to change, and we want to help. We choose our words carefully, hoping they will be received in the spirit we intend. But even well-meaning guidance can be difficult to hear.

The opening of this week's haftorah offers a beautiful starting point. אָהַבְתִּי אֶתְכֶם אָמַר ה', *I have loved you, says Hashem.* (Malachi 1:2) Malachi has difficult things to say. He will challenge the kohanim for bringing blemished offerings and treating the avodah without the care it deserves. He will confront a troubling distance between the honor due to Hashem and the way His service is being performed. But before any of that, Hashem declares His love.

The Malbim draws our attention to the word *eschem* - you. Hashem is expressing His love for the people themselves, beyond His longstanding love for their ancestors. When they ask, "בַּמָּה אֲהַבְתָּנוּ" - "How have You loved us?" - the Malbim understands their question as: How do we know that this love is truly directed toward us, rather than inherited from those who came before us?

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Hashem answers by pointing to Yaakov and Esav, the brothers whose story unfolds in Parshas Toldos. Both were children of Yitzchak and Rivkah; both were grandchildren of Avraham and Sarah. Yet Hashem loved Yaakov. Their shared ancestry alone cannot explain that love. As the Malbim puts it, "אהבתי אתכם בעצמכם" - I have loved you yourselves.

This understanding gives the opening declaration a particular tenderness. The people being addressed need to know that they are personally loved. Their relationship with Hashem has meaning in its own right. And it is to these very people that Malachi will deliver his rebuke. The declaration of love and the demand for change appear within the same conversation. The love is already present as their failings are brought into view.

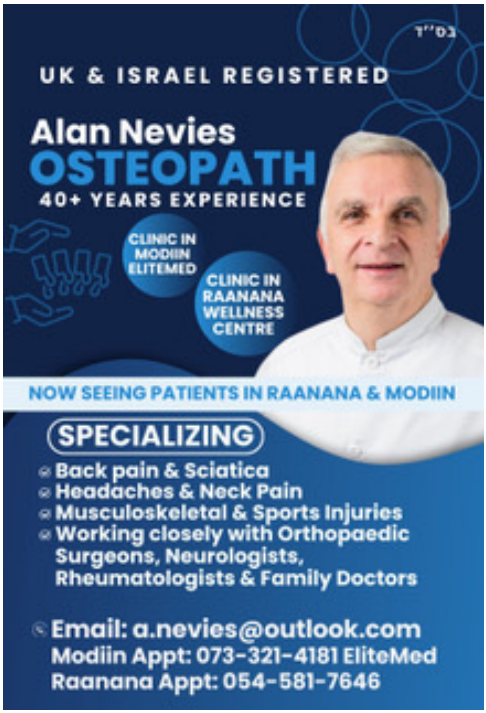
We might carry that thought into our own relationships. We can become so focused on someone's potential, responsibilities, or need to improve that we forget to express what we already cherish about them. We notice the unfinished task, the unwise choice, the habit that needs attention. Our concern is real, but it may become the part of our love that is heard most often.

A child may hear how much we expect without hearing how much we enjoy them. A spouse may hear what needs to be done

without hearing how much their efforts mean to us. Someone we work with may know that we rely on them, yet rarely hear what we appreciate about their particular gifts.

The Malbim's emphasis on "you yourselves" invites us to make our affection personal and specific: to notice someone's sensitivity, acknowledge their ongoing efforts, or tell them how their presence enriches our lives. These expressions deserve a place in the ordinary rhythm of a relationship, giving our love a voice long before a difficult conversation arises.

Then, when guidance is needed, there is a relationship of expressed affection within which it can be offered. "Ahavti eschem." Before we ask someone to hear our guidance, let's make sure they have heard our love. ■









REBBETZIN ZEMIRA OZAROWSKI
Director of OU Israel Women's Division

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Birchot Hashachar IV

As the losing baseball team neared the final inning of the game, the coach took a moment to gather the team together for a last-minute pep-talk. He looked the players in the eye and said to them – "You can do it!! You have the strength, you have the energy! Wake up and step up to the plate with dignity! We are the winning team!!". And with that, the team took their place at the dugout. With that boost of inspiration ringing in their ears, they each took their turn at bat with renewed confidence and pride, ready to face the other team and emerge victorious.

The above scenario really encapsulate the final section of Birchot Hashachar. The last four brachot are like that last-minute peptalk before we go into the day! As we encounter myriads of issues and difficulties throughout the day, we can keep these words of inspiration in our heads, giving us that extra boost of energy to be able to succeed.

ברוך אתה ה' אלוקינו מלך העולם אוזר ישראל בגבורה

Chazal originally recommended that one recite this bracha while fastening his belt in the morning. This is because a belt signifies the separation between the upper part of the body (the head, the heart, the neshama) which represents the spiritual, from the lower part of the body which represents the physical. In this bracha, we are praising Hashem for giving us the strength to overcome our physical desires and our evil inclination. There's a famous saying in Pirkei Avot – איזהו גבור הכובש את יצרו - *Who is strong? One who overcomes his Yetzer Hara.* This is the type of strength we really need at the start of a new day. We need Hashem to gird us with a special strength, with the ability to do what's right throughout the day, despite the pull to do otherwise. (Gemara Sukkah 52b) Throughout the day, we are faced with hundreds of dilemmas like – should we get angry or remain calm? Should we spend our time well or waste it? It's not easy to be strong in the face of temptations but this bracha is telling us that Hashem is with us and with His support, we can do it!

ברוך אתה ה' אלוקינו מלך העולם עוטר ישראל בתפארה

This bracha was originally instituted to be said as one puts on his turban (Kippah). The idea here is that we wear something on our head to remember who we are and who is above us. I would venture to say that a woman's headcovering can also help to accomplish the same goal. When we remember who we are and what our role is as the Jewish people, we can take pride in the fact we have been crowned with glory and splendor. We are the children of the King!

ברוך אתה ה' אלוקינו מלך העולם הנותן ליעף כח

We need to thank Hashem every day for the renewed strength He gives us at the start of the day. No matter how exhausted

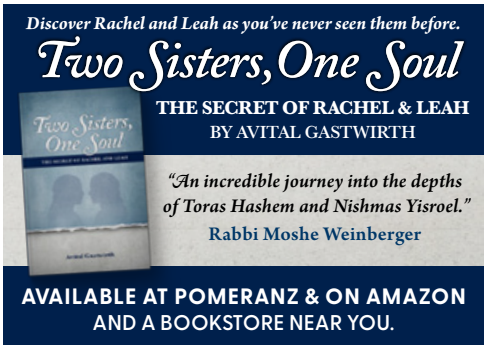
we were the night before or how overwhelmed we might have felt yesterday, in the morning we are recharged and rejuvenated, ready to face the day's challenges with renewed vigor. In addition, there are many times when we somehow manage to accomplish the impossible - we look back at what we have done, despite limits in manpower and time, and we realize that without Hashem giving us that extra energy boost, our success would have been virtually impossible. We need to recognize this and remember Who is really enabling the realization of our achievements.

ברוך אתה ה' אלוקינו מלך העולם המעביר שינה מעיני ותנומה מעפעפי

In this last bracha, we begin with praise to Hashem for removing both sleep and drowsiness from our eyes. The Gra explains that שינה refers to when one is in a very deep sleep and תנומה is referring to when we are very tired and our eyes are starting to close but our minds are still very active. The idea here is that we are thankful for the alertness and clarity that Hashem has given us.

The Siach Yitzchak writes that the beginning of any operation determines what the outcome will be. If we start off on the right foot, then we will continue upwards from there. As we begin the day, removing all vestiges of drowsiness and lethargy, and we begin new thought processes and deliberations, we are at a significant crossroad - where will our thoughts lead us? Which direction will we go in? And so, we jump immediately into the paragraph ...יהי רצון שתרגילנו בתורתך where we ask Hashem to lead us in the right direction. We will iy"H focus next week on this יהי רצון. ■







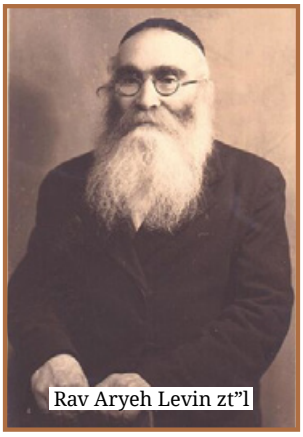
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Greeting Everyone With a Pleasant Countenance

Rav Kook on Pirkei Avot 1:15

"Shammai says…greet everyone with a pleasant countenance." (Avot 1:15)

One of the rabbinic personalities who profoundly inspired Rav Kook was Rav Yisrael Salanter, the eminent founder of the Mussar Movement. Although Rav Kook never met him personally, when he heard of Rav Salanter's passing as a young man, he tore his garment and sat on the floor in mourning.


Rav Aryeh Levin zt"l

One of the defining features of the Mussar Movement was its emphasis on treating others with dignity, sensitivity, and genuine concern. In a tribute delivered on the fiftieth anniversary of Rav Salanter's passing, Rav Kook highlighted this important aspect of his legacy:

"The main thing that the current generation needs to know, especially now…that together with the deepening and fanning of the flames of the study of ethics, he undertook the task of publicly emphasizing social justice and the particular severity of commandments and obligations between man and his fellow, without which reverence and purity of one's traits have no foundation." (Cited in *Mussar Avicha*, Gerstein, appendix, p. 207)

In light of this teaching, we can suggest that even the manner in which we greet another person, including the warmth conveyed through our facial expressions, deserves our utmost attention.

The following story illustrates this principle:

On his way to shul for Kol Nidrei on Erev Yom Kippur, Rav Yisrael Salanter encountered a man whom he warmly greeted. The man, however, was so absorbed in the solemnity and awesomeness of the Day of Judgment that he failed to return the greeting.

Rav Yisrael turned to his disciple, Rav Itzele of Petersburg, and remarked, "Why must I suffer from his preoccupation with the Day of Judgment?" (*Visions of the Fathers*, Twerski, p. 60)

Rav Salanter was teaching that even our lack of warmth toward another person can be a moral failing. Regardless of our own preoccupations, feelings, or spiritual

pursuits, we must remain mindful of how we make others feel.

SHAMMAI'S INJUNCTION

Many commentaries explain that Shammai's instruction to greet others with a pleasant countenance is not merely about projecting a pleasant outward appearance. Rather, our demeanor should reflect a genuine and heartfelt appreciation for, and concern toward, our fellow human beings (see the commentary of the Rambam).

But how does one cultivate a more loving approach toward others, particularly when encountering people with whom we do not naturally identify or whom we may feel are undeserving of our friendship?

Rav Kook's writings offer four important insights:

1. HASHEM CREATES INDIVIDUALS

We must recognize that every person is created differently, with unique talents, inclinations, and predispositions. Why should we look negatively upon someone simply because he is different from us? Hashem has deliberately created each person as a unique individual, with his own place and purpose in this world.(*Pinkasei HaReiyah*, chelek alef, Pinkas 4, 49; cited in *Nelchah Ad HaRo'eh: Iyun B'Pirkei Avot*, p. 37)

2. ALL ARE NEEDED TO BUILD THE WORLD

Appreciating the diversity of human personalities is essential to building a world in which different skills, talents, and areas of expertise contribute to the betterment of humanity. When we recognize the value of this diversity, we become more appreciative of the contributions of others and learn to look upon them with a more generous eye.(*Ein Ayah*, Berachot, Chapter 9, #285; cited in *Nelchah Ad HaRo'eh*, p. 38)



3. PERSONAL SHORTCOMINGS

When we are conscious of our own shortcomings and failures, we become less inclined to focus on the faults of others. A person who lives with humility, recognizing that he is far from perfect and does not possess absolute truth, will naturally become more patient and tolerant of those around him. (Ibid., p. 43)

4. DIRECTING ONE'S HEART TO HEAVEN

We can never accurately evaluate the intentions or sincerity of another person's heart. The Talmud teaches:

"One who brings a substantial amount and one who brings a meager amount have equal merit as long as he directs his heart to Heaven." (*Berachot* 17a)

In other words, only Hashem can fully discern the sincerity of another person's intentions and the depth of his feelings. Recognizing this should make us less judgmental and more inclined to see the goodness in our fellow human beings.(*Ein Ayah*, Berachot 17a, piska #59)

RAV ARYEH'S WILL

The Tzaddik of Yerushalayim, Rav Aryeh Levin, left several written wills for his family, sharing some of the values and practices he cherished most and hoped would be carried forward by future generations.

In one of these writings, he stated:

"I was very careful to greet every person with a pleasant countenance until it became second-nature for me. I was also careful to be the first to greet every person who I met on the way."

Rav Aryeh's grandson, Rabbi David Levin, added that his grandfather would emphasize that this practice was something he had worked to perfect for more than forty years in order to acquire this precious *mida tova* (noble character trait). (*Derech Avot*, Steinberg, p. 78)

RUNNING THROUGH HIS VEINS

A student of Rav Aryeh Levin, Rav Yaakov Ginsberg, recalled the warmth and *sever panim yafot* (pleasant countenance) with which Rav Aryeh greeted the students each day at Etz Chaim Yeshiva.

Rav Aryeh would welcome the boys with a smile, making each one feel the warmth of his affection. Among the young students, it became common knowledge that when Rav Aryeh extended his hand and took a child's hand in his own, the child could feel a flow of compassion and love "that would pass through his veins and enter their veins."

The boys would make every effort to get close to Rav Aryeh, hoping to receive a warm caress and experience the comfort and kindness of a loving father figure. (Ibid., pp. 78–79)



A DANGEROUS EMBRACE

Perhaps we can now understand the Mishnah as a whole through the lens of Rav Kook's teachings. While it is certainly a noble *mida* to greet others warmly and treat them with kindness, even those whose commitments or perspectives differ significantly from our own, we must remain steadfast in our Torah values and spiritual convictions. We must be careful not to allow our desire to embrace others to lead us toward influences or perspectives that could undermine our spiritual lives. (*Pinkasei HaReiyah*, section 1, Pinkas 4, 33)

Our Mishnah opens with Shammai's directive to establish fixed times for Torah study and to actively engage in the performance of mitzvot. These deeply rooted commitments provide the spiritual foundation and strength necessary to interact positively and warmly with all those we encounter.

When our lives are anchored in Torah and strengthened by genuine spiritual devotion, we can approach others with kindness, sensitivity, and an open heart without compromising our own values.

That is the balance Shammai asks us to achieve: to remain firmly committed to Torah and fully committed to our own ideal while greeting every person with a pleasant countenance. (See *Nelchah Ad HaRo'eh: Iyun B'Pirkei Avot*, Slav, pp. 43–45) ■



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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Dealing with a Ripping *Tzitzit*

Question: My *tzitzit* [garment] is starting to rip around the neck, extending downward. Since I bought my *tzitzit* to be the minimum *shiur* required by standard *poskim*, is it now *pasul*? How do I fix it, and is it permitted to wear it before then?

Answer: It is far from clear that the garment is *pasul* now. First, there are many opinions on the *tzitzit* garment's *shiur*, including 1 X 1 *amah*, .75 X .75 *amah*, and different opinions on the size of an *amah* (see Mishna Berura 16:4). So, a small rip of the *tzitzit* you bought may fulfill the *shiur* according to legitimate opinions. Secondly, some add the length of the *tzitzit* on both sides of the head opening to arrive at the *shiur*, which would give you more than enough (the Mishna Berura ibid. is stringent). Finally, a standard rip (minority of the garment; material still present) is analogous to a slit in the fabric beneath the neck line, which some count toward the *shiur* (see Chazon Ish, OC 3:19).

If the *tzitzit* is or may be *pasul*, you can and likely should fix it by sewing it up (see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 15:4). Admittedly, there is logic to require retying the strings because of the rule of *ta'aseh v'lo min he'asuy* (=*tvlmh*). This means that something, like *tzitzit*, that the Torah says to make, must be turned into a halachic entity by a direct action, not by an indirectly created situation. For example, when one attaches three sets of *tzitzit* to a three-cornered garment (which is not obligated in *tzitzit*) and later form a fourth corner, we view the existing strings as having been turned into "*tzitzit*" indirectly and require them to be retied (Shulchan Aruch, OC 10:5).

However, in a case where the strings were attached properly and



later the garment lost its *tzitzit* obligation, e.g., the garment was severed, with each side maintaining *tzitzit* and enough fabric to be kosher, the Shulchan Aruch (OC 15:3) says that *tvlmh* is not a problem here. The Magen Avraham (15:4) sees that as a broad rule that when at the time of a *mitzva* object's formation (e.g., *tzitzit*, *schach*, *mezuza* – see Yabia Omer, V, OC 55 at length) it was properly formed, when the *mitzva* status lapses (e.g., the garment lost its *tzitzit* obligation) and then returns, there is no problem of *tvlmh*. The Taz (OC 15:3), though, reasons that once the status is lost, *tvlmh* applies and the halachic element (e.g., *tzitzit* strings; *schach*) cannot return to *kashrut* just by the obligation returning to its "base" (e.g., garment, *sukka*). This strict view only accepts as an exception a case where the lost status was minor and/or external (e.g., a sheet was placed over the *schach* and then was removed – see Shut Ktav Sofer, Yoreh Deah 139).

The lenient position is seen as stronger and more practiced here (see Yabia Omer ibid.), but many *poskim* say we should try to conform with the stricter one (ibid.; Mishna Berura 15:7-8), which would seem to require your undoing and retying the strings. However, this is almost definitely not a problem here. First of all, as above, there is a strong possibility that in your case, the *tzitzit* remained kosher the whole time, and in the case of an added reason for leniency, many are not concerned about the Taz's stringency (Yabia Omer ibid.). Furthermore, when the rip does not remove fabric but separates the sides from each other in a minor way, it is very likely that the Taz agrees that there is no *tvlmh* (see Piskei Teshuvot 15:4).

Until you have a chance to fix or replace the *tzitzit*, it could have minimal value to wear the likely invalid *tzitzit* garment with kosher strings. There is no prohibition to wear such a garment with *tzitzit* as long as you do not make a *beracha* on it. Rather, you have it in mind when making the *beracha* on the *tallit* (Mishna Berura 15:4), as is the *minhag* for *tallit* wearers because of our general lack of confidence about our *tzitzit* garments' size (Mishna Berura 8:24). It is theoretically possible, that after mending the garment and returning its *tzitzit* obligation, if *tvlmh* applies (against what we said above), it is forbidden to wear the garment. ■

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RABBI ELYADA GOLDWICHT
Founder, Semichas Chaver Program
Rav Kehillat Lev Ra'anana

The Anchor of Eternity: How Yitzchak Decoded the Secret of Jewish Survival

Since October 7th, antisemitism has surged worldwide by over 300%. From university campuses to European streets where 96% of Jews report encountering hate, antisemitism has once again raised its ugly head. As we watch history repeat itself, every individual asks: What is the secret ingredient that carried our ancestors through the Crusades, Inquisitions, and Pogroms, and what can we do today to combat it?

The answer is tucked away in a frequently glossed-over portion of Parshat Toldot: Yitzchak's life in Gerar.

TWO POWERFUL QUESTIONS

At first glance, Yitzchak's adult life appears surprisingly unspectacular compared to Avraham or Yaakov. He seems like a virtual "copy-paste" of his father: he physically looks like Avraham, leaves home due to famine, claims his wife is his sister, struggles with childlessness, raises one *tzaddik* and one *rasha*, and re-digs his father's wells, calling them by the exact same names!

This raises two fundamental questions:

Why was Yitzchak chosen as a Patriarch if all he did was copy his father?

Why is Yitzchak the Patriarch most deeply connected to the Beis HaMikdash? (The Mishkan was erected on his birthday in Nissan, and the Akeidah took place on Har HaMoriah, the future site of the *Beis HaMikdash*. While Avraham represents *chessed* and Yaakov represents *Torah*, Yitzchak represents *tefillah*, the very essence of the *Beis HaMikdash*, which Hashem calls ביתי בית תפילה יקרא לכל העמים – "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations." The Ramban further explains that the three wells Yitzchak dug correspond to the three *Batei Mikdash*.)

THE BLUEPRINT OF EXILE

The Ramban and Kli Yakar explain that Yitzchak's narrative in Gerar is not merely an ancient real estate dispute; it is the precise blueprint of Jewish history in exile (*Galus*):

- **Exile & Success:** The Jew arrives in a foreign land (Gerar) wanting only to live quietly. Hashem blesses him (*Vayivarchehu Hashem*), and he achieves extraordinary success.
- **Jealousy & Sabotage:** Unwilling to acknowledge Hashem's hand, the locals become envious (*Vayikneu oto Plishtim*). They fill up the wells, sabotaging

their own water supply during a famine just to harm the Jew.

- **Expulsion & Pursuit:** Eventually, the king demands, *"Lech me'imanu"* ("Leave us"). History records over 30 major expulsions of Jews from host nations. Yet, when Yitzchak moves and digs again, they pursue him to fight (*Esek* and *Sitnah*).
- **Redemption:** Finally, Yitzchak digs a third well, naming it *Rechovot*, "For now Hashem has made room for us". This well represents the Third Beis HaMikdash and ultimate peace.

ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS: THE POWER OF MESORAH

Now both questions fall into place:

- **Answer to Question 1 (Why was Yitzchak chosen as a Patriarch?):** In a world obsessed with innovation, Yitzchak's supreme greatness was **preservation**. Without preservation, there is nothing left to innovate! By re-digging Avraham's wells and calling them by their original names, Yitzchak taught us that the ultimate anchor of Jewish survival is *Mesorah*, holding fast to our sacred tradition without altering an iota. This is how we survived the long, treacherous *Galus*.
- **Answer to Question 2 (Why is Yitzchak connected most to the Beis HaMikdash?):** Yitzchak connects to the Beis HaMikdash because the Beis HaMikdash is the site of *Tefillah* and the gateway to *Geulah*. His life proves that through *Mesorah* and *Emunah*, we guarantee our eventual return to Hashem's Home.

LIVING THE MESSAGE TODAY

Antisemitism has never destroyed us; only forgetting who we are can do that. Today, we witness a breathtaking spiritual awakening among Jews around the world, from soldiers requesting *tzitzit* on the front lines to hostages surviving captivity through sheer *Emunah*. When Bar Kuperstein's mother was harassed by a Hamas terrorist demanding she join the nationwide protests, she responded: *"My son is not in your hands; he is in Hashem's hands, and you are too!"*

As long as we hold tight to Yitzchak's *Mesorah*, no force on earth can stop us from reaching what Yitzchak called *Rechovot*, the Third Beis HaMikdash! ■

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MRS. MICHAL HOROWITZ
Torah Educator
Presenter for OU Women's Initiative

The Role of Yitzchak Avinu

In this week's *parsha, Parshas Toldos*, we learn about the lives, home, struggles, children, and events that occur to Yitzchak and Rivka, the second patriarch and matriarch of Am Yisrael.

The *parsha* opens with Yitzchak and Rivka's long wait for a child. We see them davening - each one standing in their own corner - beseeching HKB"H to grant them a child. Unlike Avraham, his father, and Yaakov, his son-to-be - both of whom married more than one woman - Yitzchak, due to his nature as the *olah temima*, could not marry other wives (and, unlike his father and son, he could not depart from the Holy Land). Hence, the Sages teach us that he would stand in one corner and pray and she would stand in the opposite corner and pray. Together, they longed for a child to carry on the great truth and way of life begun by Avraham and Sarah.

Ultimately, after twenty years of marriage, Yitzchak's tefilos were accepted, Rivka conceived, and after the term of her pregnancy was over, she gave birth to twins. While Eisav would not carry on the heritage of his father and grandfather, nor would he receive the blessings granted to the firstborn, Yaakov would do so. And through Yaakov, the twelve tribes were born, and the family that began in Canaan became the great nation of Israel.

Yitzchak himself is a very interesting Torah personality. Compared to his father and his son - both of whom we know so much about - we know relatively very little about Yitzchak.

Avraham's narrative begins at the end of Parshas Noach (Bereishis 11) and continues through his death in Chayei Sarah (Bereishis 25). Yaakov's journey begins in Toldos, at the end of Bereishis 25 when Eisav sells him the rights to the firstborn in exchange for lentil soup. And Yaakov's story does not end till the end of Sefer Bereishis, when his sons bury him in the Cave of the Machpela (Bereishis 50).

In contrast to them, we meet Yitzchak in Vayeira. We learn about his birth, the bris milah that was done to him, the great feast held when he was weaned, and the journey with his father to the Akeidah. In Chayei Sara, in the Torah text we are not even told if he was present when his mother was mourned for, eulogized and buried. In the next chapter, a wife is found for him



and brought home to him. And in Toldos, we are told very little about Yitzchak. He prays for a child, he travels in Gerar, the shepherds quarrel with him as he digs wells, and he is forced to move. Finally, he gives the brachos to Yaakov who is dressed in Eisav's hunting garments (then gives brachos to a distraught Eisav), and then sends Yaakov away.

Yitzchak is a mostly quiet, unassuming, very little-is-known-about-him Torah personality. For one of the avos who founded our nation - especially in contrast to the plethora of details that we know about Avraham and Yaakov - this seems very surprising. Most of the events of Yitzchak's life are occurrences that others seem to do to him or concerning him, while he himself is mostly passive.

Furthermore, the first pasuk of the parsha tells us: וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת יִצְחָק בֶּן־אַבְרָהָם אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד אֶת־יִצְחָק, *And these are the offspring of Yitzchak the son of Avraham; Avraham birthed Yitzchak* (Bereishis 25:19). Rashi comments that Yitzchak's face and features resembled those of his father, so everyone knew Yitzchak was the son of Avraham, and Avraham begot Yitzchak.

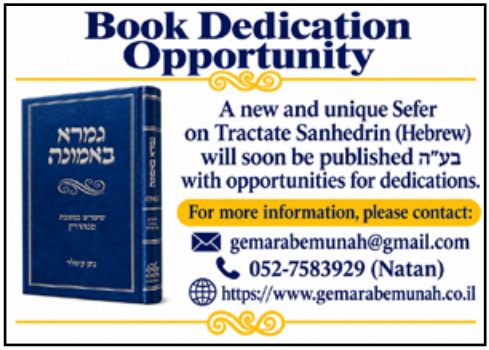
This resemblance, between father and son, was more far-reaching than a simple physical resemblance. When comparing the lives of father and son, we find that much of what happened to Avraham happened to Yitzchak.

Avraham was childless for many years, Yitzchak was too. Avraham had a son who was wicked and a son who was righteous, Yitzchak did too. Avraham dug wells, Yitzchak dug the same wells. Avraham and Sarah traveled to the region of Avimelech, king of Gerar, Yitzchak and Rivka did as well. Avraham faced a famine in the land, Yitzchak did too. Avraham said about Sarah, "she is my sister," Yitzchak said the same about Rivka. And both Avraham and Yitzchak had to send their sons away (albeit for different reasons).

How, then, can we understand the Torah's message about Yitzchak? As one of the Avos - the one who was the holy Akeidah no less - his life surely leaves us with foundational, impactful and crucial lessons about our own lives as *ovdei Hashem*.

With penetrating insight, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks z'l notes that, "Isaac is the least original of the three patriarchs. His life lacks the drama of Abraham or the struggles of Jacob... Isaac 'reopened the wells that had been dug in the time of his father Abraham, which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died, and he *gave them the same names* his father had given them.'

"Normally we strive to individuate ourselves by differentiating ourselves from our parents. We do things differently, or even if we don't, we give them different names. Isaac was not like this. He was content to be a link in the chain of generations, faithful to what his father had started. Isaac represents the faith of persistence,



the courage of continuity. He was the first Jewish child, and he represents the single greatest challenge of being a Jewish child: to continue the journey our ancestors began, rather than drifting from it, thereby bringing the journey to an end before it has reached its destination" (Covenant & Conversation, Genesis, p.164).

Avraham was an innovator, who revolutionized the world with his recognition of Hashem as Creator, Sustainer and Provider of all. Yaakov was the man of the study halls of Torah, and then the hard-working shepherd, who birthed a nation.

Who was Yitzchak? He was *the bridge* between them. His role was not to innovate, revolutionize, nor discover new horizons. His role was to carry the past, faithfully, into the future, so the nation begun by Avraham, and birthed by Yaakov, would continue forevermore.

We are not all innovators, inventors, or revolutionaries, as was Avraham. We are not all the fathers of great things born, as was Yaakov, the father of the tribes of Israel.

However, like Yitzchak, we are all - can, should and must be - a bridge from our glorious past to the bright light of the horizon of the future.

In order for Am Yisrael to continue, strongly forging ahead, we need the courage of Avraham, the vision of Yaakov, and the steadfast, quiet tenacity of Yitzchak.

Let us each live our lives guided by these principles, as we carry the legacy of Am Yisrael, Toras Yisrael and the holiness of Eretz Yisrael forward, passing on to the future what we have been bequeathed from our past.

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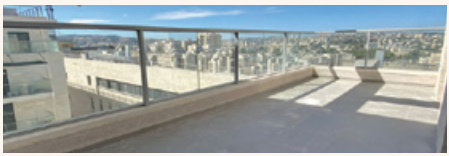
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לעילוי נשמת **מאיר יצחק בן יוסף אליהו הכהן ז"ל**

You Don't Have to Love Everything About Him

Hannah asks:

Hi Ayelet, I really could use your advice. I often go into dates feeling excited, but once I'm actually sitting across from someone, I find myself focusing on all the little things that aren't quite right. I end up losing interest, even when he seemed like someone I could really like. Am I being too critical, or am I just not meeting the right person?

Ayelet answers:

There is something worth looking at here, because sometimes the way we approach a date can actually get in the way of discovering whether there's something there.

A lot of us spend so much time thinking about what we're looking for in a spouse. We have our lists of qualities, values, personality traits and expectations, and of course, knowing what matters to us is important. But somewhere along the way, the focus can become so much about evaluating the person in front of us that we forget to pay attention to something equally important: the relationship that might develop between us.

Think about your friendships. You probably have friends whose every opinion you don't agree with, whose jokes you don't always find funny, and whose habits might occasionally drive you crazy. You wouldn't necessarily choose every single one of their traits if you were designing a person from scratch, and yet you love spending time with them. Why? Because you enjoy their company, feel comfortable around them, laugh together and genuinely want to spend time with them.

The same is true of marriage. Every happily married couple you know has, at some point during those first few dates, noticed things they didn't particularly love about each other. They didn't necessarily agree on everything or tick every box on each other's lists. But they discovered that they were happy together - and that's what you're ultimately looking for.

When you sit across from someone with the constant question of "Is he right for me?", every little thing can suddenly become significant. He says something that isn't quite how you would have phrased it, doesn't respond exactly as you expected, or has a quality that wasn't on your list, and before you've even had a chance to get to know him, you've already started building a case against him. No one in the world, not even your best friend, would be able to get 100 on a test like this.

Instead, I would suggest shifting your

attention. Rather than spending the date evaluating whether he's the person you've been looking for, ask yourself how you feel when you're with him. Are you enjoying the conversation? Are you curious to hear more? Is there something about him that you find interesting or that you appreciate?

And perhaps most importantly, if you find that the way you're dating now isn't working for you, why not try a change? Instead of an interview-like date, go somewhere fun, do something together, create an opportunity to actually experience each other's company rather than sitting opposite one another, taking turns answering questions.

You don't have to decide after every date whether this is your future husband, you just have to decide whether you'd like to spend a little more time getting to know him. And who knows? Maybe the person whose little quirks and imperfections you're busy noticing today could become the person you can't imagine your life without, your husband and your best friend. ■

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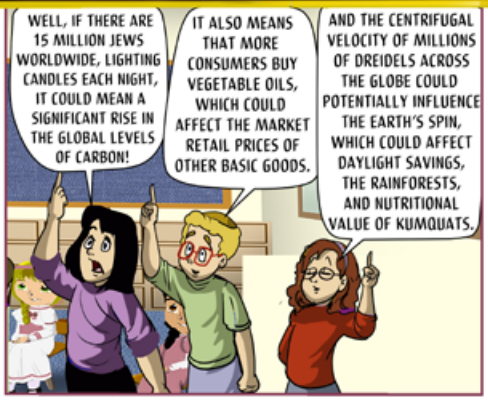


THE Y FILES
(*YERUSHALAYIM)

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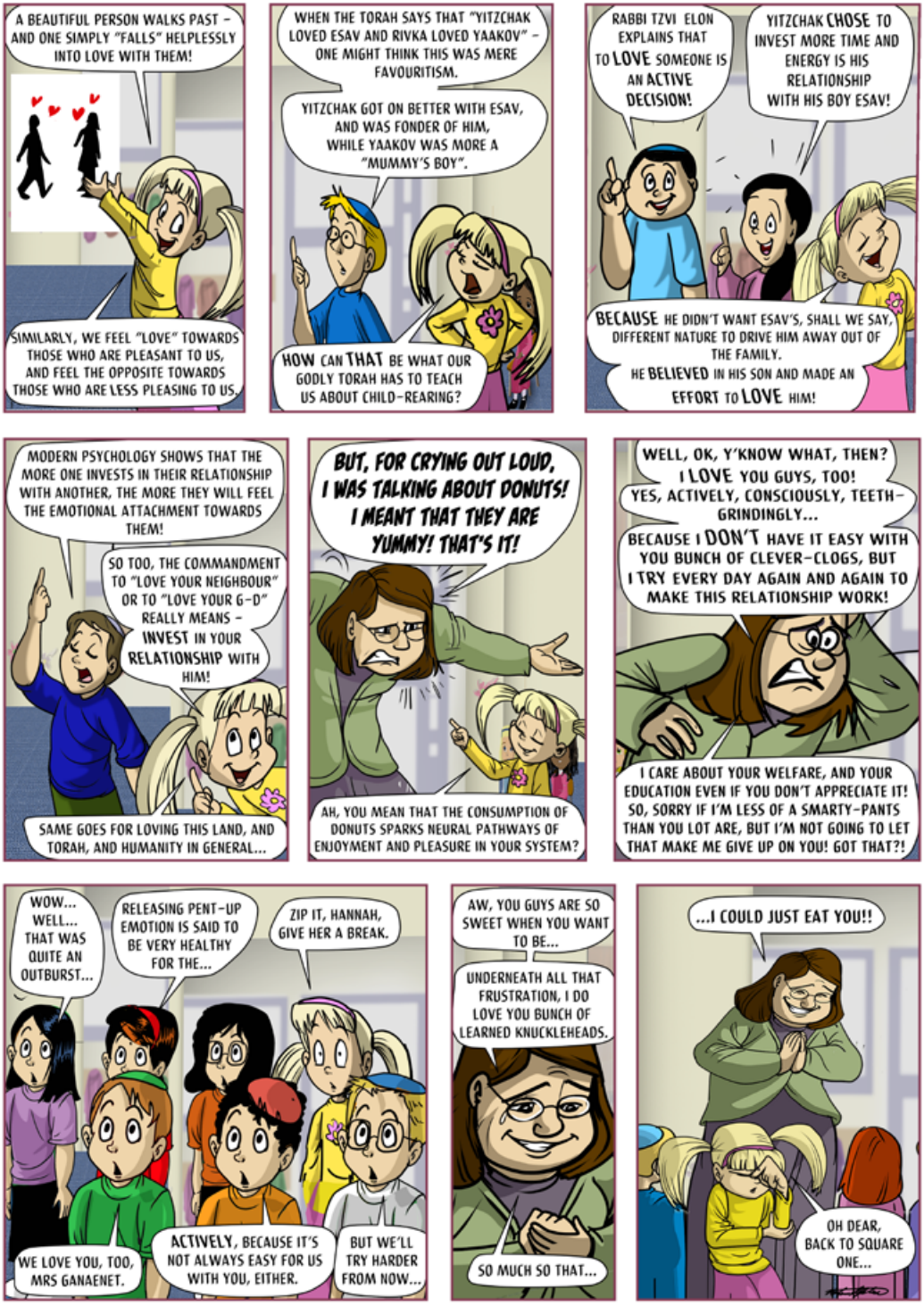











A BEAUTIFUL PERSON WALKS PAST – AND ONE SIMPLY "FALLS" HELPLESSLY INTO LOVE WITH THEM!
SIMILARLY, WE FEEL "LOVE" TOWARDS THOSE WHO ARE PLEASANT TO US, AND FEEL THE OPPOSITE TOWARDS THOSE WHO ARE LESS PLEASING TO US.
WHEN THE TORAH SAYS THAT "YITZCHAK LOVED ESAV AND RIVKA LOVED YAAKOV" – ONE MIGHT THINK THIS WAS MERE FAVOURITISM.
YITZCHAK GOT ON BETTER WITH ESAV, AND WAS FONDER OF HIM, WHILE YAAKOV WAS MORE A "MUMMY'S BOY".
HOW CAN THAT BE WHAT OUR GODLY TORAH HAS TO TEACH US ABOUT CHILD-REARING?
RABBI TZVI ELON EXPLAINS THAT TO LOVE SOMEONE IS AN ACTIVE DECISION!
YITZCHAK CHOSE TO INVEST MORE TIME AND ENERGY IS HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS BOY ESAV!
BECAUSE HE DIDN'T WANT ESAV'S, SHALL WE SAY, DIFFERENT NATURE TO DRIVE HIM AWAY OUT OF THE FAMILY.
HE BELIEVED IN HIS SON AND MADE AN EFFORT TO LOVE HIM!
MODERN PSYCHOLOGY SHOWS THAT THE MORE ONE INVESTS IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH ANOTHER, THE MORE THEY WILL FEEL THE EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT TOWARDS THEM!
SO TOO, THE COMMANDMENT TO "LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR" OR TO "LOVE YOUR G-D" REALLY MEANS – INVEST IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM!
SAME GOES FOR LOVING THIS LAND, AND TORAH, AND HUMANITY IN GENERAL...
BUT, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, I WAS TALKING ABOUT DONUTS! I MEANT THAT THEY ARE YUMMY! THAT'S IT!
AH, YOU MEAN THAT THE CONSUMPTION OF DONUTS SPARKS NEURAL PATHWAYS OF ENJOYMENT AND PLEASURE IN YOUR SYSTEM?
WELL, OK, Y'KNOW WHAT, THEN? I LOVE YOU GUYS, TOO! YES, ACTIVELY, CONSCIOUSLY, TEETH-GRINDINGLY...
BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE IT EASY WITH YOU BUNCH OF CLEVER-CLOGS, BUT I TRY EVERY DAY AGAIN AND AGAIN TO MAKE THIS RELATIONSHIP WORK!
I CARE ABOUT YOUR WELFARE, AND YOUR EDUCATION EVEN IF YOU DON'T APPRECIATE IT! SO, SORRY IF I'M LESS OF A SMARTY-PANTS THAN YOU LOT ARE, BUT I'M NOT GOING TO LET THAT MAKE ME GIVE UP ON YOU! GOT THAT?!
WOW... WELL... THAT WAS QUITE AN OUTBURST...
RELEASING PENT-UP EMOTION IS SAID TO BE VERY HEALTHY FOR THE...
ZIP IT, HANNAH, GIVE HER A BREAK.
WE LOVE YOU, TOO, MRS GANAENET.
ACTIVELY, BECAUSE IT'S NOT ALWAYS EASY FOR US WITH YOU, EITHER.
BUT WE'LL TRY HARDER FROM NOW...
AW, YOU GUYS ARE SO SWEET WHEN YOU WANT TO BE...
UNDERNEATH ALL THAT FRUSTRATION, I DO LOVE YOU BUNCH OF LEARNED KNUCKLEHEADS.
SO MUCH SO THAT...
...I COULD JUST EAT YOU!!
OH DEAR, BACK TO SQUARE ONE...



RABBI YOSEF GINSBERG
REGIONAL DIRECTOR, NCSY ISRAEL

TWO FOR THE PRICE OF ONE

The beautiful and wondrous Parsha of Toldot opens up with the very beginnings of a new generation. It tells of the offspring of Avraham and immediately goes into the beginning of the next generation being created by Yitzchak Avinu and Rivka Imenu. Even before they enter the world, it goes into detail about the twin pregnancy of Rivka and the eternal fight between them ("Vyitrotzitzu Habanim B'kirbah"–"The children agitated within her") that began in the womb. Even before they had names and identities (Yaakov and Eisav), Hashem Himself in Pasuk 23 of Perek 25 tells how there are two nations and two regimes and how one will be mightier than the other. It then follows with relatively great detail about the birth of the two sons and how they looked and the reason for their names.

You may then be disappointed to discover that the next Pasuk, 27, skips over the childhood of Yaakov and Eisav and goes straight into "Vayigdilu Hanearim – The boys grew up," describing how Esav was an 'animal trapper' and 'man of the field' while Yaakov was 'simple' and 'sat in tents'. With all the detail of their coming into this world, where is their childhood?!

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, in a controversial commentary, tells us how the Torah is hinting to us a lesson in education (especially with our children). According to the Pesukim, if we look at the two personalities in the beginning of the Parsha, without bias, they seem to be different, but not necessarily good or bad. It's only when they grow up that we see things play out. Mishlei tells us to "Chanoch l'naar al pi darko" – "bring up each child according to his/her own way". Rav Hirsch brings up how every child is different, yet Yitzchak and Rivka brought up their children in the same way. If they had educated Esav NOT in the way of Yitzchak, but rather in the way in which 'a man of the field' should be educated, Yitzchak would still have been great, and Esav could have been just as great in his own way. He says those Pesukim of their childhood are missing since the education was focused on the result of their children and not necessarily on their everyday needs.

While I don't know if I could agree with such a claim made on our holy foremother and forefather, the message, I believe, is deep and correct. The way of education is not to force the Torah onto our children, but to help find our children's place within

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the Torah.

May we all be Zoche to find ourselves in the Torah and in the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash speedily in our days.

Shabbat Shalom



OVADYA BURG
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WHO AM I?

This parsha starts with the pasuk וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת יִצְחָק, בֶּן-אַבְרָהָם: אַבְרָהָם, הוֹלִיד אֶת-יִצְחָק. Why does the Torah need to mention that Avraham is Yitzchak's father? We already know that from the last sentence.

So, Rashi says it says Avraham fathered Yitzchak because the scoffers of that generation claimed that Avimelech was the one who had fathered Sarah's child. That's why Avraham's face was made to look like Yitzchak's, so that all would see that Yitzchak looked like Avraham and thereby recognize that Avraham was his father.

My opinion on the pasuk is that Yitzchak is asking himself, "Who am I? Am I Yitzchak, just the son of Avraham, or Yitzchak, the father of Yaakov and the Jewish nation?"

Everyone asks themselves at some point in their life, "Who am I? What will I be? Will I be the next great one, or will I be just another Jew?" Everyone has the power to be the next Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov; the question is what they will do with it. Based on this idea, we can now understand the two parts of the pasuk. אברהם הוליד את יצחק means that Yitzchak was born into Avraham's home and brought up and educated by his father according to his ideology. אלה תולדות יצחק בן אברהם means Yitzchak took his father's ideology and added to it from his perspective and vision for the Jewish nation, and handed down both ideas to the next generation.

We, too, can take the ideals from our parents and add our experiences growing up in Israel, and make our contribution to our generation and the next. ■

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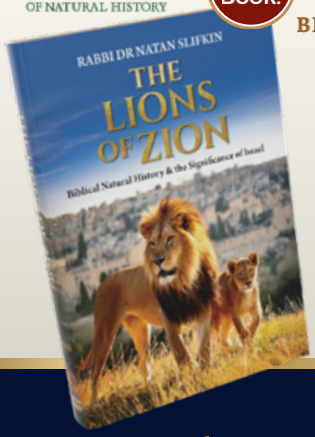
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