

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON TOLDOS - 5760

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From: Rabbi Yissocher Frand[SMTP:ryfrand@torah.org]

"RavFrand" List - RABBI FRAND ON PARSHAS TOLDOS

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 215, V'Sain Tal U'Matar. Good Shabbos! Visit <http://www.yadychiel.org/> or send e-mail to tapes@yadychiel.org ! Special Announcement: New Book By Rabbi Frand: "Listen To Your Messages -- And Other Observations On Contemporary Jewish Life" [Mesorah / Art Scroll]

Who Is The Wise One? He Who Recognizes That He Was Stupid

Parshas Toldos contains the story of Eisav selling the birthright to Yaakov. After the transaction, the Torah uses the expression "VaYivez Eisav es haBechorah." [And Eisav scorned the birthright.] [Bereshis 25:34] Rash"i explains that this expression is testifying to Eisav's wickedness.

It is obvious from the context of the narrative that Eisav scorned the birthright. This added expression tells us that there was an additional scorning -- over and above that implicit in the sale itself.

Rav Leib Chassman tells us that this pasuk [verse] provides an important insight into human personality: When we do irrational or foolish acts, we compound our folly by attempting to rationalize what we have done. Nobody wants to believe that he is an idiot or that he has done something stupid. So when people realize that they have done something foolish, what do they do? Invent a philosophy! People will invent a philosophy to rationalize their deeds.

In other words, Eisav was starving -- hungry as a bear. His stomach was driving him. He did not evaluate what he was doing. "Don't talk to me about the birthright -- just give me something to eat." After finishing the lentil soup, he realized that he did a foolish thing. The human mind needs to rationalize its actions. "It wasn't worth it anyhow. The birthright was worthless! I would do it again!" "VaYivez Eisav es haBechorah" is the human mind's necessary rationalization to justify its own foolish actions.

We twist ourselves into pretzels and invent the most ridiculous philosophies to convince ourselves that we are not foolish. "I'm the one who got the best of the deal. The birthright is not worth a pot of soup."

This is so true. We all do stupid things once in a while. But the chochom (wise person) is not the one who never does anything foolish. The chochom is the one who, after doing something foolish, can look back and recognize that it was a mistake. "I was, in fact, stupid." The fool, on the other hand, invents philosophies to perpetuate his errors, so that he does not need to face his mistakes.

Kedushah [Holiness] -- It's the Real Thing

The Torah describes that Yaakov dressed up in the garments of his brother Eisav, and entered his blind father's room. "Yitzchak smelled his clothing" (begadav) and proclaimed, "See the aroma of my son is like the aroma of the field that G-d has blessed" [27:27].

The Medrash comments that the pasuk which we translated "Yitzchak smelled his clothing" should not be interpreted based on the word begadim [clothing] but rather based on the word bogdim [from boged -- a traitor]. Yitzchak 'smelled' (i.e. -- he sensed through Ruach HaKodesh [Divine Inspiration]) the traitors of the Jewish people. Yitzchak knew prophetically that there were descendants of Yaakov Avinu who would be rebellious and traitors to G-d. Therefore, Yitzchak was inspired to give Yaakov a blessing.

What is the meaning of the Medrash? Why did a negative prophecy inspire Yitzchak to bless Yaakov? This Medrash can be understood

B'S'DBased on the example that the Medrash then relates. The Medrash gives the following example of the type of traitors that Yitzchak saw, who inspired him to give the blessing.

The Medrash relates an incident with an individual named Yosef Meshisa. When the Romans came to destroy the Beis HaMikdash [Holy Temple], they did not know their way around. They needed a guide. They took a Jew -- a traitor to his G-d and a traitor to his nation -- to help them out and show them around the Beis HaMikdash. They told him that as payment for the 'tour' he could take whatever he wanted from the "spoils" of the Beis HaMikdash.

Yosef Meshisa went in and took out the Golden Menorah. Imagine how low a Jew can sink to do such a thing, to steal the Menorah itself! However, the Romans told him that it was not appropriate for a commoner to have such an item in his house. "Go back and take something else -- anything else, just not the Menorah."

Yosef Meshisa replied, "I can't go back in." They promised him that the income from the next three years of tax collection would be his, but he persisted. "I cannot go back in. Is it not enough that I angered my G-d and defiled His Temple one time, I should have to do it again? I can't do it."

The Romans tortured him until he died. As long as he was alive, while being tortured, he mourned "Woe unto me, for I have angered my Creator".

The Ponevezher Rav asked, "What happened here? What made Yosef Meshisa do Teshuvah? He was apparently a Jew who had no sensitivity whatsoever to Jewish values, and then he turned around and was prepared to die as a martyr. What transpired that transformed him from a wicked person to a righteous person?"

The Ponevezher Rav answered that the very fact that Yosef Meshisa entered into a holy place transformed him. He was exposed to holiness. He went into the Beis HaMikdash for the worst of reasons and with the worst of intentions -- but he walked out a different person. There is something real about holiness and purity. Mere exposure to the presence of the Shechinah [G-d's Divine Presence] can change a person for life.

That is what happened to Yosef Meshisa -- he was exposed to something holy.

This, says the Medrash, is an example of the 'traitors' that Yitzchak perceived. It is possible to have a Jew that is so removed from his G-d that he can willingly enter the Temple, help the enemy, and take the Menorah -- and yet that same Jew can turn around on a dime, do Teshuva [repent], and say "No more. I have done enough. Kill me, torture me -- but I won't do it again."

That power of Yaakov's descendants, to raise themselves from the depths of lack of spirituality to its greatest heights, is the trait of the 'bogdim' that Yitzchak saw, that inspired him to give the blessing. This is what the Medrash relates. It is an amazing Medrash.

Lest one should claim that this power is unique to the Beis HaMikdash, lest one claim that today there exists nothing comparable which can so instantaneously turn a wicked individual into a righteous one, I will tell you a true story.

The story is about a Jew named Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929). Franz Rosenzweig recorded this true story in his book, The Star of Redemption.

Franz Rosenzweig was a totally secular Jew. He was a prolific author and a great philosopher, but totally secular -- to the extent that he was preparing to convert to Christianity as part of his engagement to a non-Jewish woman. He was a Captain in the German Cavalry in World War I, and was stationed in a Polish town on what happened to be the night of Yom Kippur. As an observer, he went into a Polish Shteible [small synagogue] on the night of Kol Nidre.

Franz Rosenzweig walked into the Shteible just to see what it was like, strictly out of curiosity. He walked out of there a Baal Teshuvah [a "returnee" to religion]. He broke his engagement and became a religious

Jew. This was not in America in 1990 where it is a common phenomenon for Jews to return to their religion and become Baalei Teshuvah, but in Germany in 1915, where it was almost unheard of for a secular Jew to become religious.

What did it? What was it? It was the same as with Yosef Meshisa. He was exposed to Kedusha. A person who is totally secular, or even anti-religious, or even a person who is prepared to adopt another religion, who goes to a shul -- not to pray and not to participate, but merely to observe... Someone who is merely exposed to such a place of holiness, on such a night of holiness -- that can do something to a person's soul. It can change a person. It is real.

Holiness, Kedusha, is real. Purity, Taharah, is real. And through his exposure to Kedusha and Taharah, Rozenzweig became a different person. This does not require exposure to the Beis HaMikdash. It just takes a minyan of honest Jews praying sincerely to the Master of the World. That can change a man forever.

Personalities and Sources Rav Leib Chassman -- (1869-1935) [Ohr Yahel]; Mashgiach of Chevron Yeshiva, Israel. Ponevezher Rav (1886-1969) [Rav Yosef Kahaneman]; Lithuania; Bnei Brak, Israel. Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington twerskyd@aol.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Yerushalayim dhoffman@torah.org Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 for further information. RavFrاند, Copyright 1999 by Rabbi Y. Frand and Project Genesis, Inc. Project Genesis: Torah on the Information Superhighway learn@torah.org 17 Warren Road, Suite 2B <http://www.torah.org/> Baltimore, MD 21208 (410) 602-1350 FAX: 602-1351

From: Yeshivat Har Etzion's Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash yhe@vbm-torah.org Subject: PARSHAT TOLDOT - shiur [RABBI MENACHEM LEIBTAG] Dedicated in memory of Chana Friedman A"H on her 4th yearzeit by her brother and sister-in-law Allen and Rachel Friedman and sister and brother-in-law Sharon and Michael Goldberg.

THE TANACH STUDY CENTER [<http://www.tanach.org>] In Memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag

PARSHAT TOLDOT [Note: this shiur is also available in new format on the Web Site]

Why does Yitzchak prefer Esav over Yaakov? It is commonly understood that Yitzchak can bless only ONE of his two sons, EITHER Yaakov OR Esav, but not both. Should this understanding be correct, then indeed Yitzchak's choice of Esav over Yaakov strikes us as quite disturbing. However, one could suggest that Yitzchak actually plans on blessing BOTH his sons. If so, we can more readily understand why he wished to bless Esav first. In this week's shiur, we explore this possibility. INTRODUCTION In our series thus far on Sefer Breishit, the process of "bechira" - God's designation of Avraham and his offspring to become His special nation - has emerged as the primary theme. God promised Avraham numerous times that his offspring ("zera") would become a great nation in a special land ("aretz"). Even though each promise added a unique dimension to Avraham's destiny, they all feature one form of the key phrase: "I'ZAR'ACHA natati et ha'ARETZ ha'zot..." - to your OFFSPRING, I have given this LAND" [See 12:7, 13:15, 15:18, 17:8]

Although these divine blessings suggest that this nation is to emerge from all of Avraham's offspring, God informed Avraham that specifically Yitzchak, Sarah's only son, has been chosen to fulfill this destiny: "For it is [only] through Yitzchak that there shall be called for you ZARA [your offspring]." (21:12)

God Himself later confirms this blessing to Yitzchak, when He forbids him to leave the land during a famine: "Reside in this land and I will bless you... for I will assign all this LAND to YOU and to YOUR OFFSPRING." (26:2-5)

What will happen when Yitzchak has children? Will only ONE of his children be chosen, as was the case with Avraham, or will ALL his

offspring be chosen? Considering that the reason for God's "bechira" (selection) of Avraham was for his offspring to become a NATION (see 12:1-2), obviously this 'filtering' process of choosing only ONE son over the others could not continue forever. Should only one 'favorite son' be chosen in each generation, a nation could obviously never develop. Sooner or later, this 'filtering process' must end, and an entire family must be chosen. Thanks to our 20/20 hindsight, we know that this process ends after THREE generations (Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov). However, the Avot themselves may have been unaware of when this "bechira" process was to end. With this in mind, we can begin our shiur.

ALL IN THE FAMILY Yitzchak has no reason to assume that only ONE son would be chosen and the other rejected. Unlike Yitzchak and Yishmael, who had DIFFERENT mothers, both Yaakov and Esav are born from the same mother. What more, they are twins! Therefore, it is only logical for Yitzchak to assume that BOTH Yaakov and Esav will join the "chosen family." Furthermore, even if there is some divine reason to choose only one son, it should be GOD's choice and NOT Yitzchak's! After all, God alone had been involved in this BECHIRA process heretofore. HE had chosen Avraham and HE alone had chosen Yitzchak over Avraham's other son. Without a specific divine command, why would Yitzchak even consider making such a bold decision? Thus, Yitzchak most likely believed that both Yaakov and Esav were included within the divine promise to Avraham's progeny. So why does Yitzchak intend to bless only ONE of them?

"BRACHA" OR "BECHIRA"? To answer this question, we must differentiate between TWO basic types of blessings found in Sefer Breishit. For the sake of convenience, we will refer to one as BECHIRA and the other as BRACHA. Let's explain: * BECHIRA * We use the term BECHIRA (selection) to describe God's blessing of "ZERA v'ARETZ" to the Avot, the privilege of fathering God's special nation. BECHIRA implies that only one son is chosen while the others are rejected. As we explained, this process began with God's designation of Avraham Avinu and continued with His choice of Yitzchak over Yishmael. It is not clear, however, when this bechira process will end.

* BRACHA * We will use the name BRACHA to describe a father's blessing for the personal destiny (e.g. prosperity, power) of his sons. Noah, for example, bestows a BRACHA on each of his three sons (9:24-27). He does not choose one son over the others to become a special nation. Rather, he blesses (or curses) each son based on his individual potential. The classic example of BRACHA (as opposed to BECHIRA) is Yaakov Avinu's blessings to his twelve sons prior to his death, in Parshat Vayechi (see 49:1-28). Clearly, Yaakov does not choose one or several of his children to become God's special nation. Rather, he bestows a blessing of personal destiny upon each son, according to his understanding of each son's individual character and potential (see 49:28). Thus, according to these definitions, BRACHA is administered by a father, while BECHIRA is established by God.

YITZCHAK'S BRACHA TO ESAV With this distinction in mind, we may now rephrase our original question: what kind of blessing does Yitzchak intend to give Esav? Is it a blessing of BRACHA or BECHIRA? Considering that Yitzchak has no apparent reason to choose only one son, we should expect that his intended blessing to Esav was one of BRACHA (and not BECHIRA).

To determine if this assumption is indeed correct, we need only examine the actual blessing itself - the blessing intended for Esav but deceptively seized by Yaakov: "May God give you of the dew of heaven and the FAT of the land, and an abundance of GRAIN and WINE. Other nations shall SERVE you and bow down to you; be MASTER over your brother, and let your mother's sons bow down to you ..." (27:28-29)

The blessing of prosperity and leadership is the classic example of BRACHA. It cannot be BECHIRA, as it does NOT contain the phrase of "ZERA v'ARETZ." [In fact, this blessing strongly resembles the

blessings of prosperity and leadership which Yaakov himself later bestows upon Yehuda (see 49:8) and Yosef (see 49:25-26).] But why does Yitzchak (intend to) bestow this blessing only on Esav? Why can't both sons be blessed?

THE RIGHT MAN FOR THE JOB As explained above, Yitzchak likely expects that both his children will become 'Am Yisrael' [or, more precisely, 'Am Yitzchak']. This nation, like any other, requires political leadership to be successful. Now that his end is near, Yitzchak realizes that the time has come to appoint ONE of his sons as the national LEADER. Esav - the "ish sadeh" [a man of the world (see 25:27)] - is clearly the most suitable candidate for this job. [A "macher" is necessary for a country to function properly. Also, realistically speaking, Yaakov & Esav are over sixty years old, and while Esav is married with children, has a job, and can take care of himself and others, Yaakov is still single and 'living at home.' It is readily understandable, then, why Yitzchak chooses Esav to become the family provider and leader.]

Undoubtedly, Yitzchak has a blessing in store for Yaakov as well - most probably one that involves spiritual leadership. Yaakov - the "ish tam yoshev ohalim," a man of the book (see 25:27) - can provide the family with spiritual guidance. [This 'theoretical blessing' to Yaakov resembles the ultimate responsibility of shevet Levi (see Devarim 33:10).] However, without FIRST establishing a nation (through Esav), there would be no one around for Yaakov to guide. [The fact that Yitzchak had called upon Esav, his eldest, to receive his blessing FIRST, does not rule out the possibility that he may have intended to bless Yaakov afterward. Note that in Parshat Va'ychi Yaakov FIRST blesses Yosef before proceeding to bless all twelve children.]

So what went wrong? Why does Rivka intervene? Why must Yaakov 'steal' Esav's BRACHA? Or, to put it more bluntly, is Rivka simply standing up for her 'favorite son' or did she perceive the situation differently? To answer this question, we must return to the beof the Parsha. **RIVKA KNOWS BEST** Rivka knows something that Yitzchak doesn't. Recall that Rivka suffered from an unusually difficult pregnancy and seeks God for an explanation (see 25:22). God's answer to HER (and not to Yitzchak!) already alludes to the fact that the BECHIRA process has not yet ended: "And God answered HER saying: There are TWO NATIONS in your womb, and TWO SEPARATE PEOPLES shall issue from your body. One people shall be mightier than the other, and the older shall serve the YOUNGER." (25:23)

Rivka here learns that her twins are destined to become TWO NATIONS, and as such, only ONE - the younger one (see 25:23, "v'ra'v ya'avod tza'ir") - can be chosen. Thus, Rivka knows that YAAKOV is destined to receive BECHIRA, and not Esav. Yitzchak, however, is unaware of this prophecy. [Note 25:23: "va'yomer Hashem LAH" - to HER, and not to him!]

It is unclear why Rivka never informs Yitzchak of this prophecy. She may assume that Yitzchak also knows, and only later realizes that he doesn't (see Ramban 27:4). Alternatively, she may have thought that God specifically wants ONLY HER to know, and NOT Yitzchak. Whatever the reason may be, each parent has a different perception of their children's destiny as they grow up. Yitzchak ASSUMES that both Yaakov and Esav are chosen, while Rivka KNOWS that it will only be Yaakov.

RIVKA'S DILEMMA After overhearing Yitzchak's intention to bless Esav (27:5), Rivka now faces a serious dilemma: * Does Yitzchak plan to bless Esav with the BECHIRA (or that God grant him the BECHIRA)? If so, she must act quickly, as the future of Am Yisrael rests on her shoulders. * Does Yitzchak think that BOTH children are chosen? Is he giving a BRACHA of leadership to Esav? The result of this blessing could be disastrous! * Can Rivka just tell Yitzchak that he is making a mistake? Is it too late? Will he listen? Would he be willing now, after so many years, to change his perception?

Rivka has limited time to act, yet feels responsible to the prophecy

she had received and hence obligated to rectify the situation. In her eyes, this may have been the very reason why God had originally granted her this information. Unfortunately, however, Rivka must resort to trickery to ensure that Yaakov receives the blessing. Now that we have explained Rivka's course of action, we must now explain Yitzchak's.

YITZCHAK'S BLESSINGS After Yitzchak grants Yaakov (whom he thought was Esav) a BRACHA of prosperity and leadership, the real Esav arrives and begs his father for another blessing (see 27:34,36). Yitzchak's initial response is that the special blessing intended for Esav (prosperity and power) had already been given to Yaakov (27:35,37). Esav cannot receive any other BRACHA, since the BRACHA of spirituality, originally intended for Yaakov, is unsuitable for Esav. However, since Yitzchak still assumes that both sons are chosen, in the end he is able to grant Esav another BRACHA. [This extra blessing ("tal ha'shamayim u'shmaney ha'aretz"/ see 27:38-39) speaks of prosperity, which can be shared by both brothers. The other blessing, that of political leadership ("hvei gvir l'achicha.../see 27:29), can be given to only one son. Yitzchak therefore tells Esav that he can obtain this blessing only should Yaakov's leadership collapse (see 27:40).]

What about the BECHIRA? When does Yitzchak find out the truth?

CLEARING THE AIR Undoubtedly, Rivka must have finally explained her actions to Yitzchak after the incident of the brachot. Now, after hearing the details of God's earlier prophecy to Rivka, Yitzchak finally realizes that only ONE son, Yaakov, is to be chosen. To his dismay, he must now accept the fact that the BECHIRA process must continue into yet a third generation. Therefore, before Yaakov departs to Padan Aram in search of a wife, Yitzchak grants him one last blessing. Here, we find the classic blessing of BECHIRA: "May God grant the BLESSING OF AVRAHAM [i.e. BECHIRA] to you and your OFFSPRING, that you may inherit the LAND which Elokim has given to Avraham..."(28:4)

Note once again the key phrase - "zera v'aretz" - of the BECHIRA blessing! In contrast to the BRACHA of prosperity and power that Yitzchak had meant to give Esav, this blessing involves the familiar concept of God's special NATION inheriting a special LAND. [If you have been following the shiur, you should now ask, how can Yitzchak grant a blessing of BECHIRA - is that not God's decision? The answer, however, is simple. Read 28:4 carefully - "v'kel sha-kai y'varech otcha..." Yitzchak does not grant Yaakov the BECHIRA. He rather blesses Yaakov that GOD should grant him the BECHIRA - and that's exactly what takes place a few psukim later, at the beginning of Parshat Va'yetze!]

MA'ASE AVOT, SIMAN LA'BANIM Despite our 'technical' explanation for Yitzchak and Rivka's behavior in this week's Parsha, a more fundamental question remains: Why must the BECHIRA process be so complex? In other words, why is it that at the very inception of our national history, trickery must be employed for us to arrive at our divine destiny? Although this is a very difficult question to answer, one could suggest that this entire episode may carry an important message concerning how to relate to the nature of our physical world and leadership. Indeed, to become a nation, there are times that the 'aggressive' qualities of an "ish sadeh" are needed. However, there is a popular notion that these physical responsibilities should be delegated to the "ish sadeh" and to one who is ONLY an "ish sadeh", leaving the spiritual realm alone to the delicate "ish tam". Yitzchak's original intention to bless Esav may reflect this notion. After all, Yaakov, the "ish tam," was not yet fit to receive the blessing of prosperity and leadership. Therefore, to secure that blessing, it was necessary for Yaakov to first don the 'hands of Esav.' To establish God's special nation, there are times when it is necessary for the "ish tam" to take on the responsibilities of the "ish sadeh". Separating these responsibilities between two sons reflects the notion that spirituality cannot be found in the physical world of establishing a nation. At the time of these

"brachot", Yaakov himself is not yet ready to become an "ish sadeh". But sooner or later he will need to be able to blend these qualities. Later in his life, before he returns to Eretz Yisrael, Yaakov must finally confront the 'angel of Esav,' this time without trickery, to prove that he is indeed worthy of that leadership task. Nonetheless, it is significant that the primal character of Am Yisrael is that of Yaakov, the "ish tam." Even though many situations in our history will arise when we must don the 'hands of Esav' - when we must act as an "ish sadeh" - our dominant trait must always remain that of an "ish tam." For when Am Yisrael enjoys prosperity and political leadership, it is only for them to provide mankind with spiritual guidance. Throughout our history, we must periodically 'don the hands of Esav,' but our voice must always remain 'the voice of Yaakov!' [see 27:22]

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Sunday November 14 A Day of Learning Tanach with Rabbi Menachem Leibtag Cosponsored by all the Orthodox Shuls in Teaneck and Bergenfield The shiurim will be given at Rinat Yisrael 389 W Englewood Ave Teaneck, NJ

The schedule is as follows: 11:00 preparation for first shiur
12:00 - 1:20 First shiur: Tzedek Umishpat: Following a Biblical Theme from Bereishit thru Neviim Achronim
1:20 - 2:30 Lunch 2:30 - 2:45 Introduction to the Mekorot for shiur
2:45 - 3:45 Preparation for second shiur 3:45 - 4:00 Mincha
4:00 - 5:30 Second shiur: Understanding Psukei DEzimra: An Analysis of Sefer Tehillim which will illuminate the Reasons Behind Chazal's Choice of What We Say Each Day
(Someone who has not had a chance to prepare will be able to understand shiurim)

From: Rabbi Kalman Packouz [SMTP:packouz@aish.edu]
Subject: Shabbat Shalom! Toldot ...

DVAR TORAH: based on Growth Through Torah by RABBI ZELIG PLISKIN The Torah states, "And the first came out red, all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esav (Esau)." (Genesis 25:25) Esau became a murderer and his red hair became associated with a personality that might lead to murder. (Even today many people think of red-haired people as passionate, sometime quick to anger personalities.) The Midrash, (Braishit Rabbah 63) relates that when the prophet Shmuel went to appoint David to be the king of Israel, he saw that David was admoni, of ruddy complexion. He became very frightened and said, "He too will be a murderer like Esau." The Almighty told Shmuel that there was no need to be afraid. When Esau killed it was in cold blood, but David would only take a life to carry out the just decisions of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish Supreme Court). We see from this Midrash that when someone has a basic personality tendency it is a reality of his nature that he will be what he truly is. However, a person has free will to choose how this tendency will be manifested. (The head of the FBI Behavioral Profiling Unit once said that no serial killer was so compelled to murder that he did it in front of a policeman.) Esau's tendency towards bloodshed led him down an evil path. David, on the other hand, was a mighty warrior who would utilize his natural tendencies for elevated purposes. This concept is expressed very clearly by the Vilna Gaon: "A person should not go completely against his nature even if it is bad, for he will not succeed. He should merely train himself to follow the straight path in accordance with his nature. For example, someone who has an inclination to spill blood should train himself to become a ritual slaughterer or a mohel (ritual circumciser)."

Friday, November 12, 1999 SHABBAT SHALOM: Human accident, Divine plan By RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

"And Jacob said to Rebecca his mother: 'Behold Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man.' My father will perhaps feel me and I shall seem to him as a mocker, and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing.'" (Gen. 27:11-12)

This week's portion of Toldot is a treasure house of family intrigue. Rebecca orchestrates an entire subterfuge in which her younger son Jacob dons the garb and character of his brother Esau in order to fool his blind father Isaac into giving him the birthright and blessing. Rebecca's plan requires Jacob's total commitment, and she phrases her entreaties as a "command," (Gen. 27:8). When Jacob pleads that his father will end up cursing him, Rebecca brushes aside that objection by offering to take the curse upon herself.

In the end, Jacob receives the blessing under false pretenses, and this act of deceit colors his entire life.

How can we justify a wife deceiving her husband and a son deceiving his father? Rationalizations exist, of course. Esau is clearly unworthy of the birthright; he married Hittite wives and sold the blessing for a "mess of pottage." Moreover, Rashi points out that when Isaac asks Jacob: "Are you my son Esau?" (Gen. 27:24) he answers: "I am," pauses a bit, and then says "Esau is your first born," technically having avoided the bold-faced lie. The Ktav V'Hakabbala also finds more than one textual indication indicating Jacob's heavy heart in this matter.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that a deception took place; Rebecca orchestrated it and Jacob perpetrated it. Do we deny this fact, painting the episode in translucent colors, or do we ask what the Torah wants to teach us by recording it?

Prof. Nehama Leibowitz z"l provides the most profound answer to our question. She postulates the "double track" theory of Jewish theology, suggesting that the Bible speaks on two planes: the human and the Divine. On the human level, there is absolutely no justification for deception. Jacob ends up working seven years for his beloved Rachel, only to be deceived by Laban who substitutes the elder sister for the younger. When the son-in-law takes his father-in-law to task, Laban responds: "It is not done in our place to give the younger before the elder" - a clear denigration of Jacob's previous act.

Years later, Jacob's own sons will deceive him, claiming that his beloved Joseph was torn to death by a wild animal, and Joseph's exile in Egypt will correspond to the number of years that Jacob spent away from his own father - measure for measure. Moreover, just as Jacob posed as someone else before his father Isaac, so does Joseph pose as the grand vizier of Egypt before his father Jacob. The Torah doesn't want to whitewash the facts; Esau and Isaac were deceived by Jacob, so Jacob must pay the penalty.

Mother Rebecca also pays a heavy price for having orchestrated the deception: her beloved younger son must leave home. Indeed, the Bible never even records Rebecca's death - although it does record the death of Devora, the nursemaid who actually brought Jacob up. It's quite likely that Jacob came to resent the mother who enticed him into deceiving his father; the Midrash even says that Rebecca's burial was never made public, lest people come to curse her.

So much for the human plane. On the Divine plane, however, a totally different picture emerges. Jacob may be condemned for lying and Rebecca may even be cursed for orchestrating the deception - but as the result of these actions, the Jewish people emerged as the children of Israel, dedicated to morality.

A parallel situation occurs in the story of Joseph. One of the most heinous crimes in the Bible is the brotherly hatred which results in Joseph's being sold as a slave to Egypt. Nevertheless, when Joseph finally reveals his true identity, he declares: "I am Joseph your brother whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be sad or angry [at yourselves], since it was for the preservation [of Israel] that God sent me

before you (Genesis 45:4,5)."

Joseph understands that in addition to the apparent sequence of events in the world below, a supernal design was transpiring simultaneously Above: "So now it was not you that sent me hither but God. He has made me Pharaoh's vizier, director of his entire government and dictator of all Egypt."

How does Joseph know this, and what's the significance of seeing a sibling feud as a cosmic plan?

When Joseph is sent by his father to locate his brothers somewhere in the region of Hebron, the Torah records how an anonymous individual directed him to Dotan where his brothers actually were. But isn't it strange that the Bible would find it necessary to record a simple request for directions, and even stranger that the Midrash should identify the one who gave the directions as the angel Gabriel? But, as Nahmanides explains, Joseph could otherwise have justified returning to his father. It would have been normal for him to turn back, explaining that he had tried to locate them but had no idea where they were.

"Although Joseph had sufficient reason to return to his father, justifying his failure in locating them, he persisted for the honor of his father," explains Nahmanides. "This teaches us further that God's decree is true, and human effort is illusory; God prepared a guide, who didn't necessarily understand his function, to bring Joseph into [his brothers'] hands in order for the wisdom of the Divine to emerge supreme" (Ramban on Gen. 37:15).

What the brothers perpetrated against Joseph was a wicked crime; from the human moral perspective, everything should have been done to prevent it from transpiring. But on the Divine plane, the sale of Joseph brought the Jews to Egypt, and saved the House of Jacob from death by starvation.

There is a Yiddish expression: "Man proposes, God disposes."
Shabbat Shalom

The writer is dean of the Ohr Torah Stone colleges and graduate programs and chief rabbi of Efrat.

<http://www.jpost.com/1999/Supplements/Shabbat/shabbat.xcgi>

From: Yeshivat Har Etzion's Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash
yhe@vbm-torah.org
PARASHAT TOLDOT SICHA OF HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL
SHLIT" A

"Behold, the Scent of my Son..."

Summarized by Rav Eliyahu Blumenzweig

"And [Yitzchak] smelled the scent of [Ya'akov's] CLOTHES ... and he said: Behold - the scent of my SON is like the scent of a field which God has blessed..." At first, we are told that Yitzchak smelled his son's CLOTHES. Why, then, does he mention the scent of his SON in the blessing?

In this connection, we learn in the gemara that Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said of himself that he had not reached Esav's level of fulfillment of the mitzva of honoring parents. Each time Esav came to perform this mitzva, he would change his clothes in honor of his father, while Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel would only change his clothes when he went out to the market. Esav, therefore, excelled in honoring parents, and it seems that this characteristic is apparent in his descendants too - as is evidenced by the story of Dama ben Netina of Ashkelon, who refused to wake his father from his sleep even for all the fortune in the world (Kiddushin 31a).

The mitzva of honoring parents was accepted by Esav and the nations of the world on an intellectual basis - as a logical obligation. Since the number of such mitzvot is limited, they are able to practice them strictly and accurately and to achieve admirable levels in their fulfillment. The nation of Israel, on the other hand, has 613 mitzvot to fulfill, including some which have no apparent logical

explanation, the classic example of which is the red heifer. Therefore, the story of Dama ben Netina stresses the idea that the Sages repaid him the full value of his monetary loss (what he could have earned had he woken his father) in their purchase of his red heifer - as if to purchase, as it were, mitzvot lacking a logical explanation with mitzvot having a sound intellectual basis.

Indeed, those mitzvot which are performed by the Gentile nations out of their own understanding are external actions, performed in accordance with their thinking. For this reason, Esav changes his clothes - since clothes are man's outermost manifestation.

The mitzvot which characterize the nation of Israel, on the other hand, and those in which they excel, come from their innermost nature - whether they have an explanation or not, and under any conditions. They are derived from Israel's very essence, and hence even though Yaakov wears Esav's clothes and surrounds himself with that physicality, his internal essence remains the same and still leaves its imprint. Even when the scent of the hunting clothes enters with Ya'akov, Yitzchak "smells the scent" of his son. The scent of the innermost essence prevails over the outer appearance.

"And he smelled the scent of his clothes: 'Do not read 'begadav' (his clothes) but rather 'bogedav' (his deceivers) - this refers to the sinners among Israel."

If the mitzvot are external then they are dependent on external factors, and when these change, then the mitzvot collapse together with the person's character. If the mitzvot are internal, then even when external factors change, the internal reality remains firm. Ya'akov wears Esav's clothes as a mere garment concealing his internal essence - "the scent of my son" - and all his mitzvot are derived from that essence. It survives and remains forever, in all his descendants - even the sinners among them, who are in truth "garments" concealing the true nature of the nation.

(Originally delivered at Seuda Shelishit, Shabbat Parashat Toldot 5732. Translated by Kaeren Fish.) Copyright (c) 1999 Yeshivat Har Etzion

From: Jeffrey Gross[SMTP:jgross@torah.org]
neustadt@torah.org;jgross@torah.org;genesis@torah.org
BY RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT

A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

Perhaps father will feel me and I shall appear to him as a mocker (27:12)

IS IT EVER PERMITTED TO LIE?

Yaakov Avinu was the amud ha-emes, the Pillar of Truth. Indeed, according to the Talmud(1), the greatest fear that Yaakov Avinu had was that he might encounter life situations where he would be forced to lie. When Rivkah commanded Yaakov to falsely present himself to his blind father as Eisav, he protested, for our Sages(2) compare lying to idol worship. It was only when Rivkah told him that it was the will of Heaven that he be the one to receive the blessings from his father Yitzchak, that Yaakov relented and allowed his mother to disguise him to appear as Eisav. What is the definition of lying? R' Yonah(3) lists nine different categories of lies. In order of severity, they are: People who cheat in business, causing others financial loss; People who exploit others after gaining their trust through deception; People whose lies cause others to lose out on some gain or benefit that was coming to them; People who fabricate stories merely for the sake of lying; People who hold out the promise of giving another person material goods while never intending to follow up on their promise; People who intend to keep a promise but do not honor their commitment; People who claim that they did a favor or a good deed for another when in fact they have not; People who praise themselves for virtues that they do not possess; People who change minor details when retelling an episode.

A careful analysis of these nine categories shows that all of the lies are told either for the purpose of cheating another person, or for self-glorification, etc. R' Yonah, however, does not list those who lie for a "good" purpose or for a "good" reason. Thus, we may ask, is it ever permitted to lie? Throughout Talmudic literature, we find stories about our Sages veering from the truth for "good" reasons(4). Obviously, however, only the poskim can draw practical conclusions from such cases, since these very episodes can be understood on various levels. Moreover, not everything quoted in the Talmud is applied in practical Halachah, as we often rule differently from an opinion stated in the Talmud. The following, however, are some real-life situations with which the poskim deal:

If one is asked information about a matter that is supposed to remain secret, he may answer, "I don't know"(5). Similarly, although one is not allowed to lie in order to avoid telling bad news(6), it is permitted to say, "I don't know"(7).

During an appeal for funds, one is not allowed to announce a donation in an amount greater

than he is planning to give, even if the aim is to spur others to commit themselves to larger donations(8).

A wealthy man is permitted to lie about his wealth if he fears "the evil eye" (ayin ha-ra) or if he does not want to arouse jealousy(9).

When collecting funds for a poor Torah scholar, one may say that he is collecting for hachnasas kallah, marrying off a bride, if he thinks that people will be more receptive to that cause(10). It is also permitted to raise funds for hachnasas kallah even when the collection is primarily for the benefit of the groom(11).

It is prohibited to lie for the sake of financial gain, even when no stealing is involved(12).

If one fears that a package will be mishandled, it is permitted to write "glass" on it, even though it does not contain any glass(13).

If one sees that his wife will be late for Shabbos, he is permitted to tell her that the hour is later than it really is. This is permitted only when it is clear that she is procrastinating. If, however, she is rushing and harried and telling her that the hour is later than it really is will only pressure her further, it is forbidden to do so(14). If, by refusing to receive a visitor, the visitor's feelings will be hurt, one is permitted to leave instructions saying that he is not home(15). One should not, however, instruct a minor to lie about his parents' whereabouts, since that teaches the child to lie.

FOOTNOTES: 1 Makkos 24a. 2 Sanhedrin 92a. 3 Sha'arei Teshuvah 3:178-186. 4 See, for example, Berachos (43b) - episode with R' Papa; Pesachim (112a) - attributing a statement to a fabricated source so that it will be readily accepted; Sukkah (34b) - quoting Shemuel's threat to the haddasim merchants; Yevamos (65b) - lying for the sake of peace; Bava Metzia (23b) - departing from the truth for the sake of humility, modesty or discretion; Bava Metzia (30a) - episode with R' Yishmael. There are many other such examples. 5 Harav S.Z. Auerbach and Harav S.Y. Elyashiv quoted in Titen Emes l'Yaakov, pg. 76. 6 Y.D. 402:12. 7 Harav S.Z. Auerbach, Harav S.Y. Elyashiv and Harav Y.Y. Fisher quoted in Titen Emes l'Yaakov pg. 89. See also Metzudos David, II Shemuel 18:29. 8 Minchas Yitzchak 3:97, based on Maharsha, Sukkah 29a. 9 Harav S.Y. Elyashiv quoted in Titen Emes l'Yaakov, pg. 78. 10 Teshuvos Mishneh Sachir (end of vol. 1) quoting a story with the Chasam Sofer. Part of the ruling is based on the Midrash Rabbah (Ki-Sisa) that compares a talmid chacham to a kallah. In that story the Chasam Sofer allowed a tzedakah fund intended for hachnasas kallah to support a well-known talmid chacham. 11 Harav S.Z. Auerbach quoted in Titen Emes l'Yaakov, pg. 55. 12 R' Yonah (Sha'arei Teshuvah 180,186); Rashes"n (Shabbos 140b) and Sdei Chemed (vol. 4, pg. 87) opposing the Maharsha (Shabbos 140) who implies that it is permissible; Chafetz Chayim (Sefas Tamim 2). 13 Harav S.Y. Elyashiv, Harav Y.Y. Fisher and Harav C. Kanievsky, quoted in Titen Emes l'Yaakov, pg. 66. 14 Harav S.Y. Elyashiv quoted in Titen Emes l'Yaakov, pg. 86. 15 Harav S.Z. Auerbach and Harav S.Y. Elyashiv quoted in Titen Emes l'Yaakov, pg. 76. See also Machatzis ha-Shekel O.C. 156 which states that if one has no time to answer a question about a particular subject, he may say that he is not learning that subject now and cannot answer the question.

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From: Yated USA [SMTP:yated-usa@ttec.com]

Parsha Perspectives By Death Do Us Part by RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

There were a few words spoken in this week's parsha that would normally shake a person to change his entire perspective of life. When spoken with the earnest they normally are afforded, they can change the face of a family, send children into panic and prompt realignment of all plans and values. But unfortunately, this week's spokesman used those words for a callous shirking of the greatest gift he should have merited to have. Words that invoke the premonition of finality, usually set a tone of serious inflection to any thoughtful human being. But in this week's parsha Eisav used the words "Behold I am going to die," as an excuse to forsake his right to the great eternal gifts that could have been bestowed upon him. Indeed, the transaction in which Eisav gives up his birthright for a bowl of lentil soup was preceded by those very words. "Behold I am going to die," cried Eisav, "so why do I need my birthright?" (Braishis 25:30) The thought of death was a catalyst in Eisav's decision to rid himself of the b'chorah and its responsibilities. But why did he choose that expression as the final impetus that had him cast away eternity? After all, whether we like it or not, no one is immortal. We all pass to the next world. So, what did the ultimate end have to do with Eisav's decision? Why did it play a role in deciding whether or not to trade in the b'chorah for a cup of lentil soup? Could Eisav not just as easily respond to Yaakov's offer in the following manner: "Behold, the b'chorah carries too much responsibility. What do I

need it for?" What, however, does the concept of death have to do with it?

I once heard a story from a talmid of the Telshe Yeshiva who claimed he heard it from the story's protagonist. An airplane carrying Dovid, a Telshe Yeshiva student, back to Cleveland began experiencing severe turbulence. Dovid became quite nervous, but after seeing that his own Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Mordechai Gifter, was sitting in front of him, he felt secure. "After all," thought the young man, "with such a tzadik on board, what possibly could go wrong?" Suddenly the captain's voice was heard over the intercom. "We are experiencing some difficulty with the plane's hydraulic system and may be forced to make an emergency landing. Everyone please return to your seats, fasten your seat belts, and follow the instructions given by your flight attendants." Dovid quickly leaned forward toward his Rebbe. "Perhaps we are in danger. I have a Tehillim in my carry-on luggage. Is there any particular kapitlach that should I recite?" Quickly, Rav Gifter reassured his talmid, and suggested a few appropriate perokim to recite. Then the Rosh Yeshiva urged him to quickly buckle up and prepare for landing. His advice was interrupted by shouts coming from a frantic passenger who sat next to the student. "Stewardess, quick!" came the shouts. "Get over here! Fix me a drink. Make it the best you have! And you better make it fast, before we hit the ground!" Then he paused and added with a nervous laugh, "and better make it good, 'cause it may be my last drink before I die!"

The Chofetz Chaim explains the Mishnah in Pirkei Avos, "shuv yom echad li'fnai misascha, repent one day before our death" (Avos 2:15). Obviously, those of us who do not know when that day is to arrive must reflect and ask for forgiveness while bettering our ways, daily. But the catalyst of serious reflection and sobriety is the very thought of the final moment-death. Its approach should shake us, if not wake us, into teshuvah. Eisav's approach is disturbingly different: I will cast away any vestige of responsibility or spirituality, because, after all, tomorrow I may die. His catalyst of Epicurean action is our cause for stoic concern.

And so for a bowl of lentil soup, a cocktail of craving gulped down in a moment of passion, Eisav abandons his world of eternity. And the motivating factor behind his faux pas should have inspired him to seek the meaning of life. He looked at the finality of life with a sense of desperate recklessness that warped his perspective of the greatest gift we have-life. But danger and death must be experiences that help us grow. And when we are faced with the great questions of life and of death, the Torah guides us in the proper path of commitment to Avodas Hashem. The sadness of finality is not the same when the prospect of teshuva and maasim tovim prepares us for an endless eternity of reward. So the Mishneh in Avos, when referring to the day before this sojourn ends, does not tell us to drink. Instead it tells us to think! Rabbi Kamenetzky is the Associate Dean of Yeshiva South Shore and the author of the Parsha Parables Series

peninim@shemayisrael.com

PENINIM ON THE TORAH by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Hebrew Academy of Cleveland

PARSHAS TOLDOS ...

The children agitated within her, and she said, "If so, why am I thus?" (25:22)

"If this is what I will be subjected to, why do I want to be pregnant and have a child?" Certainly, Rivkah did not want a difficult pregnancy to dissuade her from the joys of motherhood. Chazal explain that she was concerned about the spiritual health of the child she was carrying. She sought to bring a child into the world that would contribute to the world; who would continue the Patriarchal chain. She was not interested in giving birth to a child who ran both to the bais medrash and to the house of idol worship.

Paying lip service to Judaism, while maintaining a relationship with

idols and their priests, indicates a spiritual ambivalence for which there is no constructive response. One can be cured only if he realizes that he is sick.

Horav Nissan Alpert, zl, takes an interesting approach to interpreting Rivkah's words. Parental insecurity and inconsistency influence the children's development. Quite often, when we are told something is wrong with one of our children, we immediately look to blame someone else. Is it the school, the teacher, his friends? Do we ever stop to think that maybe we are the problem? Perhaps we are setting a double standard, living a dual life - at home and at work. Are we consistent our mitzvah observance? Do we demand that our children study Torah diligently, while we maintain a lifestyle that is far from Torah-oriented? Do we expect them to be observant and moral, while we privately are neither?

Upon sensing that something might be spiritually deficient in her child, Rivkah immediately questioned, "Is it me?" Is it the anochi - the "I" - that is the cause of my child's shortcomings? She knew her roots; she was well aware of her lineage. Was a strain of her background affecting her offspring? Rivkah teaches us the first question that parents must ask themselves when they are confronted with a problem in one of their children: Is it me?

The voice is Yaakov's voice, but the hands are the hands of Eisav. (27:22)

The commentators ponder various interpretations for Yitzchak's response when Yaakov came to him dressed as Eisav. Chazal say that we derive from this pasuk that Yaakov's focus in life was the work of the spirit, delving into Torah study and devoting himself to mitzvah observance. Eisav lived by the sword. He was a fighter, whose bloodthirsty nature was represented by the hands. As long as Yaakov's "voice" rang loud and clear in the shuls and yeshivos, then Eisav's "hands" could have no dominion over him. The sefer Maalos HaTorah questions this interpretation, since the text seems to imply that the hands of Eisav functioned simultaneously with the voice of Yaakov. In other words, when the voice of Yaakov was thriving, the hands of Eisav ruled. What prompts Chazal to interpret the pasuk exactly the opposite of its text? He responds that Chazal saw in Yitzchak's words a two-fold blessing for Yaakov. When Yaakov's voice in the Bais hamedrash will be strong, then his hands will be as strong as Eisav's. He will have nothing to fear from his enemies. It is only when his voice wanes, when his Torah learning becomes complacent and weak, that he fears Eisav.

"V'hi sheomdah la'avoseinu" ϕ It is this that has stood by our forefathers. Horav Matisyahu Solomon, Shlita, explains that the "this" is a reference to kol Yaakov. The voice of Yaakov represents the power of Torah learning that has been a resource for us against our enemies. He cites a number of instances in Navi and Chazal that clearly indicate how our success has always been attributed to the koach ha'Torah, power of Torah.

The Navi Yehoshua (5:13) relates how when Yehoshua was in Yericho, he was confronted by what appeared to be a powerful man standing before him with his sword drawn. Yehoshua asked him if he was friend or foe. He responded that he was an angel sent by Hashem to admonish Yehoshua for the bitul Torah, neglecting of Torah study, that had occurred. That night Yehoshua studied diligently, delving into the profundities of Torah. The Alter M'kelm questions the critique against Klal Yisrael. These people were engaged in a war, a milchemes mitzvah, a war that Hashem had commanded them to fight. This was not discretionary; it was mandatory. In regard to this question, Rashi has already asserted that since they did not battle at night, the evenings should have been reserved for Torah study. Is it that simple to sit down by the Gemorah at night after a whole day of battle? Are they to be chastised for this type of neglect? Moreover, they evidently did study Torah. It just was not, however, b'amkus, with a profound focus; it was

cursory - but Torah study nonetheless.

Horav Solomon cites Horav Elya Lopian, zl, who asks a profound question: If the angel came to them to protest their bitul Torah, why did he appear "dressed" as an officer with his sword drawn? Should not his appearance reflect his message? He should have appeared as a rosh yeshivah admonishing the people for not learning enough. The answer says, Rav Elya, is that the angel was telling Yehoshua just that: \perp I am the angel who is to guide you to ensure that you triumph in battle. I cannot succeed if you neglect the Torah. Your key to success in war is your spiritual - not physical prowess! At the onset of Klal Yisrael's first battle for land they were told the rules: In order to succeed, there has to be "Kol Yaakov." If the voice of Yaakov is sounded with exuberance and enthusiasm in the batei medrash and batei knesses, then we have dominance over our enemies. If not, if kol Yaakov is weak, then we have nothing - neither "hands" nor voice.

TORAH THOUGHTS ON THE PARSHA in loving memory of
Rabbi Samuel Stone by his children and grandchildren Birdie and
Lenny Frank & Family

From: Jonathan Schwartz[SMTP:jschwartz@ymail.yu.edu] Subject
Internet Chaburah -- Parshas Toldos (fwd)

Prologue: Frankly, two opposing positions in any relationship could be difficult. In a marriage it could lead to disaster. Among siblings, the catastrophic effects are too grave to discuss. It therefore becomes interesting to note how Yitzchak and Rivka could have such diametrically opposing positions on the chinuch of their children and the subsequent blessing thereof. Maran Harav Aaron Soloveitchik notes that the decision of Yitzchak to bless his older son was an attempt to seize upon his Midda of Gevurah and hope that through the Beracha, Esav would see the error of his ways and adopt the position whereby he could combine Gevura and Chesed creating the ultimate Baal Teshuva.

However, Rivka saw Esav's activities for what they were. She recognized that there was no way for Esav to become a Baal Teshuva for his activities were insincere. She felt that the berachos would only hamper Yaakov's attempts at bringing Chesed to the world should they not wind up in his hands. As a result, Yaakov combined the middos of his mother and father creating a situation of Tiferes, a crowning jewel of glory to the entire Jewish nation. Sometimes opposing views between siblings and parents or between siblings can get out of hand. Knowing what to do and when is becoming a hot issue in the Jewish media. Yaakov had to leave his home as a result of the family strife. This week's chaburah examines a different type of leaving home. It is entitled:

Sparing the Siblings

Battala News Mazal Tov to Mr. and Mrs. Yaakov Weinstein upon their recent marriage Mazal Tov to Mr. and Mrs. Brian Gopin upon their recent marriage. Mazal Tov to Mr. and Mrs. Mark Schlossberg upon the birth of a baby boy.

From: Zomet Institute[SMTP:zomet@virtual.co.il]

Subject: Shabbat-B'Shabbato: Toldot 5760

A MITZVA IN THE TORAH PORTION: Is a Blind Person
Required to Perform the Mitzvot?

by Rabbi Binyamin Tabory

"Take your weapons ... and hunt game for me" [Bereishit 27:3]. Yitzchak asked Eisav to sharpen the knife for slaughter, so that he would not feed him unfit meat, and not to hunt from a stolen source. Did Yitzchak suspect that his beloved son would cause him to sin? Recent commentators have suggested that since Yitzchak was blind, he feared that Eisav would consider him to be free of the obligations of the mitzvot. Even if this were true, Yitzchak wanted to be stringent with

himself and observe them in any case.

What is the halacha with respect to a blind person? According to Rabbi Yehuda, someone who is blind is not obligated to perform the mitzvot. According to the Chachamim, on the other hand, he is in principle obligated by the mitzvot, except for those he cannot physically perform. Most of the early commentators agreed with the Chachamim, while Rabeinu Yerucham and a few of the commentators sided with Rabbi Yehuda (see Dr. Avraham Steinberg, *Techumin*, volume 3).

Rabbi Yehuda's opinion, that a blind person is free of the mitzvot, can be understood in several ways: (1) A blind person is not obligated by the positive mitzvot, but is required to observe the negative ones; (2) A blind person is not obligated by the negative mitzvot, but is obligated to keep the seven mitzvot of Bnei Noach; (3) A blind person is not even obligated by the seven mitzvot of Bnei Noach.

According to the Tosafot, a blind person must perform the rabbinical mitzvot, even according to Rabbi Yehuda, because otherwise he or she would be the same as a Gentile. This implies that a blind person is not obligated to perform the negative mitzvot, since otherwise these mitzvot would separate him from the Gentiles. But this seems problematic. How can the sages obligate a blind person to perform their mitzvot, if the obligation stems from the Torah mitzva, "Do not turn from what they tell you" [Devarim 17:11]? Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach replied that even if this was meant only for those who are obligated by the mitzvot, G-d certainly wants everybody to listen to the words of the sages. Thus, everybody must fulfill their wishes, even if this is not a direct Torah commandment.

In summary, even though Yitzchak was blind, he took care not to violate the prohibition of stealing (one of the seven mitzvot of Bnei Noach), and he also made sure to eat only meat which had been ritually slaughtered, just like all the rest of Bnei Yisrael.

From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@virtual.co.il]
Simcha's Torah Stories Parshat Toldos 5760
MITZVAH SENSE

Hello Chaim, how are you? Fine Mr. Jacobs. Where are you going Chaim? Home from school Mr. Jacobs. Do you mind if I walk with you? Not at all. Mr. Jacobs, aren't you a botanist? Yes I am Chaim. What type of tree is that? That is a Japanese maple. Next to it is a peach tree. Do you want to know more? Sure, Mr. Jacobs. That would be great. Plants have always fascinated me. So, the two walk home together. Mr. Jacobs identifies every tree, bush, flower, grass and even moss that they find along the way.

Mr. Jacobs this is so interesting. You are so knowledgeable. You have pointed out things that I have seen many times, but have never given a second thought. I just walk right by them.

Chaim, when you learn something well, and work at it, you become very aware of it. Because I studied botany, I can identify all of these plants. Therefore, I notice them.

It is almost as if you have developed a "sixth sense" for plants, Mr. Jacobs. Exactly, Chaim. Mr. Jacobs, thank you so much.

It was really nothing, Chaim. I enjoy talking about plants.

That was very interesting. I am also thanking you for a wonderful insight that you have given me. Really, Chaim. An insight about what?

About our forefather Yitzchak Avinu. Did Yitzchak Avinu study botany? Not that I know of, but he did have a "sixth sense" as you do. In what way, Chaim?

Toward the end of his life, Yitzchak Avinu blessed his twin son's Yaakov and Eisav. Yaakov appeared first, disguised as Eisav. Yitzchak smelled the "scent of the field" (Bereshet 27:27). The famous Bible commentator, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, who is known to us as Rashi, explains that Yitzchak smelled the scent of the Garden of Eden. Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz explains that this was not a normal smell, the way

that we understand fragrances. This was a spiritual perception.

Yitzchak Avinu was so steeped in Torah and spirituality that he saw past the externalities, and could sense down to the spiritual essence of something. He could see its mitzvah qualities.

What you are saying, Chaim is that Yitzchak Avinu had a "sense" for mitzvot. Just as I can identify all of the plants that I see due to my knowledge of botany, he could identify the mitzvah value in everything he saw.

Exactly. One of the great Torah scholars of our generation had this sense. He would walk down the street and describe all of the mitzvot he saw. For example, he would see a lost object, and point out the mitzvah of "returning lost objects". He would see the roof of a building and point out the mitzvah of "building a guard rail around the roof". He would see an apple tree and point out the mitzvot of taking tithes and making blessings on foods. He would see an animal and identify the mitzvah of "do not cause pain to animals".

That is really something, Chaim. The world is full of mitzvot!

It surely is Mr. Jacobs. We just have to train ourselves to see them. When we walk down the street, we must make sure that we are wearing our "mitzvah glasses". Then we will see how many mitzvot there really are in this beautiful world that G-d made for us.

Simcha's Quiz Question of the Week A camel has 3000 bananas. He wants to go over a one thousand-mile stretch of the desert. He has to eat one banana for each mile he walks. However, he can only carry 1000 bananas at a time. Waiting for him on the other side is his family. He wants to find a way to bring as many bananas to them as possible. Hint: He doesn't have to go all the way at the at once and he can leave bananas in the desert because he and his camel family are the only camels that eat bananas. Can he bring any extra bananas? - If so, how many? Send your answer to simchag@netvision.net.il

Answer to last week's quiz question: There are three boxes. One is labeled "APPLES" another is labeled "ORANGES". The last one is labeled "APPLES & ORANGES". You know that each is labeled incorrectly. You then pick one fruit from one box that you choose. Which box do you draw from and how can you label the boxes correctly?

The Answer! You draw from the "APPLES & ORANGES" box and whatever you pull out is what that box is labeled. Say you draw an apple. You then label the old "APPLE" to "ORANGES" and you label the old "ORANGES" to "APPLES & ORANGES". If you draw out a orange, then you re-label the opposite box.

Written and Compiled by Simcha Grossman General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman Production Design: Eli Ballon Ohr Somayach International 22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103 Jerusalem 91180, Israel

From: Kenneth Block[SMTP:kenblock@worldnet.att.net]
Guest Rabbi: Rabbi Elchanan Weinbach Director, New Jersey Region, NCYI
Parshat Toldot 4 Kislev 5760 Saturday, November 13, 1999 Daf Yomi: Chagiga 9

"New York, New York, New York" - If that seems repetitive, than what should we say of the Torah's presentation of Rivka in the second pasuk of Toldos: "And Yitzchok was forty years old when he took Rivka, the daughter of Besuel the Aramean, from Padan Aram, who was the sister of Lavan of Aram, for a wife." Why the thrice-repeated identification with Aram?

Rashi explains this as a note of praise. Rivka was the daughter of a rosho (evil person), the sister of a rosho, and from a community of roshoim, and yet did not learn from their actions.

Remarkable indeed, yet is it really possible? How could an impressionable young child (according to the Midrash, only three years

old), not be influenced by an environment so consistently wicked?

Does this not fly in the face of child and educational psychology? HaRav Yochanon Zweig, Rosh HaYeshiva of the Talmudic University of Florida, provides a further insight. The Torah's names for places, people and nations are often indicative of the inner nature of what is named. Following the name of the region, Aram, Lavan is identified as arami. It is the smallest of steps to identify the person and the place with a different word, ramai, deceiver. The people of Aram were specialists at deceiving others, and Besuel and Lavan were no exceptions (witness Yaakov's dealings with Lavan a generation later).

What does it take to be a successful con artist? Why is it that people so often fall prey to what, at the time, seemed a sincere, caring individual. Rav Zweig explains that at the root of every deception is sensitivity. To sell his goods, the con artist must be sensitive to what his victim's wants and needs and weaknesses are. Perhaps it's the desire for a "quick buck", perhaps the need to feel recognized.

Whatever the weakness, the con artist feels out his victim, sensitive to every detectable nuance, and then moves in for the kill. To be more to the point, all successful con artists are highly sensitive people. Of course, their sensitivity is very misplaced!

With this in mind, we can read Rashi with greater understanding. Rashi had indicated that Rivkah did not learn from their actions. Indeed, from their actions not, yet their basic character trait, sensitivity, came through to her loud and clear. Like her unworthy family, Rivkah was sensitive to the total needs of the other person. For Besuel and Lavan, this sensitivity was the tool of their trade in deception; for Rivkah, it was the vehicle of her Avodas HaShem in chesed. At its highest level of expression, chesed is caring for the total needs of the individual in need.

We see this reflected in Rivkah in the previous Parshah. Eliezer came to find a wife for the son of Avrohom, who is identified by Chazal as the Av (father) of chesed. Eliezer is looking for a girl who is a paradigm of chesed. Hence, his test is formulated to see if the girl will see beyond the obvious needs of the weary traveler, a drink for Eliezer, and seek to satisfy the total needs of the caravan leader, providing water for the camels as well.

This same concept is the basis for Rambam's levels of charity. A person in need of support has more than a financial need. What about the shame of requesting charity? The embarrassment of looking the donor in the eye? The haunting knowledge that someone out there knows your need? For the recipient of tzedokoh, there are manifold emotional and psychological issues to be addressed, and with each increased level in Rambam's progression, the total needs of the recipient are more sensitively attended to, until at the highest level, providing a job opportunity, the recipient feels no shame at all. "No one has given me! I have earned". This is chesed, sensitivity to the total needs of the recipient.

Indeed, as the psychologist and educator and parent know, no child escapes the influence of environment. Rivka is praised because, while absorbing the inner trait of Aram, she did not learn from their actions. For her, and for all her descendants, sensitivity is at the root of all chesed, one of the three indelible traits that, along with being modest and merciful, define the Jewish People.

A project of the National Council of Young Israel 3 West 16th Street, New York, NY 10011 212 929-1525 800 617-NCYI Kenneth Block, Internet Administrator kenblock@youngisrael.org

From: Aish HaTorah[SMTP:aishlist@mail.netvision.net.il] Appel@aish.edu Aish HaTorah: APPEL'S PARSHA PAGE
PARSHAT TOLDOT
by Rabbi Yehuda Appel Aish HaTorah Cleveland

I recently read a report which focused on the nature of evil. The report stated that, for the most part, those guilty of the most heinous violent crimes tend to fit an otherwise "average" description. Time and again, the neighbors of a mass murderer were shocked to find that the "nice guy who lived next door" had committed such despicable acts. The article reported that

they generally acted like "good" people, and it was their evil activity which was the exception! The report concluded that all of us combine good and bad traits, and while certain circumstances may cause individuals to go beyond the bounds of normal behavior, there is no basis to assert that these people are "totally evil."

Indeed, as comfortable as it may be to categorize certain people as mons trous, cruel villains, the Torah does not paint such a reality. Even the worst evildoers can be portrayed as capable of doing much good. Perhaps the most striking example can be found in this week's Torah portion, Toldot. Much of the parsha describes the struggle between Jacob and his twin brother Esav. Esav is described as a violent "man of the field," who heads a cruel gang of 400 men. He murders many people - and even plans to murder his brother Jacob (after Jacob received their father's blessing). In addition, Esav is portrayed as "playing the field" - i.e. dallying in all forms of sexual licentiousness. Given all these factors, it is no surprise that Jewish tradition sees Esav as a "rasha," an evil person.

But Jewish tradition also sees Esav in another light. The famous Talmudic sage, Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel, was known for the great care he took in fulfilling the mitzvah of honoring one's parents. Yet he stated: "I served my father faithfully all my life, yet I did not even reach the smallest level of honor with which Esav served his father Isaac." In fact, Jewish tradition states that perhaps no one in history was more scrupulous in tending to his parents' needs than Esav. The Midrash notes how quick and eager Esav was to fulfill all his father's requests, even wearing a set of royal clothing whenever going to help his father. Apparently the care with which Esav took in honoring his parents - one of the Ten Commandments - was a key reason for Isaac to believe that Esav, not Jacob, should be the heir to Jewish leadership.

Jacob recognizes this greatness in his brother Esav as well. After fleeing from Esav (who is intent on murdering him), Jacob stays in Syria for almost two decades. He is afraid to return to Israel to face Esav. Why is Jacob so afraid? Not only because of the physical danger posed by Esav's murderous gang, but also because of the spiritual elevation that Esav possessed due to the mitzvah of honoring parents!

Yet despite this, Jewish tradition still refers to Esav as "the Evil One." His murderous deeds and sexual dalliances cannot be excused just because he excels in one particular mitzvah. On the other hand, the Torah clearly wants us to recognize that ultimately, people do not fit into neat, black-or-white categories.

The author, Rabbi Yehuda Appel, is an American who studied and taught Torah for many years in Jerusalem. In 1990, he and his family moved to Cleveland where he now serves as Executive Director of Aish HaTorah. (C) 1999 Aish HaTorah International Home Page: <http://www.aish.edu>

From:rachrysl@netmedia.net.il[SMTP:rachrysl@netmedia.net.il] Subject:"Midei Shabbos by Rabbi Eliezer Chrysler"
Parshas Toldos ...
Parshah Pearls
Toldos
Was It Eruvei Techumin?

"... because Avrohom listened to My voice, and kept My charge" (26:5). The Gemoro in Yumo (28b) learns from this posuk that Avrohom observed even Eiruv Tavshilin. 'Eiruv Tavshilin?' asks the Gro. 'Where is there a hint to Eiruv Tavshilin in this posuk?'

It would appear that the original text of the Gemoro read not 'Eiruv Tavshilin', but 'Eiruv Techumin', a concept that is certainly hinted in the word "eikev" (which means 'because' but can also mean 'a heel'), since the mitzvah of Eiruv Techumin enables one to tread with one's heel beyond the two thousand amoh limit of T'chum Shabbos. The printer of a subsequent edition however, abbreviated 'eiruvei techumin' to 'ayin-tof'. Along came the third printer, and, misunderstanding the initials 'ayin-tof', wrote it out in full to read eiruvei tavshilin - wrongly - stripping the words of any logical meaning at all (in the context of the source word "Eikev") - Gro.

Or Was It Eruvei Tavshilin?

The Tosfos Yeshonim is also perturbed by the Gro's kashya (why Chazal mention Eiruv Tavshilin over and above all other mitzvos de'Rabbonon?), which he leaves unanswered - and so is the Maharsho. The latter however, replies that Eiruv Tavshilin is not an intrinsically important mitzvah, like the other mitzvos de'Rabbonon. Its main function is merely to serve as a reminder not to forget to pick a nice portion for Shabbos. So the Gemoro is telling us that even that secondary mitzvah Avrohom kept too.

The truth of the matter is that the Gemoro does not base its d'troshoh on the word "eikev", but on the last word in the posuk "ve'sorosi" (in the plural, implying both Torah mitzvos and Rabbinical ones). In that case, the Gro's source is unclear (see Torah Temimah and the footnotes of the Seifer P'ninim mi'Shulchan ha'Gro; see also 'Eikev' which follows immediately.

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From: Yated USA[SMTP:yated-usa@ttec.com]
The Power of Daf Hayomi by Moshe Schapiro

Chaim was a simple, elderly Jew who lived alone in a small apartment in the center of Bnei Brak. After his wife died, Chaim sold his small grocery store and decided to spend his days learning Torah. His needs were few, and his four children and eighteen grandchildren visited him regularly and took care of whatever Chaim could not. Though he loved learning, Chaim was by no means a learned man. He had provided his own children with a strong Jewish education, but he had not been so fortunate. Over the years, however, he managed to acquaint himself with the basics. The highlight of Chaim's day was undoubtedly Reb Meir's daf yomi shiur at the local shul. What he lacked in knowledge, Chaim made up for with diligence and

enthusiasm, and to his great joy, he was able to keep up with Reb Meir's shiurim. So it was, every morning after davening, Chaim could be founding sitting in the exact same seat, directly in front of Reb Meir. He hung onto Reb Meir's every word, their meaning seeming to imbue his weary body with the strength to make it through yet another day. No matter what the weather, Chaim was at the shiur. When it was so cold that your breath stood frozen in the air every time you exhaled, Chaim was there. And when it was raining so hard that you couldn't see three feet in front of you, Chaim was there. Nothing, but nothing, could keep Chaim away from his beloved shiur, the key to his very existence. You can imagine the shiur members' shock when one cold winter morning, there was no sign of Chaim. Throughout the shiur, they kept glancing toward the door, convinced he'd show up any second-though it was unlike him to be late. When the shiur ended and there was still no sign of Chaim, one of the members called Chaim's house, concerned about his health. Chaim's daughter answered the phone and explained that despite her father's protests, she had refused to allow him to go to the shiur because he had an exceptionally high fever. "But knowing by father," she continued warily, "you can rest assured you'll be seeing him tomorrow. No fever is going to make him miss shiur two days in a row." Sure enough, the next morning Chaim, though slightly pale, was back in his regular seat with a gemara in hand. The shiur members greeted him warmly, but were surprised to hear that he'd already made up the material he had missed. They all knew that Chaim worked hard, but they couldn't help but think that Chaim didn't have the ability to learn the material on his own. Chaim wasn't surprised when he saw eyebrows go up all over the room. "I see that you are wondering how I covered the material," he began, with a gentle laugh. "Let me explain what happened." "Last night, as I was going over the material, I came across a difficulty in Rashi. Try as I might I just couldn't figure out the pshat. "After a while, I felt that fever taking a toll, and before I knew it, I was fast asleep. Then I had the most amazing dream." The shiur members drew closer, not wanting to miss a word. "In my dream," Chaim continued, "I saw an elderly man coming toward me. He had a long flowing beard and his face shone with this intense light. "Chaim," he asked me, 'what's troubling you?'" "I explained to him that I couldn't understand that Rashi, and he shook his head knowingly. " "Chaim," the man replied. "Let me explain what Rashi means." "Then he launched into a beautiful explanation of Rashi, and by the time he finished, the Rashi was crystal clear to me." The shiur members looked at one another in surprise. Was the old man hallucinating? Or had really merited to be visited by some great luminary of earlier generations? "I thanked the man for the beautiful explanation," continued Chaim, "and he started to turn away." "Wait, I called after him. "Who are you? What is your name?" "I am Shlomo ben Aderes," the man replied, and he disappeared." The members of the shiur sat in a dazed silence. It was Reb Meir who spoke first. "Chaim," he asked, his voice a hoarse whisper. "Do you know who Shlomo ben Aderes is?" When Chaim responded in the negative, Reb Meir opened one of the many seforim in front of him, and scanned a few pages. He soon found what he was looking for-Chaim's question on that Rashi, as well as the explanation the man in the dream had given him. What sefer was it? It was none other than the Rashba, authored, of course, by Rabbi Shlomo ben Aderes. o o o Today, when Reb Meir encourages people to learn daf yomi, he often recounts this miraculous story, adding an explanation of his own. He always describes how Chaim, who had only the bare minimum of seforim in his home -a siddur, chumashim, mishnayos and a few gemaras-didn't own a Rashba. And even if he had, he certainly would n't have understood what it said. "The only explanation as to why Chaim, this simple Jew, could have merited this," explains Reb Meir, "is that having a daily learning seder is so important in the Heavens that in order to help this man complete his daily learning, they deemed it necessary to send the Rashba to assist him."

which was added to the names of history's first converts, Avraham and Sarah). "After all, one who is righteous serves Hashem and one who is wicked does not!" The last part of the passage, explained the Sage Hillel, which refers to one who serves and one who does not, deals only with the righteous. But even in that category there is a difference between one who studies his Torah subject 100 times and one who does so 101 times. "For failing to study just one more time," wondered Ben Hei Hei, "he is called one who does not serve Hashem!" To explain his point, Hillel drew upon a comparison to the fee charged by donkey drivers who transport goods for people. They charge a zuz for transporting a distance of ten parsah, but if you ask them to go eleven parsah they will charge the disproportionate amount of two zuz. Maharsha explains that ten parsah is the distance normally covered in one day by a donkey driver walking behind his loaded animal, so that this is a labor to which he is accustomed. If someone wishes him to cover an extra parsah in that same amount of time, he is requiring a special effort for which the fee must be doubled. In similar fashion, one who studies Torah to what he deems the limit of his ability may be considered a righteous Jew, but only one who pushes himself beyond that imagined limit and puts in that 101st time is considered one who truly serves Hashem and deserving of a special reward. * Chagiga 9b

Written and Compiled by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman Production Design: Eli Ballon Ohr Somayach International info@ohr.org.il http://www.ohrnet.org

From:Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@virtual.co.il]
The Weekly Daf #300 Chagiga 4 - 10 Parshat Toldot By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach, Dean,
Ohr Somayach Institutions

Proof and Reproof When Rabbi Elazar read this Torah passage he wept: "And Yosef said to his brothers, 'I am Yosef; does my father yet live?' And his brothers could not answer him for they were terrified before him." (Bereishet 45:3) If such is the reproof of flesh and blood, mused the sage, what shall be when we are faced with Hashem's reproof? Rabbi Elazar's tears reflected his appreciation of man's futility to defend himself against the charges to be presented by Hashem in the hereafter. The proof of this futility is the embarrassed silence with which Yosef's brothers greeted the revelation of his identity, and the reproof which accompanied it. But where was there reproof in Yosef's words? All he said was "I am Yosef; does my father still live?" The answer may be found in a brilliant commentary of Beit Halevi on a midrash with a similar message. When Yosef's brothers, prior to his revelation, pleaded with the Egyptian potentate to have mercy and release Binyamin from captivity, they based their case on the anguish that his imprisonment would cause their aged father. Yosef showed them the hypocrisy in their plea by following his revelation of "I am Yosef" with the question "does my father yet live;" by this he meant to remind them of the anguish they caused their father Yaakov by selling his son Yosef into slavery. "Does my father yet live after all the pain you caused him?" asks Yosef, thus exposing the insincerity of their earlier expressions of concern for Yaakov. The Hebrew word for reproof is "tochacha," whose root means "proof." The proof of guilt is showing the inconsistency of the defendant's argument. If Yosef could silence his brothers with such a demonstration, says Rabbi Elazar, how shall we be able to defend ourselves when our Omniscient Creator reproves us and proves that all our excuses are absurd? The man who claims he did not give charity for lack of funds will be shown his expense account for luxuries. One who did not study Torah for an alleged lack of time will be shown how much time he spent on frivolous pursuits. The proof will be the reproof. * Chagiga 4b

The 101st Time "Then you shall return," says the Prophet Malachi in his vision of the hereafter, "and see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves Hashem and one who does not serve Him." (Malachi 3:18) "Is this not redundant?" asked Ben Hei Hei (a sage who was a convert to Judaism and adopted as his name the letter