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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON TOLDOS - 5764

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From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND [ryfrand@torah.org] Sent: November 26, 2003 To: ravfrand@torah.org Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Toldos

It's Important To Know The Rest of the Story

The opening pasukim [verses] in this week's parsha read: "These are the offspring of Yitzchak son of Avraham -- Avraham gave birth to Yitzchak. And Yitzchak was forty years old when he took Rivka the daughter of Besuel from Paddan Aram, the sister of Lavan the Aramean to himself for a wife." [Bereshis 25:19-20]. Rashi comments that "The offspring of Yitzchak refers to Yaakov and Eisav who are spoken of in this parsha".

Rashi was bothered by a question. The parsha begins by announcing that it will be discussing the offspring of Yitzchak, but then the Torah goes off on a tangent -- discussing Yitzchak's father, his wife, father-in-law and brother-in-law. What happened to the "offspring of Yitzchak?" Rashi must explain: "Wait. Be patient. They will be discussed later in the narration. The Torah has to go through a little background information first."

Why is it necessary to go through all this background? Why doesn't the Torah start talking about Yaakov and Eisav directly? Rav Schwab makes a simple but very important observation on this narration: the history of a person does not begin with his birth on such and such a date in such and such a city. The biography of a person begins with who his parents were, how they got married, where they were from, and who their fathers were. If the biography of Yaakov and Eisav only began with the fact that they were born, it would be telling only part of the story. We need to know what happened during their mother's pregnancy and who their parents and grandparents were. Only then can we begin to understand them.

Rav Schwab's point is that people who are seeking mates for themselves or people who are seeking to help others find a proper mate should feel the full responsibility that is upon them. When two people get married, it is not merely a union that involves those two people -- there are many preceding generations that are being united. There are generations to come that will be impacted by this marriage. The responsibility of putting two people together is a tremendous responsibility.

Bride & Groom Fast To Atonement For Sins Committed On Way To Chuppah

A related matter emerges from the last pasuk [verse] of the parsha: "So Eisav went to Yishmael and took Machalas, the daughter of Yishmael

son of Avraham, sister of Nebaioth, in addition to his wives, as a wife for himself" [Bereshis 28:9]. Our Sages etymologically relate the name Machalas to the word Mechilah [forgiveness]. They say that we see from here that on the day a person gets married, all his sins are forgiven. It is a type of pseudo-Yom Kippur. That is why the groom and bride customarily fast on their wedding day. The Mincha [afternoon prayer] that a chosson [bridegroom] recites on the day of his marriage includes the confession [vidui] recited on Yom Kippur.

Rav Avraham Pam once offered an interesting explanation for why the couple fast on the day of their marriage. Specifically, for which sins do they need this special atonement? Rav Pam explained that the Chosson and Kallah [bride] fast on the day of their wedding to atone for the sins they committed while on the way to their wedding day. It is not uncommon for young men and women to hurt people's feelings very severely while involved in the process of making their way to the Chuppah.

At Least We Should Try To Act Like Eisav!

The Torah speaks of Eisav's special set of clothes in which Rivka disguised Yaakov [Bereshis 27:15]. Our Sages infer that this was a special set of clothing that Eisav reserved for serving his father. In spite of the fact that he was a thoroughly wicked person, he showed tremendous respect to his father and honored him in an extraordinary fashion. Whenever Yitzchak asked him to do something, Eisav would not merely appear in his street clothes or his hunting clothes. He had a special set of clothing reserved only for the service of his father. Rabban Shimeon ben Gamliel comments in the Medrash "all my life I tried to faithfully serve my father according to halacha, but I did not pay him 1% of the honor that Eisav gave to his father, Yitzchak."

At this point in time, Yitzchak was already blind, as we clearly see from the story of the blessings. So when Eisav would dress up in his special clothing, it did not even make a difference to Yitzchak. Yitzchak would have no way of knowing what Eisav was wearing. Therefore, this fact demonstrates that when Eisav was serving his father it was not merely an act. He put on his best clothes even when his father was not aware of it. That was the extent of the Kibud Av of Eisav.

Many people are blessed with parents who are older. Sometimes when people become old, they lose awareness of their surroundings. Sometimes it is Alzheimer's disease. Sometimes there are other factors. The parents may sometimes not even recognize that the person in the room is their son or daughter.

We must learn from Eisav. Eisav dressed up for his father, even when his father would not have known if Eisav was wearing street clothes or Shabbos clothes or no clothes. His Kibud Av was such that "It does not matter what my father knows or what my father realizes. I have a responsibility to honor my father." In this sense we all must try to emulate Eisav.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, WA DavidATwersky@aol.com
Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #393 Neitz Hachama vs. Tefilah B'tzibur. 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 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> Project Genesis, Inc. learn@torah.org Baltimore, MD

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RABBI MICHAEL ROSENSWEIG

WHO IS YITZCHAK AND WHAT IS HIS LEGACY?

"The actions of the Patriarchs are signposts to their descendants. (Maasei Avot Siman Le-banim)" This rabbinic perspective, which underscores the relevance of the intense study of Tanach, projects that a profound understanding of biblical personalities, particularly the unique individual legacies of the three avot, constitutes an exercise in self-discovery, a glimpse into our own spiritual potential and destiny.

Of the three avot, Yitzchak is the least well-developed in the Torah. His story spans barely one parshah, in which he shares center stage with and is often eclipsed by the activities of others-- Avraham during the akeidah (binding of Yitzchak); Yaakov, Eisav, and Rivkah in the struggle over the birthright and blessings. Moreover, when we do encounter Yitzchak in the Torah, he emerges as a most enigmatic figure. Occasionally, he exudes majesty and charisma. This is exemplified by his willing participation in the akeidah and by his dramatic first meeting with Rivkah, in which she literally falls off her camel in his presence (Bereishit 24:64). In other contexts, however, Yitzchak appears to be at least partially manipulated by events that swirl around him and his role is almost transitional, the bridge between a father who was the celebrated founder of monotheism and a nation, and a son, Yaakov, whose evident achievements qualified him to bear the name and legacy of "Yisrael". Yet, Yitzchak's status and stature in Biblical literature and religious history is unquestioned, even as his contribution needs to be more fully assessed and understood. Who is Yitzchak really and what is his legacy?

The first verse in parshat Toledot (Bereishit 25:19) provides a clue to unraveling the puzzle of Yitzchak's development: "Eileh Toledot Yitzchak ben Avraham, Avraham holid et Yitzchak (These are the generations of Yitzchak son of Avraham; Avraham fathered Yitzchak)". This dual, apparently superfluous formulation establishes that Yitzchak's self-image, as his father's son, formed the foundation of his conduct and character. This powerful identification with his father is reflected in the scant information the Torah shares of his life: his involvement with his father's wells; his approach to Avimelech, King of the Philistines etc. Yet, his image of his father was shaped by the special circumstances and realities of his own life. After all, he only experienced the twilight of his father's career. Moreover, his primary interaction with his father took place in the absolutely unique and dramatic episode of the akeidah. The Torah, by repeating the phrase "vayeilchu shneihem yachdav (and the two of them traveled as one)" (Bereishit 22:6,8), emphasizes that this incomparable sacrifice cemented their relationship, inspiring the rabbinic insight that they approached the task with a singularity of purpose and commitment-- "as one man with one heart". The Torah (Bereishit 22:6-10) strikingly repeatedly accents their status as father and son in these very verses that might be perceived by outsiders as the ultimate betrayal of that sacred bond because it is precisely in this context of ultimate religious commitment that their father-son relationship is most intensely manifest.

While Avraham, whom Yitzchak perceives himself emulating, returns after having met the challenge posed by the akeidah and reintegrates into a normal, even an anticlimactic routine- catching up with the family history of his brother Nachor (Bereishit 22:20)-, Yitzchak's fundamental religious personality was apparently profoundly reshaped by the event and implications of the akeidah. He could not simply put the experience behind him and rejoin society. He reappears in the Torah only three years later to encounter Rivkah (Bereishit 24:62). Some of the meforshim (see, for example, R. Bechai) note that Yitzchak appears to have missed the funeral of his beloved mother, Sarah! Rabbinic tradition postulates that Yitzchak remained on Mount Moriah, the site of the akeidah, for an additional three years! Furthermore, the rabbis in the midrash (see, also, Rashi Bereishit 24:62) cite a tradition that Yitzchak

returned to civilization in order to carry out another mission of personal heroism and sacrifice, this time on behalf of his father-- to reunite Avraham with Hagar, the very woman Sarah had banished some years earlier!

For Avraham, the akeidah was a test, a confirmation and culmination of an ambitiously balanced religious life. For the young, impressionable Yitzchak, it was apparently a defining experience, one which accented the role of charismatic gestures, extreme sacrifices, and the suppression of ego and personal need in the pursuit of spirituality. Rabbinic tradition attributes the quality of "gevurah", heroic self-control, to the Patriarch Yitzchak.

Yitzchak's singular approach to religion and life impacted upon his personal relationships as well. His charismatic, uncompromising approach accounts for the dramatic first encounter with his future wife, Rivkah. While she responded immediately to his presence, he reacted with reticence, only acknowledging and relating to her after she had established by entering Sarah's tent that she was the rightful successor to Sarah's legacy (Bereishit 24:67). Their marital relationship was unlike any of the other patriarch-matriarch models. It is apparent from parshat Toledot that they did not perceive their children similarly, nor did they even communicate explicitly on this critical issue.

Indeed, it is possible that Yitzchak's assessment of his children was also a function of his overall religious perspective. Yitzchak favored Eisav despite his apparent flaws because he was impressed with his dramatic, almost larger-than-life persona which might ultimately be channeled into charismatic, spiritually meaningful activities. The midrash notes that Eisav's name implies that he was already born in a developed state, and his shocking red hair and hairy skin certainly set him apart. His prodigious appetite might potentially be mobilized for spiritually heroic ends. Not until Yaakov took bold initiative to wrest the blessings away from Eisav, did his father appreciate the depth and complexity of his quieter, balanced commitment. The realization that he had misread the spiritual personalities and potentials of his two sons literally shook Yitzchak's world view (Bereishit 27:33). In this light, it is fascinating to note that rabbinic tradition traces Yitzchak's physical "blindness" (Bereishit 27:1) to the experience of the akeidah! It might be further suggested that this glorious episode, the source of his particular perspective on spirituality, "blinded" him to Eisav's fatal flaws, and to Yaakov's vast potential.

Yitzchak's legacy was truly a unique one. His character is less developed in the Torah than the other avot and his role more circumscribed precisely because he intensely pursued a singular heroic ideal of self-restraint and sacrifice. He is far from a transitional figure, as his name, special contribution, and singular orientation is validated several times a day in our tefillot, where prominent mention is made of "Elokei Yitzchak", alongside the other avot. The spiritual model of Yitzchak contributes enormously to our spiritual heritage, even though the more complex and balanced religious agenda of Yaakov, also named "Yisrael", is perceived to represent the ideal religious prototype.

Mankind and Yahadut is surely enriched by its legitimate diversity. The charismatic and wholly idealistic Yitzchak persona represents a critical element in the mosaic of religious society. He provides leadership, occasionally even sets the tone in confronting various crisis situations, and he balances other elements in the daily challenges encountered by society. Moreover, the Yitzchak typology accents motifs that need to be integrated into every individual -- idealism, heroism, the willingness to surrender and sacrifice for principle, the capacity to eschew compromises that reflect a lack of will, devotion, and true commitment.

Yet, as noted, it is Yaakov who emerged as the ideal Patriarch. He most successfully integrated both his father's idealism-heroism and his grandfather Avraham's consuming commitment to compassion, enabling him to address the complexities of life armed with a broader and greater spiritual vision. The contributions of all the avot are particularly

relevant as we struggle to resolve the knotty social and spiritual issues that confront us in the beginning of the twenty-first century. The challenges posed by technological-scientific breakthroughs, the increasing gap between the wealthy and poor in society, the opportunities and problems engendered by the global village, the assault against traditional values and social norms all require intellectual, moral and spiritual leadership of the highest order. The fragmentation within the broad Jewish community and the destructive disunity that prevails even among Torah-committed Jews compounds the difficulties. Never has the need to integrate idealism, realism, activism, and a broader spiritual vision been more imperative than in our own age. May the biblical models of the avot, truly compelling and relevant, continue to inspire that leadership.

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From: Midei [rachrysl@netvision.net.il] Subject: Midei Shabbos by RABBI ELIEZER CHRYSLER - Parshas Toldos

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How Old Was She Really

(Adapted from the Da'as Zekeinim mi'Ba'alei Tosfos)

"And Yitzchak was forty years old when he took Rivkah ..." (25:20).

When Yitzchak returned from Har ha'Mori'ah, Rashi explains, Avraham was informed that Rivkah was born. At that stage, Yitzchak was thirty seven. So he waited three years, until she was of a marriageable age, and then he married her.

The Da'as Zekeinim M.T. (mi'Ba'alei Tosfos) however, takes Rashi to task from a Sifri, which concludes that Kehas, Rivkah and ben Azai all lived to the same age. Kehas, the Torah specifically writes, died at the age of a hundred and thirty-three. In that case, that was the age at which Rivkah died, too.

Assuming that Yitzchak married Rivkah when she was 3, as Rashi maintains, she will have been 23 when she gave birth to Ya'akov and Eisav. Add to this the 63 of Ya'akov when he was blessed (as Rashi himself writes at the end of the Parshah), the 14 years that he studied in the Yeshivah of Sheim and Eiver, the 20 years that he spent with Lavan and the 2 years that he spent on the journey home, at which point in time he received news of his mother's death. In total, this makes Rivkah 122 at that time, 11 years short of the 133 mentioned by the Sifri.

The Da'as Zekeinim M.T. therefore concludes that Rivkah was 14 years old when she married. We will then have to explain that, when G-d informed Avraham about Rivkah's birth, it was not because she was just born (in fact, she was already eleven at the time), but because the time had arrived for Yitzchak to start thinking of marriage, and Rivkah was his Barshert.

One problem with the Da'as Zekeinim M.T.'s explanation is why Avraham waited three years before sending Eliezer to find him a wife. And this is exacerbated if, as Rashi explains at the end of Vayeira, the news of Rivkah's birth came to alleviate Avraham's worries. Avraham reckoned, Rashi explains there, that if Yitzchak had been Shechted at the Akeidah, what would have happened to the great future G-d had promised him? So he figured that he had better marry him off to one of the daughters of Aner, Eshkol or Mamrei. And this was when Hashem informed him that Rivkah was available. Why did he not send Eliezer off to Charan there and then?

And even if the Da'as Zekeinim M.T. does not concur with the latter Medrash cited by Rashi, he will still need to explain why Avraham procrastinated for three years. Why would the same Avraham Avinu

about whom the Pasuk testifies "And Avraham arose early in the morning", for the sake of a Mitzvah, bide his time here?

Rashi, based on his own view of Rivkah's age, answers the question beautifully. Avraham did indeed intend to marry off Yitzchak immediately, and so he would have done, had Hashem not informed him about Rivkah. And it was only after He did, that Avraham had no option but to wait three years until Rivkah was ready to marry. But according to the Da'as Zekeinim M.T., there seems to be no logical reason as to why, once he knew about Rivkah, he did not send Eliezer to Choron immediately.

Another problem with the explanation of the Da'as Zekeinim M.T. is one that he himself raises from the Gemara in Kesuvos. The Gemara in Kesuvos (57a) learns from the episode with Rivkah, that a besulah (a virgin) is given twelve months from the time of the betrothal to prepare for her wedding. That is fine according to Rashi, who says she was three at the time of the betrothal. But according to the Da'as Zekeinim M.T., who gives her age as fourteen, she was no longer a besulah, but a bogeres (the post besulah stage), and the time between the betrothal and the wedding allowed a bogeres, is not twelve months, but thirty days (like that of a widow). So it appears that the Gemara does not concur with the opinion of the Sifri, in support of Rashi's opinion, that Rivkah was three years old when Yitzchak married her.

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Sent: November 27, 2003 To: Peninim Parsha

PENINIM ON THE TORAH

by RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM

Parshas Toldos

And these are the offspring of Yitzchak ben Avraham. (25:19)

While the narrative in Parshas Toldos addresses the life and accomplishments of Yaakov Avinu, its scope pales in comparison to the space devoted to the lives of Avraham Avinu and Yitzchak Avinu. Yitzchak lived longer than both his father and his son; yet, much less space is dedicated to his life. The Rambam reinforces this pattern, by devoting considerable space to Avraham's achievements in the area of outreach to the pagans. Similarly, he writes that Yaakov sanctified Hashem's Name through harbotzas Torah, dissemination of Torah teachings. Regarding Yitzchak, he writes simply that he studied and mandated his son, Yaakov, to transmit his teachings to the world. Thus, in comparison to Avraham and Yaakov, Yitzchak's spiritual activity in relation to the outside appears diminished. While Avraham and Yaakov reached out to thousands, Yitzchak had only one talmid, disciple: Yaakov.

Horav Yaakov Kaminetzky, zl, explains that the distinctions in the diversity of activities manifest by each of the Avos, Patriarchs, is to be understood in light of the differences in the manner that each spread emunah, faith in Hashem, which was an outgrowth of the uniqueness of his respective mission. We are accustomed to thinking that Avraham left his door open to the world, encouraging everyone to share his bread. When they conveyed their gratitude in response, he would instruct them to offer their gratitude to Hashem. While this is true, his manner of outreach was a little more complicated.

Avraham's avodah, service, was founded in his awe before Hashem's unceasing flow of chesed, kindness. Avraham saw his own role as exemplifying this character trait, teaching it to the world. When his guests expressed their gratitude for his generosity, they also marveled at his nobility of character. He would explain that his acts of altruism were a form of Divine service, which reflected the beneficence of the Almighty. This is a character trait that all of Hashem's creations should

emulate. Indeed, the idea of a religion based upon kindness and altruism was attractive to the many thousands whom Avraham introduced to monotheism.

Yaakov's mode of avodah was Torah study as a pursuit of eternal truth. Although, his approach was clearly more restrictive than that of Avraham, he nonetheless did reach out to a multitude of adherents, people who came to form the first yeshivah. Yitzchak's approach to Avodas Hashem reflected middas HaDin, the attribute of strict justice. This required total discipline, living life as fully as possible within the most exacting demands of Hashem's will, self-abnegation to the point that he was prepared to give up his life at the Akeidah - if this was Hashem's will. This type of service was certainly not as popular as that of the other two. Yitzchak attracted one faithful student - Yaakov. Yitzchak's yeshivah of "one" constituted the Patriarch's outreach to the world. Thus, his activities were not acknowledged with as much fanfare as those of Avraham and Yaakov.

The lifework of each Av is recorded in consonance with his individual success. The long-term success of the Patriarchs' dissemination of emunah in Hashem can be appreciated by noting how deeply the lessons of each has become indelibly ingrained in the Jew's national character. Yitzchak's lesson of self-negation to the point of self-sacrifice has surfaced in every era of Jewish history. Indeed, our readiness to sacrifice our lives for the Jewish ideal has been manifest in even the most dubious circumstances by the most improbable Jews. Our willingness to die for our beliefs has been the source of our survival.

A well-known incident that occurred in the early days of the Russian revolution demonstrates this idea. A band of outlaws entered the Russian hamlet of Machanov'ke, rounding up the town's thirty-seven Jews with one thing in mind: to kill them. The townspeople, who had lost no love for the Jews, were all there to witness the atrocity. As the robbers picked up their rifles to begin the "proceedings," a voice shouted from the crowd, "I am also a Jew!" It was a pharmacist who had been living in town for years, whom no one, neither Jew nor gentile, had ever suspected of being Jewish. One wonders why this man, who had so completely assimilated into Christian life, suddenly - after so many years of being estranged from his people - had come back, especially when doing so meant certain death. Rav Yaakov suggests that he was responding to his innate Jewish willingness to surrender his life to affirm his commitment to Hashem. Yitzchak's seminal act at the Akeidah imbued a spirit of self-sacrifice in the Jewish psyche that has remained integral until this very day. The robbers fired their guns in the air and released the Jews - only to gather them back to the village square once again to repeat the ruse. They repeated the charade, finally letting the Jewish citizens go free. Perhaps it was the zechus, merit, of the Jewish pharmacist, who dramatically awoke to his true identity, that saved the Jews that day.

Yitzchak loved Eisav...but Rivkah loved Yaakov. (25:28)

Horav Aharon Kotler, zl, asks a number of compelling questions concerning Yitzchak Avinu's relationship with Eisav. First, why did Yitzchak love Eisav? He certainly must have known that this son was far from the ideal. Why would he want to impart the berachos, blessings, to him - instead of Yaakov? Moreover, Chazal tell us that on the day Avraham died, Eisav transgressed five sins, among which was the sin of denying the existence of the Creator. Is this the kind of person that should have received the berachos? Second, how did Eisav turn into an apostate after being raised in Yitzchak's home? He was fifteen years old when Avraham Avinu died. He apparently had experienced an unparalleled exposure to ruchnius, spirituality. Yet, he became an apikores, apostate. How did this happen? Last, if Eisav did not believe in Hashem, why did he grieve so bitterly over losing the berachos?

Rav Aharon explains that Eisav undoubtedly had developed an acute awareness of Hashem. He, therefore, realized that losing the berachos

meant losing a treasure of inestimable value. As we have pointed out previously, one could not have grown up in a home that was so suffused with spirituality and not build a strong understanding and appreciation of Hashem. Eisav was aware and understood but, nonetheless, he did not care. Kofer b'Ikar means that a person knows, yet denies. The reason for this is that in order for man to be a baal bechirah, have the ability to choose equally between right and wrong, good and evil, he must not be predisposed more to one side than to the other. Consequently, one who is very righteous, who has a profound understanding of Hashem, must have a yetzer hora, evil-inclination, that is equally powerful, that has the guile and ability to sway him away from his beliefs. How does a great person with a deep perception of the Almighty fall prey to the yetzer hora? The answer is clear: the yetzer hora, in his case, is armed with special weaponry. It can entice him to turn to his base desires to the point that he is prepared to throw away his opportunity for achieving eternity. Chazal teach us that the wicked are aware that in the end they must confront their own mortality. Despite this, their evil-inclination entices them to have a "good time" until the end.

Eisav's perception of the Almighty was sublime. Even so, he chose to live a life dedicated to materialism, debauchery and licentiousness. He knew better, but he did not care. He disregarded Hashem, because he wanted to live a lifestyle that was base and meaningless. This is why his "head" is buried in the Meoras Ha'Machpeilah. His mind was aware, but his body did not care. He had the "head" of a Torah Jew, but lived the life of a pagan. He chose to satisfy his physical desires. He was great, but so was his yetzer hora. The yetzer hora was victorious.

Yitzchak knew the difference between Yaakov and Eisav. He still, however, wanted to give the blessings to Eisav. Yaakov was spiritually pure, his sanctity unimpaired by any materialistic concerns or desires. His sons followed in his hallowed nature. They were destined to form the nation that would be a mamleches Kohanim, Nation of Priests, and goi Kadosh, Holy Nation. If Eisav and his descendants were to be bequeathed the material blessings of Eretz Yisrael they would be able to share in Yaakov's holy work by sustaining him and his descendants. In this way, Eisav would not be eternally severed from the Patriarchal heritage. He would not be a "Yaakov," but he still would not have descended to the nadir that he did. Rivkah, however, saw that regardless of the positive influence on Eisav, it was not worth the risk for Yaakov to be subordinated and subservient to him in any way. Yaakov must be completely divorced from Eisav. This is why she wanted Yaakov to be independent of Eisav and be the sole beneficiary of Yitzchak's blessings. Apparently, Hashem agreed with her.

And he called them by the same names that his father had called them. (26:18)

Yitzchak Avinu dug up the wells that the Philistines had stopped up. He then called them by the same names that his father, Avraham, had called. Horav Yechezkel Abramsky, zl, compared the emergence of the "yeshivos" that were rebuilt after the Holocaust to Yitzchak's wells. In the previous pasuk, the Torah writes, "And Yitzchak dug anew the wells of water...the Philistines had stopped up." The yeshivos that taught Torah, the fountain of life of the Jewish people, which were originally founded in Europe by Avraham Avinu's descendants, the Roshei Hayeshivah, were "stopped up" by the Nazis. Those wellsprings of Torah were dug anew in Eretz Yisrael and were given the same names of Mir, Slabodka and Ponevez. We may add that it was not only out of respect that these names were carried forward. It was to emphasize that the derech halimud v'hachaim, the manner of Torah study and the lifestyle that was inherent in these yeshivos, did not die. It had been transplanted to another place with renewed vigor and vibrancy.

In truth, these bastions of Torah constitute the fountainhead of Torah in Eretz Yisrael and throughout the world. They are what gives a place distinction. They are what gives it its size. The Alter, zl, m'Slabodka was

wont to say that just as there is a world map that points out where every country is located, so, too, is there a spiritual map. There is a difference between the two in regard to distinguishing one city/country from another. In the standard world map, many small cities/towns are either not marked or they are marked with a tiny dot. This is due to their miniscule population. The size of the dot denotes the population and significance of a place. The spiritual map is different: it does not place significance on population, but, rather, on spiritual influence. The dots on the global map for the cities of Radin, Mir, Telz, Ponevez were probably very tiny, if they existed at all. On the spiritual map, in contrast, they were mammoth, because these small towns had a spiritual influence that outshined that of many of the largest cities. Furthermore, we may add that if a small town produces a Torah giant whose influence reaches out on a global level, he gives his hometown unparalleled distinction. Man's perspective must be guided by Torah orientation if he is to see any given situation with clarity and truth.

Rivkah said to Yitzchak, "I am disgusted with my life on account of the daughters of Cheis." (27:46)

The way parents act - between themselves and in regard to their children - leaves an enduring impression. When Rivkah told Yitzchak that she wanted Yaakov to leave home, she said that there was no way he could find a suitable wife among the Bnos Cheis. On the other hand, she told Yaakov that she had instructed him to leave because Eisav sought to kill him. Why did she not tell Yitzchak the truth, that it was revealed to her b'Ruach Hakodesh, with Divine Inspiration, that Eisav was preparing to do away with his competition? The Ohr Ha'Chaim Hakadosh explains that Rivkah did not want to become a talebearer by relating to Yitzchak the evil intentions of their son, Eisav. If she could make do by simply telling him that it was for shidduch purposes, it would be more appropriate. To Yaakov, however, she told the primary reason: that Eisav was pursuing him. She could not take any chances that Yaakov might remain. His life was in danger, and it was necessary to impress this upon him. When a mother is sensitive to all of the laws of the Torah, it is no wonder that she raises a son like Yaakov Avinu.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, derives a powerful lesson in how parents should speak to their children from the dialogue between Yitzchak and Yaakov. When Yitzchak "encouraged" Yaakov to leave home and go to seek a wife, he had specific criteria concerning who this wife should be. She could not be from the Bnos Canaan, and it would be best that she be from Rivkah's family in Padan Aram. Interestingly, when Yitzchak instructed Yaakov concerning whom not to marry, he preceded his negative command with a blessing. He then said, "Do not take a wife from the Canaanite daughters." Why did he couch his instructions to leave with a blessing? Would it not have been more appropriate to first instruct him to leave and then to bless him prior to his trip?

Rav Zilberstein infers from here a valuable lesson in education and parenting. When Yitzchak commanded Yaakov to marry only from a specific milieu, he placed some very clear restrictions upon him. By limiting Yaakov to a specific group of people, Yitzchak was imposing a lot on his son. Perhaps he would not find a wife to his satisfaction among Rivkah's family. Who says that Lavan would agree to the match? Therefore, before Yitzchak could impose these restrictions on his son, he blessed him. Doing this would render his command more palatable and would insure its acceptance.

What a contrast for those parents who feel that the only way to raise their children is by exercising an iron fist. Placing restrictions and imposing obstacles every step of the way will only strain a relationship. While it is true that it is necessary to lay down the rules and that some rules must be inflexible, there is a way to present these rules on a positive note. Give the blessing of good will before you send the child to a corner. This way, he will at least realize that your intentions are noble.

Sponsored in loving memory RABBI SAMUEL STONE By his children and grandchildren Birdie & Lenny Frank & Family

From: Yeshivat Har Etzion Office [office@etzion.org.il] Subject: SICHOT64 -06: Parashat Toldot
yeshivat har etzion israel koschitzky virtual beit midrash (vbm) student summaries of sichot of the roshei yeshiva parashat toldot
SICHA OF HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL SHLIT"A
"And Yitzchak Loved Esav"

Summarized by Matan Glidai Translated by Kaeren Fish

"And the boys grew up, and Esav became a cunning hunter, a man of the field, while Yaakov was a simple man who dwelled in tents" (25:27). The Ibn Ezra explains the contrast between Yaakov and Esav as follows: Esav was full of cunning, for it is impossible to hunt animals without deceiving them (by means of traps, etc.). Yaakov, on the other hand, was a "simple" (tam) man – he was full of innocence and completely without deceit. Rashi offers a similar explanation: Esav deceived his father, asking him how to tithe salt in order that his father would believe that he was punctilious in his observance of mitzvot, while Yaakov had no idea how to deceive: "He spoke only what was in his heart. Someone who is not a deceiver is called 'simple' (tam)."

"And Yitzchak loved Esav, for the hunt was in his mouth." Why did Yitzchak love Esav and his cunning?

In order to answer this question, let us first examine the personality of one of the most outstanding Tana'im, R. Meir. The Gemara (Eiruvim 13b) narrates, "It is revealed and known to 'the One who spoke and the world was created' that there was no one in R. Meir's generation who was like him (in greatness). And why was the halakha not established in accordance with his opinion? Because his colleagues could not fully fathom his reasoning. He would say of something impure that it was pure, and provide proof, and he would say of something pure that it was impure, and provide proof. We have learned: His name was not R. Meir but rather R. Nehorai. Why, then, was he called R. Meir? Because he would enlighten (me'ir) the eyes of the Sages in halakha... Rabbi said: I am sharper than my colleagues because I merited seeing R. Meir from behind (Rashi: I sat in the row immediately behind him when I was his student); but had I seen him from the front, I would be yet sharper."

R. Meir was as great as he was because of his boldness. He was prepared to prove that something that appeared impure was really pure, and vice versa. He was prepared to argue with the seemingly clear and simple understanding. In R. Meir's Torah, next to the verse, "And G-d saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good (tov me'od)" (1:31), there appeared the gloss, "Death is 'good' (tov mavet)" (Bereishit Rabba 3:2). He saw beyond the simple and literal. Concerning the verse, "And ythe Lord G-d made Adam and his wife garments of leather ('or' spelled with an 'ayin')" (3:21), he glossed: "garments of light ('or' spelled with an 'aleph') – the garments were not something external, like leather, but rather internal, like light (Bereishit Rabba 20:12). "You are children to Hashem your G-d" (Devarim 14:1) – R. Meir taught, "When you behave like His children then you are called His children; when you do not behave like His children, you are not called so" (Kiddushin 36a).

R. Meir was ready to deviate from the literal understanding, to supply seemingly far-fetched explanations. He discerned the inner essence of things, and was willing to take risks. The Gemara (Chagiga 15a-b) recounts how R. Meir learned from Elisha ben Avuya ('Acher') even after the latter's turn to heresy, since he knew how to select the worthy things that he had to say. "R. Meir found a pomegranate (referring to Acher); he ate the inside and threw away the

peel." R. Meir's boldness therefore caused him to be greater in Torah than anyone else in his generation.

The forefathers of our nation had an important role to play in the world – to sanctify G-d's Name and to serve as a light to the nations. Avraham was extremely successful in this task – he was the "father of many nations," and his greatness was universally recognized. Yitzchak, on the other hand, was much more passive. A well-known Gemara (Pesachim 85a) compares Avraham to a mountain and Yitzchak to a field: Avraham stood out and could be seen from afar; he was recognized everywhere. Yitzchak was like a field – introverted and not visible from afar. "And all the wells which the servants of his father had dug in the days of Avraham were blocked by the Philistines and filled with earth" (26:15) – Kabbala teaches that the converts taught by Avraham also returned to their former pagan ways in the days of Yitzchak. Yitzchak's era is thus characterized by a regression in all aspects of activity among the nations.

Yitzchak recognized this failure on his part and wanted the situation to improve in the next generation. Therefore he chose Esav over Yaakov. Yaakov was admittedly a "dweller of tents" – a student of Torah, but study was not the trait that was necessary to act among the nations and inspire them. The fourteen years that Yaakov spent in the Beit Midrash (study hall) of Shem and Ever certainly made him wise and knowledgeable, but they would not necessarily help him to sanctify G-d's name in the world. Yitzchak saw Esav as better equipped for this task. Esav was cunning and daring. He would be able to improve things and to make things happen. Esav was a man of the world, a man of courage and boldness, and Yitzchak thus saw him as the successor of Avraham.

Rivka loved Yaakov because she knew, through her sense of prophecy, that G-d had chosen him ("the elder shall serve the younger"). G-d Himself declares, "I love Yaakov, but I hate Esav" (Malakhi 1:2-3). The Zohar, however, has an interesting understanding of just what G-d hates about Esav, and this too may help us appreciate why Yitzchak preferred him.

The Zohar alludes to the gemara (Sota 13a) which narrates how, when the time came to bury Yaakov in Me'arat Ha-makhpela, Esav arrived and claimed that he, rather than Yaakov, had the right to be buried there. Naftali was dispatched to Egypt to bring proof that the place rightfully belonged to Yaakov. Meanwhile, Chushim – the son of Dan – arose and killed Esav, beheading him with a sword. Esav's head rolled into Me'arat Ha-machpela and remained there, while the rest of him was buried elsewhere. In keeping with this tradition, the Zohar interprets G-d's declaration, "I love Yaakov, but I hate Esav" to mean that "I hate that which secondary in Esav, but I love that in him which is primary (figuratively, his head)."

Esav's primary characteristic was his boldness, and G-d (as well as Yitzchak) loved this characteristic. However, while Yitzchak thought this was sufficient reason for Esav to be his successor, G-d thought that Esav's negative secondary characteristics disqualified him (as He informed Rivka). Nevertheless, G-d could not afford to have this important quality disappear from among His chosen people. It was R. Meir – a descendant of Esav! – who reinstated the quality of boldness in Bnei Yisrael.

(Originally delivered on leil Shabbat Parashat Toldot 5756 [1995].) yeshivat har etzion israel koschitzky virtual beit midrash alon shevut, gush etzion 90433 e-mail: yhe@etzion.org.il or office@etzion.org.il

From: ohr@ohr.edu To: weekly@ohr.edu Subject: Torah Weekly - Parshat Toldot TORAH WEEKLY - For the week ending 29 November 2003 / 4 Kislev 5764 - from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu Parshat Toldot -- <http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/1289>

The Green Green Stuff "...Pour into me now some of that red red stuff..." (25:32)

We live in a world of addiction. And not just to drugs. There are addictions to sweets and chocolate, to TV programs and to golf.

One modern addiction even has its own name: "Workaholism." Everyone needs to work. Every one needs to find a way to put chicken on the table for Shabbat. The Mishna in Pirkei Avot tells us that we should minimize our involvement with business and maximize our time spent learning Torah. We live in a physical world, but we must never become enmeshed in it. There is no mitzvah for a person to be a workaholic. Work was designed to be a curse: "By the sweat of your brow you will eat bread." The irony is that nowadays the curse has been embraced as a blessing.

In this week's Torah portion, we find the world's first workaholic:

"...Pour into me now some of that red red stuff..." Esav's other name is Edom, meaning "red". Esav returned so exhausted from work that he recognized the lentils Yaakov was cooking only by their color.

Esav had lost the basic human recognition of "what things are," and degenerated to the level of "what things look like." He had lost the basic human understanding of essence, and grasped only the superficial. When Yaakov saw this spiritual degeneration he realized that Esav was in no way fit for the spiritual duties incumbent on the first-born, and immediately asked him to sell him the birthright.

This is the difference between the descendants of Yaakov and Esav to this day. Yaakov grasps the world of the inside, whereas Esav lays hold of only the surface, the outside.

Being a workaholic is not a Jewish thing.

Source: Based on the Sforno in Lev Eliyahu

Written and compiled by RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

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From: RABBI RISKIN'S SHABBAT SHALOM List [parsha@ohrtorahstone.org.il] Sent: November 26, 2003 2 To: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's Shabbat Shalom Parsha Column Subject: Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Toldot by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Toldot (Genesis 25:19-28:9) By Shlomo Riskin Efrat, Israel - "And it was that Isaac had grown old and his eyesight was fading. He summoned his elder son Esau, '...trap me some game... My soul will then bless you before I die'" (Genesis 27:1,3,4).

The agonizing question which continues to plague all the commentaries is why Father Isaac initially chooses to give the blessing – birthright to Esau. The immediate verse preceding Isaac's invitation to Esau tells us that "Esau's (Hittite wives) became a source of spiritual bitterness to Isaac and Rebecca" (Genesis 26:35); in Biblical terms, Esau had intermarried! Moreover, Isaac certainly knew that Esau had sold and scorned the birthright, and he had most probably heard from his wife the Divine prophesy that "the elder shall serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23). So even if his blindness had prevented him from seeing the immoral behavior of Esau, how could Isaac have chosen Esau over Jacob for the blessings – birthright?

I believe that a careful reading of the text will provide the answer. The Biblical chapter preceding the bestowal of the blessings opens with a famine in the Land of Israel, causing Isaac to settle in Gerar – the city of the Philistine King Abimelech, situated on the southern border of Israel. He receives a Divine promise that eventually this land will be part of his patrimony of Israel, and goes through a similar experience as had his father Abraham, since both father and son had seen their wives taken into – and freed from – the harem of Abimelech. Abraham had also made a treaty with Abimelech, presumably allowing the descendants of each to dwell on that land (Genesis 20:15, 21:23 ff). Abimelech seems to be honoring his treaty, because he instructs his nation that if anyone even touches Isaac or his wife, the criminal will be put to death (Genesis 26:11).

However, the fly in the ointment becomes apparent as Isaac waxes wealthy, owning flocks of sheep, herds of cattle, retinues of slaves. The Philistines become jealous, and plug up all the wells which Abraham's servants had dug in the area during Abraham's lifetime. Abimelekh then confronts Isaac, chasing him away and charging him with having become more powerful than they by taking over their wealth (Genesis 26:16). Apparently Abimelekh has forgotten his previous promises and treaties, and Isaac doesn't even bother to remind him of them: "And Isaac went away from there and camped in the Gerar valley." (Genesis 26:16)

Isaac's servants dig new wells in their exiled place of habitation, his rights to two out of three of them being contested by the Philistines. To add insult to injury, Abimelekh flanked in a Mafiosolike manner on both sides by a group of "friends" as well as his general Pikhoh – comes to Isaac in order to make a new treaty with him, an offer he can't possibly refuse given the composition of his visitors. A dumbstruck Isaac incredulously asks, "Why do you come to me? You hate me and you drove me away from you." (Genesis 26:27). Abimelekh, apparently desirous of protecting himself on every side since Isaac seems to always land on his feet and G-d appears to be guarding over him, shamelessly responds, "You dare not do any ill towards us since we did not harm you; indeed, we only did good to you by allowing you to leave in peace..." (Genesis 26:29). And Isaac makes a treaty with Abimelekh. It is at this point in the text that we are told that Esau took Hittite wives, but nevertheless Isaac summons Esau for the blessing – birthright...

I believe that the Biblical order speaks for itself and explains Isaac's choice. Isaac loves the Land of Israel; he alone out of all the patriarchs never forsakes its sacred earth. He is pictured "laying seeds in the land, and extracting in one year one hundred times as much as he sowed" (Genesis 26:12). Yet, he is at a loss to protect the land, even to protect his right to continue to live on the land even under Philistine rule, even after two previous treaties, one with Abraham and one with him. He is told that he ought be grateful that he was merely banished from the land and not personally harmed; and he is humiliated into entering into yet another treaty with the same deceitful rogue who has so callously reneges on his past treaties.

Isaac understands that although G-d has promised us the land, we will most probably have to do battle for the land in order to occupy it. He is probably disappointed in his own lack of ability to stand up for his rights, to strike back at Abimelekh. And when he looks at his twin sons, the naive dweller in tents Yankele and the aggressive hunter Esau, he concludes that only an Esau will have the wherewithal to stand up to our enemies and fight for the patrimony. Indeed, as Isaac bestows the blessing –birthright, he first smells the fragrance of the garments, declaring, "Behold, the fragrance of my son is as the fragrance of the fields which have been blessed by G-d."

Shabbat Shalom.

You can find Rabbi Riskin's parshiot on the web at: http://www.ohrtorahstone.org.il/_parsha/index.htm Ohr Torah Stone Colleges and Graduate Programs Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, Chancellor Rabbi Chaim Brovender, Dean To subscribe, E-mail to: Shabbat_Shalom-on@ohrtorahstone.org.il

From: Rav Kook List [RavKookList@hotmail.com] Subject: RAV KOOK DVAR TORAH LIST - Toldot: Abraham Kept Mitzvot Toldot: ABRAHAM KEPT MITZVOT

Why are rituals and practical mitzvot so central to Judaism? Why isn't it sufficient just to absorb the philosophical content of the Torah's teachings?

When famine struck and Isaac considered leaving the Land of Israel, G-d appeared to him.

"I will make your children as the stars in the sky, and I will give them all of this land. Because Abraham listened to Me, and kept My watch, My mitzvot, My laws and My Torah." [Gen. 26:4-5]

Abraham kept mitzvot? The Sages gleaned from this verse that the forefathers fulfilled the precepts of the Torah, even though the Torah had not yet been revealed at Sinai. Rav Ashi (fifth century Talmudic sage) went even further. He asserted that Abraham performed the ritual of "Eiruv Tavshilin" - of rabbinical origin - when a holiday fell on Friday. [Yoma 28]

A student once wrote Rav Kook that this statement should not be understood literally. How could Abraham know what the rabbinical courts would decree a thousand years in the future? The Sages must have intended to transmit a subtler message: Abraham's philosophical mastery of the Torah was so complete, his comprehension was so penetrating, that it encompassed even the underlying rationale for future decrees.

Rav Kook himself was not taken with this explanation. In his response, Rav Kook emphasized that the Torah's spiritual underpinnings cannot be safeguarded without practical mitzvot. We cannot truly absorb the Torah's philosophical teachings without concrete rituals. This is the fundamental weakness of Christianity - its reliance solely on faith.

Rather, Rav Kook elucidated this Talmudic tradition in a different vein. Abraham did not literally perform the ritual of "eiruv tavshilin" as we do today. Yet, he applied the concept of this ceremony to his day-to-day living. What is the essence of "eiruv tavshilin"? This ritual teaches us to distinguish between the sanctity of the Sabbath and the lesser sanctity of the holidays. Abraham was also able to make this fine distinction - **in his actions**. In his life and deeds, he was able to differentiate not only between the sacred and the profane, but also between varying levels of holiness.

[Igrat I: 135 (1908)]

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From: Kol Torah [koltorah@koltorah.org] Sent: November 14 & 21, 2003 Subject: Kol Torah Parshat Vayera & Chaye Sara Gevinat Akum Kol Torah A Student Publication of the Torah Academy of Bergen County

THE GEVINAT AKUM PROHIBITION BY RABBI CHAIM JACHTER

Part I

Unlike the prohibitions of Chalav Yisrael that we discussed for the past three weeks, the prohibition of Gevinat Akum, cheese produced by a non-Jew, is observed by all observant Jews in (mostly) the same manner. In this essay and in next week's essay, we shall outline the development and the parameters of this prohibition as well as some of the issues that are debated by twentieth century Poskim. These essays will be based on three essays on this topic that have been recently written by three Kashrut professionals - Rav Yaakov Borow in Tenuva's Binetiv Hechalav pp. 43-47, Rav Zushe Blech in the Orthodox Union's Daf Kashrut of Adar I 5757, and Rav Avraham Juravel's discussion that is published in a Kashrut journal known as Mehadrin, Adar II 5755.

Talmudic Background

The Rambam (Hilchot Maachalot Asurot 3:12-13) notes that fundamentally, there is more reason to be lenient regarding cheese produced by a non-Jew than milk produced by a non-Jew. This is because, the Rambam writes, milk from a non-kosher animal cannot be made into cheese. Nevertheless, Chazal prohibited consuming cheese produced by a non-Jew. The Gemara offers many possible reasons for this enactment, but the Mishnah (Avodah Zarah 29b and see Avodah Zarah 35a) indicates that Chazal at first concealed the reason for this enactment.

The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 35) searches for the reason behind this enactment and cites a plethora of explanations. One explanation is that

non-Jews curdle the milk with the stomach lining from animals that were not properly slaughtered (Niveilot). Another reason is that the non-Jews did not take adequate care to cover the milk that would be used to make cheese and Chazal were concerned that snakes would release their venom into the uncovered liquids. Another is that the non-Jews smoothed over the cheese with pig fat. Yet another explanation is that Chazal were concerned that there were leftover drops of milk in the cheese that did not curdle and these drops of milk might have been from a non-Kosher animal. Another explanation is that they made the cheese from non-Kosher vinegar.

Rishonim

The Rishonim debate which of these reasons is the accepted approach. The Rambam (Hilchot Maachalot Asurot 3:13) codifies the reason that they use the stomach lining of Niveilot to curdle the cheese. Rabbeinu Tam (cited in Tosafot Avodah Zarah 35a s.v. Chada), on the other hand, believes that the primary concern is that the milk was exposed to snake venom. The Shulchan Aruch (Y.D. 115:2) adopts the approach of the Rambam.

The Rishonim also debate whether the enactment forbidding Gevinat Akum applies even when the concerns for the enactment are not relevant. Rabbeinu Tam (ibid) asserts that the concerns are not relevant today since snakes are not prevalent in our environs. He argues that Chazal did not issue this enactment in a situation where concern for snake venom is not relevant. Furthermore, he states:

“In many places Jews eat cheese produced by non-Jews since the non-Jews use flowers to curdle the milk and the Geonim of Narbonne (Southern France) permitted this practice. However, in our places (Northern France and Germany) there is reason to be strict since they use stomach linings to curdle milk.” The Rambam (Hilchot Ma’achalot Asurot 3:14), however, records that “some Geonim” rule that the prohibition of Gevinat Akum applies even when the reason for the enactment does not apply. He writes:

“Cheese that non-Jews curdle with grass or with fruit juice such as date tree sap and it is evident in the cheese [that an animal product was not used to produce the cheese], some Geonim ruled that it is nevertheless forbidden because the enactment applies to all cheese produced by non-Jews whether or not a Kosher or non-Kosher curdling agent was used.” It should be noted that the Rambam does not cite any authority that disputes the ruling of the Geonim and the Rambam does not criticize this ruling. Rav Yosef Karo (both in his Kesef Mishneh commentary to the Rambam and in his Beit Yosef commentary to the Tur) asserts, therefore, that the Rambam concurs with the ruling of the Geonim. The Maggid Mishneh explains that the reason for this ruling is that it is a Davar Sh'b'minyan, that whenever Chazal forbade something, the prohibition remains even when the reason for the prohibition is not relevant (see Beitzah 5a).

Interestingly, Rav Blech writes that there is a type of cheese made in Portugal today that uses an enzyme derived from the thistle flower to curdle milk to make cheese. In addition, Rav Juravel writes that during World War I when there was a severe shortage of animal rennet, people in many countries used date tree sap to make cheese. He explains that there is an enzyme in this sap known as ficin that serves as a curdling agent.

Shulchan Aruch and Codes

The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 115:2) unequivocally rules in accordance with the ruling of the Rambam. The Rama adds that this is the accepted custom and warns against being “Poreitz Geder” breaking the fence enacted by Am Yisrael regarding this matter. The Rama adds, though, that an exception to this lenient ruling is a place where the Jewish community has a tradition to follow the lenient ruling of the Geonim of Narbonne. The Beit Yosef, on the other hand, is far less tolerant of those places that maintain their tradition to follow the lenient approach to this issue. He strongly urges those few communities who follow the lenient view to adopt the practice of the overwhelming majority of Jewish communities throughout the world to be strict about this matter. The Chochmat Adam (53:38 and 67:7) and the Aruch Hashulchan (Y.D. 115:16-17) rule completely in accordance with the strict view and express harsh words against those who follow the lenient opinion. These authorities, writing in the nineteenth century, make no mention of communities that are lenient regarding this issue. It seems that by their time there were no longer any communities that followed the lenient tradition.

This is an especially relevant issue today, as cheese is made either from non-animals sources such as microbial rennet or animal sources that have been reduced to a powder, which seems to cause the stomach lining to lose its prohibited status as it has been reduced to “mere wood” (Rama Y.D. 87:10). Accordingly, the reason for this enactment is virtually never relevant today. Nonetheless, the prohibition still applies and all observant Jews strictly adhere to this prohibition.

Stomach Lining of a Kosher Animal

Rishonim ask why the stomach lining of a N'veilah renders cheese not Kosher. Indeed, only a small amount of the lining is used and there is certainly

more than sixty times of milk than stomach lining and thus the stomach lining should be nullified (Battel) by the milk. The Rambam (Hilchot Maachalot Asurot 3:13) answers that the stomach is a Davar Hamaamid (it establishes the form of the item, in this case it is the catalyst that turns the milk into cheese) and is not Battel even if it less than sixty times the product it was placed into. This approach is exceedingly logical. The reason why something is Battel is because if it is less than sixty times the product it was placed in, then it has lost its significance. The stomach lining, though, cannot be described as insignificant since it is indispensable in creating the cheese.

The Maggid Mishneh (ad. loc.) cites a different answer presented by the Ramban and the Rashba, that the fact that the taste of the stomach lining is nullified is irrelevant because Chazal enacted the prohibition of Gevinat Akum to create a social barrier between us and non-Jews and not because of a Kashrut problem. This approach is quite cogent in light of our practice to prohibit Gevinat Akum even if the reason for its enactment does not apply. The Rambam (Hilchot Maachalot Asurot 9:16), in turn, asks that if the stomach lining is never Battel because it is a Davar Hamaamid, then cheese made from the stomach lining of animal that is slaughtered properly should also be forbidden because of the mixture between milk and meat. The Rambam answers (following the approach of his father’s Rebbe, the Ri Migash) that the rule that a Davar Hamaamid is never Battel applies only if the Davar Hamaamid is prohibited already (such as the stomach lining of a non-Kosher animal). An item that is Kosher (the stomach lining from a properly slaughtered animal) cannot create a prohibited mixture of milk and meat because it is a Davar Hamaamid. See Tosafot (Avodah Zarah 35a s.v. Mipnei) for a different resolution of this problem.

One may ask then how is it permissible to make Kosher cheese if we are forbidden to intentionally nullify prohibited items (“Ein Mivatlin Issur Lichatchilah,” see Shach Y.D. 87:33). For example, we are not permitted to intentionally place a bit of meat into a glass of milk if we wish to drink the milk, even if there is at least sixty times more milk than meat. How then are we permitted to add a bit of stomach lining to milk in order to make cheese? Rav Akiva Eiger (Teshuvot number 207, cited in the Pitchei Teshuva 87:19) explains that the prohibition of Ein M’vatlin Issur L’chatchilah does not apply if two lenient factors are in effect - the use of completely desiccated stomach linings and the fact that the stomach linings are nullified because they are less than sixty times the milk that it is placed in. The Aruch Hashulchan (Y.D. 87:43) records the common practice to produce cheese with completely desiccated stomach linings mixed together with other items. When the stomach lining is mixed together with other items to effect the curdling process, we may be lenient because this is a situation of “Zeh Vizeh Goreim,” an item that was created by two factors, one permissible and one forbidden, where we may disregard the permitted item if the permitted item could have accomplished the task even without aid of the forbidden item (see Rama Y.D. 87:11 and Shach Y.D. 87:35). For further discussion of this issue see Pitchei Teshuva (Y.D. 87:19) and Darkei Teshuva (87:138).

Conclusion

Next week, Bli Neder and Im Yirtzeh Hashem we shall complete our discussion of the Gevinat Akum prohibition. We shall discuss whether Jewish participation is required in the process of cheese making and whether soft cheeses and whey are included in this prohibition.

The Gevinat Akum Prohibition: Part II
by Rabbi Chaim Jachter

This week we shall conclude our review of the prohibition to eat cheese that was produced by a non-Jew. We shall discuss whether Jewish participation is required in the cheese making process and whether soft cheeses and whey are included in this prohibition. Jewish Supervision or Participation – Rama vs. the Shach There are two unresolved debates regarding the production of kosher cheese. The Rama (Y.D. 115:2) rules (and notes that this is the common custom) that it is sufficient for a Jew to monitor the cheese making process to render the cheese kosher. According to the Rama, the prohibition of Gevinat Akum parallels the prohibition of Chalav Akum as supervision suffices to permit the product. The Shach (Y.D. 115:20) requires either Jewish ownership of the cheese or active participation of a Jew in the cheese making. According to the Shach, Gevinat Akum parallels the rules of Pat Akum (bread baked by a non-Jew) in that Jewish participation is required to render the product permissible.

The Shach offers an interesting proof to his ruling from the language of the Mishnahot that present the prohibitions of Gevinat Akum and Chalav Akum. The Mishnah (Avodah Zarah 35b) that presents the prohibition of Chalav Akum states that the milk is prohibited if a Jew does not watch the milking. On the other hand, the Mishnah (Avodah Zarah 29b) that presents the prohibition of Gevinat Akum simply states that Gevinat Akum is prohibited and makes no distinction as to whether a Jew watches the cheese making process or not. The Shach, accordingly, concludes

that Jewish ownership or active participation is required to permit us to eat the cheese. See, though, the comments of Rav Yonatan Eibushetz (Mateh Yonatan Y.D. 115:2) who seeks to refute this proof of the Shach. The Aruch Hashulchan (Y.D. 115:19), in turn, cites the Rambam in his commentary to the Mishnah (that appears on Avodah Zarah 29b) who writes explicitly in accordance with the view of the Rama. This dispute has never been resolved. Among eighteenth-century authorities, the Noda Biyehuda (2:Orach Chaim 37) rules in accordance with the Rama and notes that this is the accepted practice, whereas the Vilna Gaon (Biur HaGra Y.D. 115:15) rules in accordance with the Shach. Among the nineteenth-century authorities, the Chochmat Adam (67:7) rules in accordance with the Shach and the Aruch Hashulchan (Y.D. 115:19) essentially rules in accordance with the Rama, although he writes that it is proper to accommodate the strict ruling of the Shach. In the twentieth century, Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe Y.D. 3:16) adopt the same approach as the Aruch Hashulchan. Rav Zushe Blech (in his essay that we cited last week) notes that it seems that the generally accepted practice is to follow the Shach. This dispute has a major impact regarding the level of supervision required for the cheese making process. According to the Rama occasional inspections suffice, because the Gemara (Chullin 4a) states that “Yotzei Vinichnas Kiomeid Al Gabav Dami”, spot checks are the equivalent of constantly supervising a procedure. However, according to the Shach, a Mashgiach must be available on location to participate in the cheese making process. This explains why it is impractical for a large general company to have its cheeses certified kosher. This is why kosher cheeses are made by companies that produce cheese specifically for the observant Jewish community.

Soft Cheeses – Chochmat Adam, Aruch Hashulchan, and Rav Moshe Feinstein

Another major debate rages concerning whether soft cheeses (such as cottage cheese and cream cheese) are included in the prohibition of Gevinat Akum. Logically, it would seem that since the concern according to the Rambam and Shulchan Aruch is that the non-Jews used the stomach lining of a Niveila (an animal that was not slaughtered properly) to curdle the cheese, that the prohibition would only apply to cheeses that are produced by the enzyme from the stomach lining. Soft cheeses, though, are not made primarily with the use of enzymes. Before the modern age, cottage cheese was made by passively allowing the milk to ferment and separate into curds and whey. Hence, it would seem that the enactment should not apply to soft cheese since it is not a rennet-based process.

In the modern age, though, a small amount of rennet is added to improve the process of making soft cheeses. Nonetheless, because of the principle of Zeh Vizeh Goreim it would seem reasonable that we may overlook the fact that some rennet is added to enhance the production. As we explained last week, if both a forbidden and permitted substance are involved together in the creation of a food product, we may ignore the contribution of the non-kosher item if the kosher item could have accomplished the task even without the aid of the non-kosher item.

To illustrate the different roles of rennet in the production of soft and hard cheeses, Rav Blech notes that soft cheese uses no more than 2 milliliters of rennet per 1000 pounds of milk whereas hard cheese generally requires between fifty and ninety milliliters of rennet. Indeed, Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe Y.D. 2:48) is inclined to rule that the prohibition of Gevinat Akum does not apply to soft cheeses. He notes that the principle of Zeh Vizeh Gorem appears to be operative in the production of cottage cheese. In fact, Rav Blech cites that Rav Tuvia Goldstein (a prominent Posek from Brooklyn) rules that one may even Lichatchilah (initially) rely on this approach. He rules that soft cheeses are equivalent to butter (that we discussed in last week’s issue) regarding which most observant Jews follow the lenient approach among the Poskim. Nonetheless, both the Chochmat Adam (53:38) and the Aruch Hashulchan (Y.D. 115:16) rule that the prohibition applies even to cheeses where no rennet is used to produce the cheese. This approach is in harmony with the ruling of the Rambam and the Shulchan Aruch that the enactment applies even when the reason does not apply. We should note that Rav Moshe does not rule unequivocally that soft cheeses are not included in the prohibition of Gevinat Akum. Rather, he writes to Rav Shimon Schwab, of blessed memory, that there is no need for a Rav to make a public pronouncement to adopt the strict view regarding this matter.

Rav Blech and Rav Borow (in his article that we cited last week) demonstrate that this dispute has been debated by numerous authorities of previous generations. The Radvaz (Teshuvot 6:2291) rules that yogurt (which is made without rennet) is included in the Gevinat Akum prohibition. The Pri Chadash (Y.D. 115:21), though, adopts the lenient view. Rav Blech, though, questions Rav Moshe’s approach based on Frank V. Kosikowski’s “Cheese and Fermented Milk Foods” (p. 111) that states that the rennet enzymes that are added in the production of soft cheeses provides for a sweeter cheese. Rav Borow, though, notes that he consulted with the food engineers at Tenuva who stated that the rennet added to soft cheeses does not play a primary role in creating the cheese. Rather, the small amount of added rennet allows industrial scale

production of soft cheeses to proceed more efficiently. Rav Juravel suggests a fascinating possible proof to Rav Moshe’s approach. He notes that the enzyme from date tree sap creates hard cheese. He suggests that perhaps the reason why the Rambam in his description of the Gevinat Akum prohibition presents the example of date tree sap to illustrate that only hard cheeses are included in the Gezeirah (enactment) prohibiting Gevinat Akum. This dispute has never fully been resolved.

Rav Borow told me that some Kashrut organizations adopt a compromise about this matter. In regard to hard cheeses, they follow the Shach and require the Mashgiach to actively participate in the cheese making process. In regard to soft cheeses, they follow the Rama’s ruling that supervision suffices (and that even Yotzei V’nichnas supervision suffices). This explains the availability of cottage cheese and cream cheese from large companies with a Kashrut certification from an accepted Kashrut agency. Other Kashrut agencies, though, are stricter and require the active participation of a Mashgiach even for the production of soft cheeses. Rav Borow, though, writes that all agree that even soft cheese require a reliable Kashrut certification to insure that all ingredients are kosher.

Whey In the cheese making process, the milk separates into curds and whey. The question is whether the whey (which is essentially a byproduct of the cheese making process) is included in the prohibition of Gevinat Akum. Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe Y.D. 3:17) rules that it is not included in the prohibition, whereas Rav Eliyahu Bakshi Doron (Techumin 23:466) believes that it should be included in the prohibition. Rav Moshe argues that the whey should be viewed as distinct from cheese as butter is viewed distinctly from milk according to the lenient opinions regarding Chemat Akum. Rav Shmuel Wosner (Teshuvot Sheivet Halevi 4:87) adopts a middle approach and rules that the prohibition applies to whey only when the whey is heated together with the curd at a temperature higher than Yad Soledet Bo (hot to the touch). Yad Soledet Bo is the Halachic definition of heat in the context of Kashrut and Shabbat and Poskim assert varying opinions regarding the parallel in degrees Fahrenheit– the opinions range from 110–120 degrees (see Teshuvot Minchat Shlomo 1:91:8, Rav Shimon Eider’s Halachos of Shabbos p.243, and Rav Mordechai Willig, Beit Yitzchak 21:pp.178-179). Since Beliah (absorption from food) occurs at Yad Soledet Bo, Rav Wosner reasons that the whey absorbed from the Gevinat Akum and is rendered as forbidden.

Rav Blech reports that the policy of the Orthodox Union is to follow the approach of Rav Wosner using Rav Aharon Kotler’s standard (as reported by Rav Shimon Eider and Rav Moshe Heinemann, as cited by Rav Blech) for Yad Soledet Bo, which is 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Although many would not ordinarily rely on Rav Kotler’s ruling in a context where it serves as a leniency, in this context it is justified because the custom has been in the United States (as mentioned in Rav Moshe’s Teshuva) and Israel (see Binetiv Hechalav p.42) to entirely follow Rav Moshe’s ruling. Accordingly, the OU’s policy represents an upgrade from the previously accepted practice.

Conclusion Unlike the area of Chalav Yisrael, there is near uniformity regarding the prohibition of Gevinat Akum. However, there are a few pockets of debate there still persist and about these we say Eilu Vieilu Divrei Elokim Chaim. Most likely there will be further areas of disagreement as modern food technology changes at breakneck speed and Poskim continue to successfully apply our ancient and venerated Halacha to contemporary challenges.

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Crash Course in Jewish History Part 7: JOSEPH

BY RABBI KEN SPIRO

Had Jacob married Rachel as he had intended -- instead of being tricked into marrying Leah -- Joseph would have likely been his first-born son. Although he was Jacob's 11th son, he dominates the narrative of the 12 brothers, and, in his story, we see a great many historical patterns.

To begin with, Joseph has a key position in the family as a result of his being the long-awaited first child of Jacob's favorite wife. His father seems to be showing him a considerable amount of favoritism -- he buys him a special coat -- and this engenders jealousy from his brothers.

However, it would be a mistake to view their behavior simplistically, as typical of a dysfunctional family. While these people without a doubt make mistakes, spiritually they are on an incredibly high level. So we have to look deeply at what is really going on here.

Joseph is having dreams and he interprets those dreams. As we learn, he has a special gift for dream interpretation, and his dreams and interpretations are accurate and prophetic. He tells his brothers, for example, that one day they will bow to him (which does indeed happen some years later).

The brothers conclude that Joseph must be the bad apple in their generation and decide to get rid of him.

But to his brothers his dreams appear to verge on megalomania. And since they know that they are the team that's supposed to change the world, they think he is endangering the whole future of humanity. They know the family history -- that in each generation there was one "bad apple" -- first Ishmael, then Esau. So they conclude that Joseph must be the bad one in this generation.

They contemplate killing him, but instead they sell him into slavery. They take his fancy coat, smear it with goat's blood and present it to Jacob as if Joseph had been killed by a wild animal.

Meanwhile, Joseph is taken by a caravan of Ishmaelites to Egypt, where he becomes a slave in the household of a nobleman named Potiphar.

EGYPTIAN EMPIRE

At this juncture, we have to consider what Egypt was like at this time in history when it was the second of the two great civilizations in existence. (The first was the Mesopotamian civilization which we described in Part 3 of this series.)

Egypt at that time was mostly desert except for the Nile River. The Nile is the greatest river in the world, and if it didn't flow through Egypt the country would be just sand. In ancient times only 3% of Egypt was inhabitable, arable land.

Because of its natural defenses, Egypt was totally isolated and virtually impossible to invade. (The Hyksos, invaded it once, the Assyrians also, then finally Alexander the Great. But that's only three times in 3,000 years.) Egypt was the most static, longest-surviving civilization in human history. And it virtually didn't change. You think about how little Egypt changed in 3,000 years and how much the modern world has changed in even a few hundred years. It's mind-boggling how stable that society was and to a large extent it's due to its geography.

The Great Pyramid of Khufu covers 13 acres in area, is 500 feet high and built of 5 million tons of stone. Although we don't have exact dates for the beginning of the Egyptian civilization, it is believed to have started in the Early Bronze period, around 3300 BCE. It was a very sophisticated culture, considering the feats of engineering that the pyramids represent. The Great Pyramid of Khufu, known as "Cheops," is the largest ever built, 13 acres in area, almost 500 feet high, of 5 million tons of stone; and it was built by people who did not have any iron tools. We have no idea how they did it. They obviously had tremendously sophisticated stone cutting techniques and engineering knowledge, enabling them to move large blocks of stone. They had pulleys, they had levers, they had a lot of muscle power.

It's estimated that Cheops took 100,000 men and thirty years to build. Why spend so much effort on building a tomb? Because the Egyptians were also spiritually sophisticated. It was a dark spirituality but not to be lightly dismissed. They were preoccupied with death, which is why they perfected mummification, and their holy book was called the Book of the Dead. How's that for a lively read?

They believed that Pharaoh was a living god, he had absolute power, and that Pharaoh's position in the after-life would affect how the whole of Egypt would do. So you had to make a really good tomb for him, and you had to give him the right gifts, and you had to make sure that he got into the after-life correctly, otherwise things would go badly for everybody. Which is why it was a national project of the entire Egyptian people to create such extra-ordinary tombs for the Pharaohs.

Of course, this very sophisticated culture was antithetical to Judaism as is humanly possible, because it practiced idolatry. They worshipped 2,000 different gods in ancient Egypt. G-ds with hippo heads, and falcon heads, and crocodile heads. This was a civilization that was idolatrous to the extreme -- very religious and spiritual in its own sense and yet very idolatrous at the same time. They were not primitive or superstitious or stupid; they understood spiritual power and were a very sophisticated people who truly believed in the power of idolatry.

Egypt, besides being a place of idolatry, was also a place of immorality -- a very licentious place.

So to throw young Joseph into this environment is bad news. Very bad news.

A SLAVE RISES TO THE TOP

Separated from the influence of his family at an early age, Joseph has a major disadvantage for a licentious society -- he is very handsome. And his master's wife, Mrs. Potiphar, finds him very attractive.

Besides that, Joseph has a lot going for him -- he is very smart and hardworking and he rises from his position as lowly teenage servant to head of Potiphar's household. This is the classic historic pattern of the Jew in the Diaspora -- he comes in impoverished, deals with a bad situation, works hard, rises to the top.

Now Potiphar's wife is not happy that Joseph refuses her advances. Eventually, she picks a time when everyone is out of the house attending a national celebration and she tries to rip his clothes off. He runs away. She screams rape.

Mr. Potiphar comes home. It is obvious that he doesn't believe his wife because otherwise he would have Joseph killed on the spot. Instead, he throws him into prison.

So here Joseph, who was the head servant, is on the bottom again. This is the Jew in the Diaspora. We come into a country, we rise, then we're thrown out. We start at the bottom somewhere else. Joseph is now in prison and he rises very quickly to be the head prisoner. He's running the whole place. This again is the Jew.

Thrown into prison, Joseph rises very quickly to be the head prisoner. Into prison is thrown Pharaoh's wine steward and Pharaoh's baker. And they have dreams. Now as we know Joseph is the master dream interpreter, and therefore it's not surprising that Joseph interprets these dreams and he tells the wine steward that the Pharaoh is going to reinstate him into his position, and he tells the baker that he's going to lose his head. And that's exactly what happens.

PHARAOH'S DREAMS

Then the Pharaoh himself has a couple of disturbing dreams. He dreams of seven fat cows coming out of the Nile and being devoured by seven thin cows. And then he has another dream of seven fat sheaves of wheat being devoured by seven thin sheaves of wheat. And he's very disturbed. And believe me, if living-god-on-earth-Pharaoh can't sleep, no one in Egypt sleeps.

The Pharaoh wakes up all his magicians and his soothsayers and his astrologers and none of them can figure out what the dream was about, and then the wine steward says, "I remember, there was this Jewish kid in prison who interprets dreams."

Now this, by the way, is the ultimate Jewish success story. They take Joseph out of prison; they shower him, shave him and bring him before Pharaoh. When he hears the dream, Joseph tells the Pharaoh: "There's going to be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine."

"What should I do?" asks the Pharaoh. And Joseph says, "You'd better stockpile all the grain in Egypt so that when the famine hits you'll have what to eat." Pharaoh says, "You thought of it, you do it."

Joseph becomes Viceroy of Egypt, for all practical purposes the most powerful man in the empire. And this is how Joseph becomes Viceroy, for all practical purposes the most powerful man in the whole land in terms of infrastructure of Egypt, the most powerful empire at the time. How's that for promotion -- from prisoner to viceroy. And he marries -- Osnat, the daughter of Potiphar.

Before the famine hits he has two children, Menashe and Ephraim. To this day, observant Jews bless their children every Friday night to be like Ephraim and Menashe. Why? First, unlike all the previous brothers in the Bible -- Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Jacob and Esau -- they love each other and are not jealous of each other's accomplishments. Second, because these kids grow up as sons of the Viceroy, they could have been totally assimilated, spoiled, Egyptian brats, yet it's very clear that they grow up completely loyal proto-Jews in an incredibly hostile environment.

Now that Joseph is Viceroy the stage is set for his early dreams to come true, when he saw his brothers bowing before him. And this is indeed what happens next.

NEXT: REUNION