

BS"D



To: Parsha@YahooGroups.com

From: crshulman@aol.com

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON TOLDOS - 5766

Starting our 11th cycle!

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Begin Visein Tal U'Matar This Sunday Evening

From Ezras Torah Luach - <http://www.ezrastorah.org/kislev.htm> - At Maariv of Sunday night Dec. 4, 2005, 4 Kislev, we begin to include Vesain Tal Umatar into the Shemonah Esrei. If one became aware, after he had completed the Bracha Mevaraich Hashanim, that he had omitted Vesain Tal Umatar he should wait to insert it right before Ki Ata Shomeah of Shema Koleinu. If he had already completed the Bracha Shomeah Tfilah, he may insert it before saying "Retzei". If he had already begun "Retzei" he must return to the Bracha "Boraich Aleinu", which is the proper place for Vesain Tal Umatar. If he had already completed the Shemonah Esrei and stepped backward, then he must repeat the entire Shemonah Esrei. In any situation in which a person must repeat the entire Shemonah Esrei, he may fulfill his obligation by listening to every word of the Chazzan's Repetition from beginning to end, with the intention of thus fulfilling his obligation. (It is advisable to repeat 101 times [at the very least 90 times]: Ves Kal Minei Svusa Letova Vesaen Tal Umatar so as to make the inclusion of Vesain Tal Umatar habitual and fluent, thus eliminating any future doubt as to whether one included Vesain Tal Umatar in the Shemonah Esrei or not.)

From: TorahWeb.org [torahweb@torahweb.org] Sent: Wednesday, November 30, 2005 9:40 PM To: weeklydt@torahweb2.org Subject: [TorahWeb] Rabbi Mordechai Willig - Raising Children

Rabbi Mordechai Willig

Raising Children

"Yitzchok loved Eisav, for game was in his mouth, but Rivka loved Yaakov (25:28)."

"One who spares his rod hates his child, but he who loves him disciplines him in his youth (Mishlei 13:24)." Yitzchok loved Eisav, and therefore Eisav became a terrible sinner because Yitzchok did not discipline him. Whoever does not discipline his son, will hate him when he goes astray. Examples include Avraham and Yishmael, and David and both Avshalom and Adoniya: "All his [Adoniya's] days his father had never saddened him [by] saying 'why have you done this?' (Melachim I 1:6)."

"One who loves him disciplines him - this is Avraham who chastised Yitzchok and taught him Torah and guided him in his ways. This is Yaakov, whose father Yitzchok taught him Torah and disciplined him in the Yeshiva. Yaakov chastised his sons and punished them, and taught them his ways. Ultimately a son who is disciplined loves and honors his father." -Tanchuma Shemos 1

The Torah does not hide the errors of our great men -they are thereby made greater and more instructive (Rav Hirsch 12:10). As long as Yaakov and Eisav were little, both had exactly the same teaching. This was a mistake. The great law of education, bring up each child in accordance with his own way (Mishlei 22:6), was forgotten. Had Yitzchok and Rivka trained Eisav

differently, according to his nature, early enough, he could have helped Yaakov (ibid 25:27).

Yitzchok loved Eisav, who served him well, but he ultimately hated Eisav. Rivka loved Yaakov (present tense), based on his wonderful nature which engendered even greater love (Netziv 25:28).

II

Raising children sometimes demands selflessness. Yitzchok allowed Eisav's service to interfere with disciplinary action. Yitzchok's eyesight failed because Eisav bribed him, and bribery blinds (Shemos 23:8) (Da'as Zekeinim MiBa'alei HaTosafos 27:1).

Earlier, Eisav was disciplined too much, raised in the same way as Yaakov. Sometimes "one size fits all" education is simply more expedient. Moreover, a tightly disciplined child is a source of pride to a parent. However, a child who needs more "space" in early youth must be reasonably accommodated. This requires a careful analysis of the child's nature, and a great deal of patience and flexibility.

One who is born during the hour of Mars (maadim - red) will be a man who spills blood: a bloodletter, a shochet, a mohel, or a [murderous] thief (Shabbos 156a). A parent who attempts to raise such a child as a rosh yeshiva instead of a doctor, shochet or mohel, may cause him to become a murderer. Instead, the child must be raised according to his way, utilizing his particular nature to serve Hashem (Gra, Mishlei 22:6). Eisav was the ultimate red one [adomi, 25:25]. The sword by which he lived (27:40) could have been sublimated to help Yaakov, rather than to kill him.

III

Extremes of harsh discipline and undue permissiveness must be avoided. According to Rav Shlomo Wolbe zt"l, "the rod" need not refer to physical punishment, or even verbal rebuke. The rod of pleasantness (Sanhedrin 24a), of encouragement, of positive reinforcement, is preferred (Planting and Building, p. 35).

Certainly, an angry parent who loses control and strikes or scolds his child, damages his child. In our times, such measures may be inappropriate even when the parent controls himself. They may lead to low self-esteem and/or rebellion (ibid pp. 36-38, based on Rav Chaim of Volozhin).

Yet a parent dare not ignore the bad behavior of his child. A father who hears his son say silly things and responds "he is a child, let him play" causes terrible harm to the entire family (Bamidbar Rabba 4).

Too many American parents have abdicated their disciplinary responsibility, leading to disastrous results. The Torah world has been affected by this excessive permissiveness as well.

Children must be taught that certain behaviors that are acceptable in American society are prohibited by Torah law. Of course, parents must teach primarily by example. If a parent says, or does, "silly things", he can hardly expect his child to refrain from such sinful words or deeds.

Indeed, raising each child according to his way is an arduous challenge. It requires careful analysis of what "his way" is. It demands delicate balance and extraordinary patience to implement the individualized chinuch method appropriate for "his way".

Finally, tefillah is critical. The tears shed over the centuries by fathers in shul and mothers during candle-lighting work wonders in Heaven. In addition, a child who discerns that his parents are crying as well we trying their best to raise him properly is more likely to honor them by fulfilling their fondest wish.

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Parashas Toledos from

Living Each Week

By Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski

Parashas Toledos

[When Esau was forty years old, he marries two Hittite women.] They were a source of much bitterness to Isaac and to Rebecca (Genesis 26:35)

The Midrash states that the Hittite women were idol worshippers, and this deeply aggravated Isaac and Rebecca.

Since the Torah states, "They were a source of much bitterness 'to Isaac and to Rebecca,'" instead of "to Isaac and Rebecca," the Midrash infers that Isaac was provoked first, and Rebecca only later. The Midrash explains that Rebecca, having grown up in a family of idol worshippers, was not as intensely provoked as Isaac, who was raised in Abraham's household.

Why does the Torah tell us this?

Actually, the message is a frightening one. The Matriarch Rebecca, in spite of her antipathy toward idol worship, and in spite of her being away from her family for over sixty years, was not as annoyed by these practices because she had been exposed to them in her childhood. Even the grossest abominations may lose their odium if one has been accustomed to them. We are in danger of losing our abhorrence of evil if we are exposed to it.

There are some psychologists who minimize the effects on children who are exposed to violence and lewdness in the media. The teaching of this passage in the Torah as explained by the Midrash is that such exposure lowers one's threshold of disapproval, so that even the most moral person does not escape unscathed.

[From last year]

<http://www.torah.org/learning/ravfrand/5765/>

Rabbi Frand on Parshas Toldos

Who Cares About The Scoffers of the Generation?

At the beginning of the Parsha, Rashi cites a Medrash. The Medrash says that the scoffers of the generation mocked Avraham and Sarah, and said that Sarah became pregnant when she was in the house of Avimelech. They said that Avraham was not Yitzchak's biological father. To counteract this cynical suggestion, G-d miraculously made Yitzchak's appearance exactly like Avraham's. He was a replica. Everyone who saw the child immediately testified: "Avraham fathered Yitzchak" [Bereshis 25:19].

Many commentaries wonder why it was necessary for G-d to make a miracle, just to counteract the words of the scoffers of the generation (leitzanei haDor). Who cares what the leitzanei haDor say?

Rav Gifter, zt"l, Rosh Hayeshiva of the Telshe Yeshiva, once said that we learn about the destructive power of cynicism from this Medrash. Leitzanus is a terrible plague. A "Leitz" (one who speaks "leitzanus") is not to be confused with a person who has a good sense of humor or even a sharp wit. Humor is not leitzanus. Leitzanus has a connotation of cynicism. It refers to taking everything which is high and knocking it down. A leitz takes everything that is holy and tries to demonstrate the profane side of it.

The Mesilas Yesharim writes that in the military, they could prevent an incoming arrow from penetrating a protective shield by covering the shield with a slimy substance. In this way, the arrows bounced or slid right off the shield and were unable to penetrate the metal. Likewise, he writes, mussar is intended to be an arrow that will penetrate a person's heart and motivate him to repent. However, a single cynical comment can push away a hundred rebukes. One "good line" that cynically mocks a mussar lecture deflects incoming arrows of rebuke intended to soften the heart of the listener, just as the slime that covers the battlefield shields deflects the incoming arrows of attack. We have to be extremely careful, writes the Mesilas Yesharim, not to fall into the trap of cynicism.

This is why the miracle of the facial appearance of Yitzchak was necessary. The leitzanei haDor cannot just be discounted. People like that have an effect. G-d wanted to show that this was the future of Klal Yisrael. A lot was riding on the integrity of the authentic father-son transmission between Avraham and Yitzchak. The few leitzanei haDor had the potential to ruin it all with their one-liners and their snide remarks. It was so important that

this not happen, that G-d changed nature to create an exact duplicate of Avraham's appearance, in the appearance of his son, Yitzchak.

It is my observation that we as parents - as a generation - are raising very cynical offspring. Every kid thinks he is a comedian. Every kid thinks he has to come up with a 'line'. The trouble is that when a person starts to mock one thing and then starts to mock another thing - all too often he is left with nothing that is sacred.

The mode of leitzanus can be very entrapping. Once one goes down that path, it is hard to emerge with respect for anything. It is a terrible plague in our time. I am not sure what it comes from. Most likely it results from society at large thriving on cynicism. If one turns on the radio all one hears is cynicism, putting down one's opponents, and mocking. It pervades the airwaves and it pervades society.

We should be careful not to fall into the ensnaring web of cynicism that exists out there. It is a destructive force. Once one is always trying to put down, to one-up, to reject anything that comes his way - he is left with nothing.

It was worth it for the Almighty to perform an open miracle to protect the lesson of "Avraham fathered Yitzchak" from the scoffers of the generation.

Hopefully I Will Be Caught In The Act

The Gemara [Makkos 24a] says that the expression in Tehillim [15:3] "who has no slander on his tongue" refers to Yaakov. The proof cited by the Gemara that Yaakov Avinu was the paradigm of the man of truth is the pasuk [verse] in our parsha: "Perhaps my father will feel me (Ulai yemushainee avi) and I will be as a mocker in his eyes" [Bereshis 27:12].

This Gemara requires explanation. Of all places in Chumash, the least likely place we would expect to bring a proof of Yaakov's honesty is from the incident when he disguised himself as Eisav! The proof that we would have expected is Yaakov's speech to Lavan, in which he said that he never cheated during all his years of service [Bereshis 31:38-41]: "These twenty years I have been with you, your ewes and she goats never miscarried, nor did I eat rams of your flock. That which was mangled I never brought you - I myself would bear the loss, from me you would exact it, whether it was stolen by day or stolen by night... By day scorching heat consumed me, and frost by night; my sleep drifted from my eyes..." However, we would not think that Yaakov's finest hour was his masquerading as Eisav to receive the blessings.

I saw a beautiful response to this question from Rav Simcha Zissel Ziv (1824-1898). We see from the Targum Yonasan ben Uziel's translation of the expression "Perhaps my father will feel me," that Yaakov was not worried that he would incur the wrath of his father. He was not worried that Yitzchok would curse him for his misrepresentation. He was guaranteed protection from any such curse because his mother had assured him "Your curse will be upon me, my son" [Bereshis 27:13]. He was worried about the sin of falsehood. The idea of lying was so abhorrent to Yaakov that he was petrified of carrying out his mother's suggestion.

Rav Simcha Zissel explains how the Targum inferred this from the pasuk in Chumash. Rav Simcha Zissel explains it based on a teaching of the Vilna Gaon in last week's parsha.

Our Sages teach that when Eliezer told Avraham "Ulai" (Maybe) the woman will not wish to come with me, he was really thinking "Elai" (to me) - meaning then perhaps Yitzchak will marry my daughter. The Gaon asked why Chazal take Eliezer's innocuous remark and make something sinister out of it. The Gaon explains that there are two words in Hebrew that connote "maybe" - "Ulai" and "Pen". What is the difference? The Gaon answers that when we do not desire the possible outcome to occur we use the word "Pen" as in "Pen namus (lest we die)" [Shmos 20:16]. This is the type of "maybe" that a person does not want to occur. The connotation of the word "ulai" is that I DO want it to happen. Since Eliezer said "Ulai" - that the woman won't want to come - we see that deep down he really did not want her to come (so that he could become Yitzchak's father-in-law).

Based on the Gaon's principle that "ulai" means I want that particular result to happen, Rav Simcha Zissel explains that when Yaakov says "ulai" my father will touch me, the connotation is that he wants that to happen. Yaakov wants to be "caught in the act." Why would Yaakov want to be discovered? The answer, Rav Simcha Zissel says is that Yaakov wants to be discovered because he abhors falsehood so much that he would rather be discovered and not receive the blessings than to be deceitful, even if it would allow him to receive the blessings.

That is why this pasuk, more than any other, highlights the honesty of Yaakov. He had no choice in the matter. He was following his mother's orders. It was essential that he receive the blessings. But he hated falsehood. He hated it so much that he says "Ulai" my father will touch me, hoping that in fact this would occur.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, WA DavidATwersky@aol.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Toldos Sarah are provided below: 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@yadvechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadvechiel.org/> for further information. Text Copyright © 2004 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington. Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Yerushalayim. Rav Frand Books and Audio Tapes are now available for sale! Thanks to www.yadvechiel.org and Artscroll.com.

From: Rabbi Kalman Packouz [newsletterserver@aish.com] Sent: November 27, 2005 9:59 AM To: Subject: Shabbat Shalom - Toldot

Dvar Torah
based on Growth Through Torah
by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin

When Yitzhak found out that he gave the blessings to Ya'akov and not to Esau as he thought he had, the Torah tells us: "Yitzhak trembled greatly." (Genesis 27:33)

Why did Yitzhak tremble so much?

Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz, the late Rosh HaYeshiva of Mir, cited the Sages who stated that Yitzhak experienced greater fear and anxiety at this moment than he did at the akaidah, when he was brought up as a sacrifice by his father, Avraham. There he was bound and ready to be killed with a sharp blade. From here we see, said Rav Chaim, that the realization that one made a mistake is the greatest of pains. This was not a one time mistake. Rather, Yitzhak realized that all the years he thought Esau was more deserving than Ya'akov he was in error. The anxiety experienced in the awareness of error is a powerfully painful emotion.

This is important to keep in mind when you are trying to point out to someone his faults and mistakes. You might thin, "It is so obvious that this person is wrong. As soon as I tell it to him he should admit it." However, the reality is that admitting a mistake can be extremely painful. For this reason there is a strong tendency for people to deny their mistakes. If you sincerely want to help someone improve, it is crucial to be as tactful as possible. Start out by saying, "It seems to me..." or "I might be mistaken, but perhaps..." The more sensitive you are to the feelings of the person you are trying to help, the more effective you will be.

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From: **RABBI BEREL WEIN** [rbwein@torah.org] Sent: November 30, 2005 9:26 PM To: rabbiwein@torah.org Subject: Rabbi Wein - Parshas Toldos www.RabbiWein.com

Jerusalem Post December 2, 2005 www.rabbiwein.com/jpost-index.html
PATIENCE <http://rabbiwein.com/column-1023.html>

Jewish tradition is rife with details of sibling rivalries, family feuds and enormous disappointments with children and descendants. The Bible itself provides us with sufficient examples of these sad but all too common characteristics of human life. Lot, Yishmael and Eisav are the prime examples of this problem in the lives of our forefathers. The story of Yosef and his conflict with his brothers is the continuing source of all major rifts in the Jewish world, according to the Chasidic masters. Shlomo's wisdom was not inherited by his son Rechavam who needlessly split the kingdom he inherited from his father and grandfather. The litany of the failures of the kings of Judah and Israel forms one of the more depressing narratives in the Bible. Righteous fathers somehow fathered evil children, kings who became idolaters and traitors to the Jewish mission. The children of Moshe, Eli, and Shmuel all proved themselves to be disappointments to their great fathers. Perhaps the very greatness of their fathers was one of the causes for the children's failings. It is not easy to be a child of a great leader, of a holy person, of someone who demands perfection from one's self as well as from others. King David's family is redeemed only by Shlomo, and even he is no match for his father in terms of reputation, leadership qualities and the acclaim of Jewish tradition and destiny. Family disappointments are regular fare in the narratives of the Bible.

In later generations, we find that this type of depressing pattern repeats itself all too often. The Karaitic movement that began in the eighth century was caused by a bitter family feud between Anan, the founder of that movement, and his brother, as to the position of becoming the Exilarch for Jewish Babylonia. We all know of "breakaway" groups who leave the established congregation to create their own synagogue and community.

This is almost the norm in Jewish life, both yesterday and today. However, Anan took the "breakaway" idea one step further when he lost the contest to his brother and then declared to the Caliph that he and his faith of Karaism was a new and different religion than rabbinic Judaism. Families whose children fail to follow in the footsteps and beliefs of their ancestors are often very sad groups. We find this phenomenon present in our own Israeli society where there are children from religious families who forsake observance and children from secular families who become observant Jews. It is obvious that the children may choose whatever path in life they wish. However, this in no way diminishes the angst of the parents and the family over these choices. All of the various movements and splits in Jewish life over the past few centuries have caused great pain to many Jewish families, but that is what life is about, and the story of Israel throughout its long history is testimony to this continuing situation.

There are many stories – some may even be true – regarding family feuds within the Chasidic world, the yeshiva world, the secular Zionist society, and various other groupings within the Jewish world. There is the story regarding the great Rebbe of Sanz, Rabbi Chaim Halberstam, who engaged in a strong disagreement with his son, who later was known as the Shinover rebbe. Rabbi Chaim forbade his son from crossing the threshold of his house. The son nevertheless persisted in visiting his father, but in obedience to his father's wishes, never crossed the threshold of the house but rather entered and exited through one of the windows of the house. The son of Rabbi Yisrael Lipkin of Salant became a noted mathematics professor at the University of St. Petersburg in the nineteenth century and no longer followed a Jewishly observant way of life. In response to this appointment, some of the leading maskilim - so-called "enlightened" ones – placed a congratulatory advertisement in one of the Hebrew newspapers of the time. It blessed Rabbi Yisrael for the nachat that his son's appointment to the college faculty must have brought to him. Rabbi Yisrael then placed his own advertisement in the next issue of that paper and stated that he had no nachat whatsoever from his son because of the latter's forsaking Jewish life and practice. And he further stated that he would be grateful in this world and in the next world as well to anyone who could help bring his son to return to a life of Jewish tradition and observance. As noted before, the greatest of people are not immune from the pains of having children who

refuse for whatever reason to follow in their way of life and behavior. Families are a delicate and highly volatile grouping. Therefore, the rabbis of the Talmud declared that after all efforts and education, success in this matter is a matter of mazal – good fortune.

Weekly Parsha December 2, 2005 <http://www.rabbiwein.com/parsha-index.html> TOLDOT <http://rabbiwein.com/column-1025.html>

How many times has it occurred that a piece of paper or another type of item that you may have believed to be unimportant at the time and thus carelessly misplaced or thrown out, turns out to be the one important item necessary for your records or accomplishments? What is unimportant and of little consequence at one moment in life may assume great value at a later stage of life. This is pretty much the obvious lesson that Eisav's sale of his birthright to Yaakov, as recorded in this week's parsha, imparts to us.

The Torah tells us that when Eisav sold the birthright to Yaakov he had no regrets and no hesitation in so doing. The birthright was then of no value to him. The pot of lentils, the good time, the night out with the boys, his sexual conquests, these were the important things in his life. So he throws away the item that in later life he will most crave and long to find his birthright, his soul, his very being. He later implores his father for the blessing that has already been given away to Yaakov, the blessing that is the right of the birthright to obtain. Have you only one blessing, father? he roars and entreats. And Yitzchak answers him that the blessing of Yaakov is part of the birthright. There are other blessings that Eisav will receive but the one blessing that he wishes to have, now later in his life when the passions have cooled and the millions have been banked and he searches for eternity and serenity, that blessing he cannot obtain. He threw it away with his birthright when he felt that the latter was worthless to him.

In Jewish national life and in the personal lives of countless individual Jews, the birthright of Israel the Torah and all of holy traditions, customs and ways has often been discarded in favor of seemingly certain gain and progress. Every time that this has happened it has turned out badly for individual Jew and for the Jewish people as a whole. The pot of lentils, of all of the isms of the Jewish world over the past century and a half, turned out to be of little value in comparison to the squandered birthright.

Eisav's cry of: Have you no other blessing for me? is heard from the depths of the souls of countless Jews today. All of the alternate forms of Judaism, the phony kabbalists and the guitar-playing, kitsch prayer services are a symptom of this deep longing for spirituality, meaning and self-worth in life. But having sold out and discarded the birthright, many times without even realizing that there was once a birthright that was abandoned by their grandparents for a pot of lentils, all of the new blessings somehow turn out to be unsatisfying and non-propagating. Even though those who created and support Operation Birthright to bring American youth to visit Israel were unaware of this profound article of mine, I nevertheless find it heartening that they chose to name the program Birthright. Only by treating our Torah birthright seriously and respectfully can we hope to achieve the blessings of our father Yitzchak in our personal and national lives.

Shabat shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein

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EMES LIYAAKOV

Weekly Insights from MOREINU

HORAV YAAKOV KAMENETZKY zt"l

[Translated by Ephraim Weiss <Easykgh@aol.com>]

In Parshas Toldos, the Torah spends several pesukim recounting an episode involving Yitzchak and the Plishtim. The Torah tells us that Yitzchak dug, looking for water, and found a well. However, the Plishtim fought with Yitzchak over the ownership of this well and claimed that the well belonged to them. Yitzchak then proceeded to dig a second well, which the Plishtim also seized for themselves as well. Finally, Yitzchak moved further away and dug a third well, over which the Plishtim did not argue. The Ramban comments on this story that when understood in the simple way, this story does not seem to have any purpose. It does not seem to teach us any lesson, nor does it show us the greatness of Yitzchak. Therefore, it must be understood in a more allegorical way. The first well represents the first Bais HaMikdash, which was fought over many times, and eventually destroyed. The second well signifies the second Bais HaMikdash, which was also attacked many times and eventually destroyed. The third well represents the third Bais HaMikdash, which when it will be built, bi' mihayra bi' yameinu, will bring with it eternal peace.

HaRav Yaakov Kamenetzky, zt"l further elucidates the comparison between the story of the wells and the Bais HaMikdash, based on a seemingly unrelated idea. At the Bris Bein Habisarim, Hashem told Avraham that his descendants would be slaves for four hundred years. However, we know that Bnei Yisroel only spent two hundred and ten years in Mitzrayim. The Miforshim explain this disparity in that the four hundred years do not start from when Bnei Yisroel entered Mitzrayim, but rather from when Yitzchak was born, as Yitzchak already began to feel the pains of galus. There is an obvious question on this. Yitzchak lived his whole life without ever leaving Eretz Yisroel. In what way did he feel the pains of galus? Rav Yaakov answers that during Avraham's lifetime, he was not envied by other people for his great wealth. Yitzchak was the first one to feel the jealousy of the surrounding nations. When Yitzchak found the first well, it was obviously due solely to the chesed of Hashem. However, when the Plishtim fought over it anyway, Yitzchak attributed this not to jealousy, but rather to the fact that the Plishtim simply needed the water. Yitzchak moved on, and discovered a second well. When the Plishtim disputed Yitzchak's ownership of this one as well, Yitzchak realized that the problem was not that they needed the water, but rather that they were jealous, and did not want him to have it. At that point, Yitzchak realized that in his current milieu, it was impossible to dig a well. He moved away from the Plishtim, and only that brought an end to the disagreement. This was the first example of the jealousy that has been directed towards Klal Yisroel over the generations, and as such, the birth of Yitzchak was equated with the start of the galus.

If we look carefully, we will find that the history of the Bais HaMikdash followed a similar pattern. When Shlomo HaMelech built the first Bais HaMikdash, he enlisted the help of several kings of the surrounding nations. Shlomo HaMelech tried to use the Bais HaMikdash to improve his relationship with the other nations of the world. However, this plan backfired, and it was the foreign involvement in the Bais HaMikdash that led to the eventual churban. As Shlomo HaMelech's derech was to try to improve relations with other nations, he was willing to build a house for the daughter of Pharaoh. Because of this action, the meluchah was split between Malchus Yehudah and Malchus Yisroel, and this division is what led to the ultimate churban and galus.

Similarly, the second Bais HaMikdash, although built exclusively by Bnei Yisroel, was built under the auspices of the kings of Paras u' Maday. Here too, the eventual churban was caused by the foreign involvement. It will be

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only the third Bais Hamikdash, built by Hashem himself without any alien assistance, that will bring with it eternal peace and safety. This is the parallel between the story of the wells and the history of the Bais HaMikdash, and it is in order to teach us this lesson that the Torah went out of its way to recount this, seemingly at face value, superfluous story. May we be zocheh to merit the eternal peace that will be associated with the third Bais HaMikdash, she'yibaneh bi' mihayra bi'yameinu, amen.

<http://www.yuhsb.org/currentyr/gen%20info/pubs/skoleinu/Toldos.pdf>

SHEMA KOLEINU

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The Challenge to Remain Challenged

Rabbi Jordan Rosenberg

Immediately after Yaakov successfully fools Yitzchak and steals Eisav's blessing, the passuk tells us that: "Vayecharad Yitzchak charedah gedolah ad meod" – "And Yitzchak trembled an exceedingly great trembling" (Bereishit 27:33). Many commentators offer insight into this powerful expression of Yitzchak's distraught emotional state. I would like to turn to the puzzling commentary of the Rashbam.

Rashbam, in his commentary to 27:33, says that Yitzchak trembled "because he found hair on the smooth parts of Yaakov's neck." Obviously, according to Rashbam, this hair must be highly significant. But could its detection be more disturbing to Yitzchak than his discovering that he had been tricked by his own son and had passed on an eternal blessing to an unintended recipient?

According to Rabbi Chaggai Raviv, the growth of Yaakov's hair is significant because it is indicative of Yaakov changing his nature and becoming a different type of person. Up until this point, Yitzchak may have debated within himself regarding the proper way man should relate to this world: Is the world a place of enjoyment, of receiving goodness from Hashem, or is the world about endless toil and hard-won achievement? Eisav represents the former perspective. Eisav receives his name by virtue of his being born with hair (and maybe teeth and organs) that were fully grown and developed at birth (25:25). Eisav's chosen occupation and approach to nature was that of a hunter (25:27) as opposed to that of his ancestors who were farmers and shepherds. His attitude throughout life is one of impatience as illustrated when Eisav approaches Yaakov and asks Yaakov to "please pour me some of that red stuff, because I am too tired [to cook it myself]." Eisav's relationship with women also follows a similar pattern of avoiding commitment and development. The Midrash and Rashi (26:34) inform us that Eisav was a serial rapist, a man who shunned the continuous effort that marriage required and would instead "prey" on the wives of others.

Yaakov, on the other hand, struggles to earn a livelihood and to start a family. Yaakov's struggles begin before birth, while he is still in his mother's womb (25:22). His constant striving continues during his birth: he emerges second, holding on to the heel of his older brother and lifelong combatant (25:26). Yaakov's profession also expresses a life of labor. For 20 years, Yaakov is a shepherd who labors by day and night, in the sun, and in the freezing cold (30:37-40). Most famously, Yaakov invests 14 years of hard labor to marry Rachel and Leah (29:20, 30:26).

While Yitzchak surely found something redemptive in Eisav's approach to the world, Yaakov's hard-won relationship to the world was special. Given the vast difference between the world-views of Yaakov and Eisav, Yitzchak, after feeling hair on Yaakov's neck, feared that Yaakov was not only masquerading as Eisav but was actually becoming like Eisav. Yitzchak worried that Yaakov's deceit expressed a willingness to take the easy route towards advancement.

Yaakov's life serves as an example of success in the struggle between choosing between that which is easy and that which is hard and we can all learn from his model. Every day, we encounter situations that test us. Frequently, merely deciding to face up to these difficulties is a challenge. Do we choose to be brave or do we go along with what is natural? Do we continue to push our limits and stretch our capabilities or do we live a life of ease? The challenge to remain challenged is an essential value for adults and teen-agers in matters professional, personal, educational and spiritual. May we all be blessed with the strength to surmount challenges and the vigor to continue to face internal challenges.

You Are What You Are

Jason Margulies

In this week's parsha, Rivkah gives birth to Yaakov and Eisav. The Torah says "Yitzchak loved Esav because there was game in his mouth, and Rivkah loves Yaakov." What caused Yitzchak to love Eisav and Rivkah to love Yaakov? Furthermore, why does the passuk say that Yitzchak loved Eisav, in the past tense, but that Rivkah loves Yaakov, in the present tense? To answer these questions, we must investigate the nature of the love that Yitzchak and Rivkah felt for their children. The Rashbam explains that Yitzchak loved Eisav because Eisav brought his father food; while Rivkah loved Yaakov because she recognized his righteousness. But is it possible that Yitzchak Avinu did not recognize his own son's righteousness? The Radak explains that in fact Yitzchak loved Yaakov more than he loved Eisav. The passuk is telling us that although one might have expected Yitzchak to love only Yaakov, he loved Eisav as well.

The Chizkuni explains why the past tense is used when describing Yitzchak's love for Eisav but the present tense is used when describing Rivkah's love for Yaakov. He says that Yitzchak loved Eisav when Eisav brought him food. However, Rivkah's love for Yaakov was constant: She loved him at all times. The Dubno Maggid relates that Eisav defined himself by his actions. Therefore, Yitzchak loved Eisav because Eisav brought him food. But Yaakov was defined by his midos and by his righteousness. Therefore Rivkah could love Yaakov. Rabbi Yissocher Frand extends this explanation to our times: when two people meet for the first time, one immediately asks the other, "What do you do?" The question that we ask should not be "What do you do?," but rather "What are you?" And the answer shouldn't be, "I'm a doctor," or "I'm a lawyer," but instead "I'm a Jew" or "I'm an Oveid Hashem."

Hakol Kol Yaakov, V'yadayim Y'dei Eisav

Yecheil Fuchs

The Torah in Parshas Toldos (25:22) states: "Vayisrotzitzu Habanim Bikirbah" – "And the children agitated within her." Rashi comments that "Vayisrotzitzu" comes from the root "Ratz" to run. When Rivkah would pass by the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever, Yaakov would try to run out. On the other hand, when Rivkah passed by a house of Avodah Zarah, Eisav would try to run out. Thus Rivkah knew from the very beginning that Yaakov and Eisav would be opposites of each other.

Chazal tell us that when Yaakov studies Torah and performs mitzvot, Eisav's evil ways are rendered powerless. Also, in Perek 27, Pasuk 22, Yitzchak says "Hakol Kol Yaakov Vehayadim Yidei Eisav" – "The voice is the voice of Yaakov and the hands are the hands of Eisav?" which means that the good and evil cannot exist together. How then do good and evil coexist in our world?

Rav Shach explains that Yaakov and Eisav have separate boundaries in life, set up for them by Hashem. Yaakov learns Torah, performs mitzvot and lives a life according to the will of Hashem. On the other hand, Eisav's place is the field. He is an "Ish Tzayid," focused on the material world with very little spirituality. As long as Yaakov stays within his boundary and Eisav is in his, coexistence is possible. However once the Kol of Yaakov moves past its border, the Yadayim of Eisav will be found. We must realize that, ultimately, our only purpose in this world is to fulfill the word of Hashem. Since we live in a world of material things, we may lose focus of this task. It is easy for us to slip off the Torah path of Kol Yaakov and cross the boundary into the materialistic world of Yidei Eisav. It is our responsibility to determine where that boundary is and prevent ourselves from crossing it.

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Covenant & Conversation

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

SIR JONATHAN SACKS

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

[From 2 years ago 5764]

<http://www.chiefrabbi.org/tt-index.html>

Toldot

IT IS ONE OF THE MOST EMOTIONALLY AFFECTING SCENES IN THE TORAH. Jacob, dressed in Esau's clothes, has taken Esau's blessing. He leaves, and shortly thereafter, Esau enters. What is remarkable is not what happens next but how the Torah describes it, its use of language and narrative art:

After Isaac finished blessing him and Jacob had scarcely left his father's presence, his brother Esau came in from hunting. He too had prepared some tasty food and brought it to his father. Then he said to him, "My father, sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing."

His father Isaac asked him, "Who are you?"

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

Isaac trembled violently and said, "Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came and I blessed him - and indeed he will be blessed." When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me - me too, my father."

But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing."

Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob [= heel-grasper], for he has supplanted me these two times: He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing." Then he asked, "Haven't you reserved any blessing for me?"

Isaac answered Esau, "I have made him lord over you and have made all his relatives his servants, and I have sustained him with corn and new wine. So what can I possibly do for you, my son?"

Esau said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father." Then Esau wept aloud. In general the Torah is sparing in its details, especially about the emotional state of its characters. Its descriptions are understated, leaving the reader to supply what the text omits (what the characters look like, their location, body language and so on). Emmanuel Levinas was surely correct in seeing this as an invitation to midrash, summoning the reader to complete the text in dialogue with the written word. The Torah is more like radio than television, actively enlisting the imaginative participation of its hearers. So we are dealing here with a passage unusual in its literary explicitness and psychological depth of drama.

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

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

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

The fat places of earth can still be your dwelling. [You can still have] the dew of heaven. But you shall live by your sword. You may have to serve your brother, But when your complaints mount up, You will throw his yoke off your neck. The "fat places of earth" and the "dew of heaven" are not so circumscribed, implies Isaac, that there will not be enough for both of you. This is a blessing both sons can enjoy without the one diminishing the other. As for Jacob's supremacy, it will last only as

long as he does not misuse it. If he acts with unwarranted high-handedness, Esau will simply "throw his yoke off" his neck. There is a basis here for coexistence.

The second insight comes when Esau "marries out," taking two Hittite girls as wives. This was "a source of bitterness" to Isaac and Rebekah, and provides Rebekah with the necessary pretext to reconcile Isaac with Jacob, as well as giving Jacob a legitimate excuse to leave home ("I am disgusted with life because of those Hittite women," she tells Isaac, "If Jacob marries such a Hittite girl from the daughters of this land, why should I go on living?" 5). Esau's reaction is interesting. He "understood that the Canaanite girls were displeasing to his father Isaac" 6 and tries to ameliorate the situation by taking a third wife - Machlath, daughter of Ishmael. The gesture fails for two obvious reasons: he does not divorce the other wives, and he has not internalised the fact that Ishmael too has been rejected as an heir to the Abrahamic covenant. Esau is not overly endowed with intelligence, but he cares for his father and does not wish to cause him distress.

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

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

The fifth - much later - is the shape of the relationship between the Israelites and Edomites. Here two verses in particular stand out. The first is G-d's instruction to the Israelites:

You are passing by the borders of your brothers, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. Although they fear you, be very careful not to provoke them. I will not give you even one foot of their land, since I have given Mount Seir as Esau's inheritance. 10 The second is the no less emphatic command:

Do not abhor an Edomite, since he is your brother. There is nothing in these commands to remind us of the eternal strife between the two nations predicted before their birth ("Two nations are in your womb . . . one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger"). During the biblical era there were periodic tensions and shifting fortunes in the relationship between Edom and Israel (see II Samuel 8: 14; II Kings 8: 20). But normatively, the Israelites were commanded to respect both the Edomites and their land.

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

Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel said: no man ever honoured his father as I did mine, yet I found that Esau honoured his father even more than I did. There is a marked tendency on the part of the midrash to separate biblical characters into the wholly good and wholly bad, and for this there are good pedagogic reasons, as R. Zvi Hirsch Chajes points out in his *Mavo ha-Aggadot* (printed at the beginning of standard editions of *Ein Yaakov*). To serve effectively as role models, biblical heroes must be seen as consistently heroic, non-heroes as systematic villains.

Yet beneath this overlay of midrash, the Torah teaches a different and equally important message, albeit one that demands a certain maturity to appreciate, namely that even heroes have their faults and non-heroes their virtues, and that those virtues are important to G-d. "The Holy One, blessed be He, does not withhold the reward of any creature" said the sages. The Esau who emerges from the Torah has none of

Abraham's faith, Isaac's steadfastness or Jacob's persistence. He is carved of an altogether coarser grain. But he is not without his humanity, his filial loyalty and a decent if quick-tempered disposition.

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

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

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

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

Something of the deepest possible consequence is being intimated in the story of Esau. The choice of one does not mean the rejection of the other. Esau is not chosen, but he is also not rejected. He too will have his blessing, his heritage, his land. He too will have children who become kings, who will rule and not be ruled. He too will have his virtues recognized, above all his love and respect for his father. Not accidentally are our sympathies drawn to him, as if to say for all time to all humanity - not all are chosen for the rigors, spiritual and existential, of the Abrahamic covenant, but all are precious to G-d, each has his or her place in the scheme of things, each has his or her virtues, talents, gifts, and each is precious in the eyes of G-d. As G-d will later tell Jonah: "You are concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow . . . Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?" Or as the Psalm puts it: "The Lord is good to all; He has compassion on all He has made."

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

From: Shema Yisrael Torah Network [shemalist@shemayisrael.com] Sent: Thursday, December 01, 2005 5:52 AM

Peninim on the Torah
by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
- Parshas Toldos

Yitzchak loved Eisav. (25:28)

We are very impressionable. Indeed, whatever impressions we form as small children seem to remain with us throughout life. Chazal refer to girsa d'yankesa, the material that one absorbs as a child, as being engraved upon a person's heart and mind even as he matures. Thus, if one has developed a certain mindset or impression as a young child in primary school, this impression will subtly affect any new opinions he will be exposed to throughout his life. As youngsters we were taught that Eisav was a rasha,

wicked and evil person. Each and every one of us were given pictures of Eisav as a man who represented evil incarnate. The way he appeared to us was often up to the imagination of our individual teacher or whatever coloring books our school used. But, Eisav always appeared as some kind of devil, with a nasty smirk on his face, hairy and red, often carrying some type of weapon, which probably changed with time - and imagination. This unsavory portrait of Eisav remained imbedded in our minds throughout school and concomitantly - into adulthood. It was no one's fault. The rebbe/teacher taught the truth - Eisav was a rasha. So, he must be depicted as one. We knew no better, so, we accepted the ignoble picture of Eisav.

As intelligent adults, we would be ill-advised to follow this same script. Our minds have expanded as we research the various texts dealing with Eisav, and suddenly, lo and behold, a new, totally different picture of the evil Eisav emerges. Horav Yechezkel Sarna, zl, suggests that to continue studying Chumash based upon our youthful impressions is like studying the Written Law without the benefit of the commentary and interpretation of the Oral Law. It is incomprehensible. Therefore, in order to understand the narratives and personalities of the Torah, one must study Chazal, or else he is left with nothing more than his coloring book.

Let us now look at Eisav through the prism of Chazal. We are told that Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel says that his own kibud av, honoring of his father, did not come within one hundredth of Eisav's kibud av. He would wear everyday clothes when he served his father, while Eisav would don clothing fit for royalty when he approached his father. Now Rabbi Shimon was the distinguished Tanna who related about himself, that no person ever displayed respect to their parent in a manner even remotely comparable to him. In other words, in the area of kibud av, he had no peer. Yet, he also posits that he did not come close to Eisav. Bearing this appreciation of Eisav in mind, we can no longer view him as the evil highwayman, the baneful sociopath. A man that reached the zenith of kibud av was no ordinary thief, no simple murderer. A man that would have plummeted to such a nadir of depravity as Eisav was described to us long ago, could not have reached the spiritual apex necessary for fulfilling the mitzvah of kibud av as he did. Furthermore, Yitzchak, the Olah Temimah, perfect sacrifice, was prepared to transfer the blessings he received from his father Avraham Avinu to Eisav. If Eisav would have possessed the base character depicted to us in our youth, does one think for a moment that Yitzchak would have bequeathed to him this major spiritual treasure? Are we to believe that the great Patriarch Yitzchak, who was a Navi, prophet, would err so dreadfully? No. Yitzchak loved Eisav for a reason. He saw a totally different person in front of him than the one we have been led to envision.

Rav Sarna penetrates further Eisav's mindset and gives us a clearer picture of this man. Concerning the pasuk (27:41), where Eisav thinks, "May the days of mourning for my father draw near, then I will kill my brother Yaakov," Chazal say the following: Eisav conjectured, "If I kill him, then Shem and Eiver will judge me and ask, 'Why did you kill your brother?' I will rather go to Yishmael and incite him to argue with Yaakov about the birthright. Then, I will be the redeemer of my brother's blood and kill Yishmael. Thus, I will inherit both Yaakov's and Yishmael's inheritance." Hashem, of course, delves into a person's heart and mind and confronted Eisav, whose immediate response was, "I did nothing!" Hashem, however, understood the evil plans that Eisav was conjuring in his mind.

We see from this that Eisav is held in contempt not for doing, not even for planning, but, for thinking about what he might consider doing. No, Eisav did not look the part, nor did he act the part. Hashem, however, judges a person according to a different barometer. A man who grows up in a home where the Shechinah is present, as it certainly was in Yitzchak's home, has no excuse to even think evil. Eisav thought maliciously about Yaakov. This earned him an eternal place among history's most infamous. This is what the Baalei Mussar, Ethicists, refer to as omek haDin, the depth of Judgment. We have no idea how penetrating and scrutinizing Heavenly Judgment can be, and hopefully, we will not find out.

But his mother said to him, "Your curse be on me, my son." (27:13)

The Bircas Yitzchak, blessings that Yitzchak gave his sons, established for eternity their variant destinies. One wonders why, if Hashem wanted Yaakov to ultimately receive the blessings, that He caused it to come about in such a surreptitious manner. Rivkah went out of her way to guide Yaakov in deceiving Yitzchak. This was risky both for Rivkah, as well as for Yaakov. Yitzchak surely would not have accepted this deception lightly. Was it really necessary? The Derashos HaRan explains that this all occurred by design. Indeed, in order to maintain Klal Yisrael's commitment to Hashem, it is essential that there be some entity that serves as an antagonist to remind us of our Father in Heaven. Thus, the seeds of enmity that were present at birth had to be cultivated through this deception. Eisav must feel cheated and Yaakov may never forget that Eisav hates him. Yaakov must remember that as long as he maintains his distinctiveness and displays a willingness to sacrifice himself for his convictions, then Eisav's anger will be restrained. However, if Yaakov displays weakness, Eisav comes on strong.

Horav Avraham Pam, zl, in his Ateres Avraham, translated and anthologized by Rabbi Sholom Smith, gives an alternate explanation. Yaakov had a rough life. He went from challenge to challenge, from adversity to persecution. During the twenty-two years that he was away from his parents, Yaakov experienced considerable distress. First, Eisav's son, Eliphaz, attacked him and relieved him of his material possessions. Arriving at Lavan's home penniless, he now had to work for a man who redefined the meaning of deceit. Twenty years of being cheated by a father-in-law would have broken a lesser person. He finally leaves only to face the danger of a confrontation with Eisav, whose anger still raged within him. Then there were the internal problems on the home front. First, there was the abduction and violation of his daughter, Dinah. This was followed by his wife Rachel's death as she gave birth to Binyamin. The "crown" of Yaakov's tzaros, distress, came as he was finally about to settle down in tranquility. It was then that the anguish of Yosef's disappearance occurred.

No, Yaakov's life was not an easy one. How then was he able to maintain his spiritual stamina, his unaltered conviction, his unequivocal commitment? How was he able to overcome so much distress, any one of which would have destroyed a lesser person? The Midrash gives us a fascinating response. Chazal say that what sustained Yaakov throughout his constant travail was the knowledge that "If I give up, I will forfeit all the energies that my mother invested in me to help me obtain the brachos." Yaakov lived with the constant awareness that his mother had risked so much to ensure that he receive the brachos. She told him, "Your curse, be on me, my son." This notion accompanied Yaakov throughout his life's endeavor. It was a constant inspiration, an unfailing encouragement to withstand the pressure and pain. It gave him the resolution and fortitude to overcome the various crises that he faced. It gave him the hope to persevere when feelings of despair engulfed him and might have held him back. Despite everything, Yaakov Avinu became the greatest Patriarch, the father of the Twelve Tribes.

Yaakov's story is the story of life. Many of us face trial and vicissitude, some more, some less. The overwhelming problems often seem too much to bear. It is at such times that we should take note of this meaningful Midrash: Remember the great energy that your parents expended on your behalf. Think about your mother's tears, your father's support, your parents' belief in you. They wanted you to succeed. They prayed for your success. How can you let them down?

I experienced this phenomenon first-hand as I was growing up. My father's fortieth Yahrzeit is coming up in two weeks. He was an individual who was born prior to World War I and was not able to receive a formal education in a yeshivah gedolah. He valued his cheder education and ability to learn Chumash and Rashi. The entire Sefer Tehillim which he recited daily, sustained him throughout the terrible Holocaust years and the various concentration camps that he survived. When my parents came to this country, they came with a hope to rebuild what they had lost. My father received his inspiration and spiritual succor from our rav, the saintly Veitzener Rav, Horav Tzvi Hirsch Meisels, zl. Together, they survived Auschwitz, and together they prepared to rebuild their lives and set the spiritual foundation for future generations.

My father was very devoted to his children and would do anything to see to it that our spiritual development was enhanced, regardless of the physical or financial strain it put upon him. There is one aspect of my youth that will always remain with me. In fact, whenever I have reached a sort of impasse in my Torah progress, my father's devotion and determination spur me on. My regular Day School Torah education was not sufficient for my father. He, therefore, saw to it that whatever free time I had available was spent with a tutor, to advance my Torah studies. Every Friday night, during the cold winter months, I would go to the tutor to study for one hour. It was a twenty-five minute walk - each way. My father, of course, accompanied me, since I was young and in "those days" children did not wander around alone at night. During the hour session, my father would walk up and down the street. Chicago in the winter is freezing cold and windy. So, every Friday night, after my father had put in a seventy-hour workweek, he would walk for two hours in the cold. He did this so that his son could have some extra learning. While this may not seem like the most intriguing example of a parent's dedication to their child's spiritual growth - it has inspired me throughout my career. It also teaches us that it is the "little things" that make a difference.

Rivkah then took her older son, Eisav's, clean garments... and clothed Yaakov, her young son. (27:15)

Throughout the Parsha we note that the Torah refers to Eisav as the gadol, older, son, and Yaakov, as the ben ha'katan, young son. Why is this? They were twins, a status which usually grants the two sons equal status. Is there some special lesson to be derived from the fact that Eisav is called the gadol and Yaakov is referred to as the katan? The Zevihler Rebbe, zl, responds with a practical analogy. A young boy was concerned about the physical condition of his grandfather. Unfortunately, his grandfather had fallen the day before. He was immediately rushed to the hospital

where his status was classified as critical. The next day, the situation deteriorated even more as his grandfather became very weak and listless. On the third day, his condition worsened as he developed a fever indicating the presence of an infection. On the fourth day, his grandfather no longer was able to speak. His family surrounded his bed deeply concerned, praying for a miracle.

Observing all this, the young boy suddenly burst out in bitter weeping. His parents, understandingly perturbed, asked him, "What is wrong? Why are you crying?"

"Why should I not cry?" he countered. "I am afraid for my baby brother's life. The same things wrong with grandfather are happening to him. He also falls when he tries to walk. He also gets a fever when he is sick, and he also does not speak. These are signs that something is very seriously wrong with him."

When the parents heard this, they smiled. "My child," the father said, "A baby often falls as he learns to walk. Indeed, children develop a fever when they are sick, but it is not abnormal. And yes, he does not speak yet, but he will learn to as he matures. Your grandfather's situation is much different."

The same idea applies to Eisav the gadol and Yaakov the katan. Eisav is like an old man. When signs of illness appear, it is reason for concern, for there is little hope for recovery. When Eisav is affected by a spiritual malady, it will run its course and destroy him. Yaakov, on the other hand, is like a young child in that even when he is struck with illness, he can overcome it. The spiritual maladies such as sin and other deficiencies that challenge Yaakov will, in due time, as Yaakov "matures" be defeated, through teshuvah, repentance, and maasim tovim, good deeds.

Alternatively, we derive from here the overwhelming significance of time. Twins are born just minutes apart, yet, the first is the older one while the second is the younger one. How much younger? Five, seven, eight minutes? Does that make such a difference? Yes, because time is valuable. When they came before their father to receive the blessings, Eisav and Yaakov were both sixty-three years old. Yet, one is called the gadol and the other one is referred to as the katan. We see that we really have no idea the difference a few minutes can make.

In the Talmud Berachos 53a, Chazal relate that in the yeshivah of Rabban Gamliel, they would not say, "gezuntheit" when one sneezed. Why? It was bitul Torah; it wasted time from Torah study. How much time - half a minute? Yet, they would not respond, because even a half a minute is time!

Me'ein HaShavua cites Tosfos in the Talmud Berachos 37a, which teaches us a cogent lesson regarding the meaning of time. Chazal state that if one were to soak bread in water until the water changes color because of the bread, the brachah of Borei Minei Mezonos is recited, rather than Ha'Motzi Lechem min Haaretz, the usual blessing made over bread, since the bread is no longer considered bread. Now, one can only imagine the taste of this bread. Having soaked in water so long, it probably has no taste whatsoever. Yet, Tosfos tells us that Rav David m'Meitz would soak bread overnight in water so that he could eat it for breakfast the next day and not be required to make either Ha'Motzi, or Bentsh, say Grace after the meal. He did this because every minute counted as he prepared himself for his daily shiur, Torah lesson. If that is the case, why did he eat altogether? Tosfos explains that he needed the nourishment so that he could teach properly. Consider what we have just related. How long does it take to wash, make a Ha'Motzi and Bentsh? Only a few minutes. Yet, this sage would rather eat the tasteless bread than spend the few extra moments - eating.

The venerable Rosh HaYeshivah of Baranovitz, Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl, would wear shoes without laces because he did not want to waste time tying his shoes. Time is life and the value of life is inestimable. We now understand why being born a few moments earlier gives one the privilege of being referred to as the gadol.

In honor of the forthcoming marriage of our children Shimshon Keller and Shira Schabes Peninim mailing list Peninim@shemayisrael.com
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Daf Yomi Posted 11/30/2005

By Cong. Al Hadaf

Smoking Like A Chimney "A Private Town Becomes Public" (Erubin 59a)

Our Daf teaches that private areas in a private town, or even in a private town that became public, may be combined by way of shitufei mevo'os, a pooling of courtyards, to allow for carrying on the Sabbath. Thus, the status of private areas is converted for the benefit of the public. Let us examine how public areas have dominance over other private actions for the benefit of the public.

Smoking In Public Areas

In recent decades, public attention has been drawn to the fact that smoking is dangerous and is a major cause of mortality. Warnings have been issued by health agencies the world over to keep people from being exposed to this common nuisance

and health danger. Many municipalities have enacted laws prohibiting smoking within public buildings.

In The Beth Midrash

Members of a certain beth midrash asked Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, zt"l, if they could forbid others to smoke on the premises. He replied (Igros Moshe, Choshen Mishpat 2:18) that they may oppose it even if smoking were harmless to one's health. After all, any nuisance causing great distress must be removed (even in a public domain — see Chazeh HaTenufah by a pupil of the Rosh, end of the Chida's Responsa Chayim Sha'al, cited in Tzitz Eliezer 15:39). As smoking has been proven to harm health, those smoking in public areas must obey requests to desist.

A Chazaka (Established Right) To Smoke In A Beth Midrash

The Gemara (Bava Bathra 22b) explains that a person may prevent others from causing specific nuisances. But if he takes no action over a certain period, he is understood to have come to terms with the matter. How, then, does halacha treat places where smoking was accepted for many years? The smokers could claim a chazaka that seemingly cannot be invalidated. The Tzitz Eliezer (ibid.) devotes an intriguing discussion to the topic and asserts that smoking, as a nuisance, has two aspects: One is that even when not taking into account the potential harm to health, some people just cannot bear smoke. The second aspect is based on the concept of nuisance as understood by the Shulchan Aruch, and Rema (Choshen Mishpat 155:37), based on the above Gemara [see also Shach, ibid.; Rabbi Akiva Eger, cited in Pis'chei Teshuva, ibid.]. Smoke is considered a severe nuisance and neighbors are entitled to protest even after years of use. Accordingly, members of a beth midrash may demand from others to desist (see Rashba, Responsa 3:162).

The Poskim differ, though, as to whether the Gemara would also regard occasional smoke as an intolerable nuisance. Rema holds that neighbors cannot prevent such smoke and hence people are unable, apparently, to keep others from smoking since hardly anyone does so constantly. However, the Choshen Aharon (Choshen Mishpat, ibid.) explains that even occasional smoke becomes a major nuisance if it causes tangible damage, and therefore neighbors may surely protest. As tobacco smoke has been proven to harm health, smokers cannot claim chazaka. The Choshen Aharon further stresses that even if poskim disagree as to the severity of occasional smoke, Nesivos HaMishpat (155:7) states that one must desist from causing damage in cases of doubt, as well.

Incessant Smoke

The Tzitz Eliezer further remarks that though no one constantly (24/7 or, for our discussions 24/6) smokes, we may ignore someone's claim that his occasional smoking is not so severe. Were we to allow everyone to smoke in a specific public area, the place would eventually reek from smoke. The smoker's smoking, though occasional for him, joins that of others to cumulatively become a constant nuisance and major health hazard.

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From: weekly-halacha-owner@torah.org on behalf of Jeffrey Gross [jgross@torah.org] Sent: Wednesday, November 30, 2005 8:06 PM To: weekly-halacha@torah.org Subject: Weekly Halacha - Parshas Toldos WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5766

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights

A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav SHE'AILOS U'TESHUVOS

QUESTION: On Shabbos or Yom Tov, is it permitted to flush a toilet which contains a disinfectant tablet that colors the water?

DISCUSSION: There are a number of different types of toilet disinfectants and deodorizers on the market which color the water blue when the toilet is flushed. L'chatchilah, none of them may be used on Shabbos or Yom Tov, as flushing a toilet and thereby coloring the water in the toilet bowl may be prohibited min ha-Torah as a violation of the Shabbos Labor of Coloring. The blue color gives the water in the bowl a more "hygienic" look, so the coloring of the water is beneficial and hence forbidden on Shabbos.(1) It is important, therefore, that the disinfectant unit be removed from the tank or bowl before the onset of Shabbos or Yom Tov. What should one do if he forgot to remove it or if he is a guest in a home where there is such a disinfectant tablet in the toilet? It depends on the type of tablet that has been inserted in the toilet: If the disinfectant unit is inserted near the top of the rim of the tank, then he may flush the toilet. This is permitted because the direct act of

flushing will not color the water since the water will not turn blue until it has risen to the top of the tank; the Coloring is merely an indirect result of the flushing, a gerama, which is permitted under these circumstances.(2) However, if the disinfectant unit is in the bottom of the tank or is suspended from the rim of the bowl, then the toilet may not be flushed. Flushing such a toilet will directly color the new water coming in and gerama will not apply. One should make every effort to remove the disinfectant tablet from inside the tank or the bowl, preferably through "indirect movement."(3) If this is impossible or impractical, and one will be embarrassed to leave the toilet unflushed (kavod ha-beriyos), he may rely on the view of some poskim who argue(4) that flushing such a toilet is not a violation of Coloring(5) and he should flush the toilet in an unusual way, e.g. by using one's elbow or foot.

QUESTION: What may be done if one realizes on Shabbos or Yom Tov that his car lights - either the headlights or the dome lights - were mistakenly left on?

DISCUSSION: In order of halachic preference, the following may be done:

* If a non-Jew who sees the lights on offers to shut them off, it is permitted to accept his offer. Although generally it is forbidden to directly benefit from an action of a non-Jew on Shabbos even if he offers to do a forbidden Labor on his own, shutting off lights is considered an indirect benefit - a preventive action, which is permitted.(6)

* If there is no non-Jew who offers to shut off the lights, it is permitted to hint to a non-Jew that the lights should be turned off, e.g., it is a pity that the battery is going to die.

* If the hint will not be understood, and if the battery will in all probability die and cause a substantial loss to the owner of the vehicle, it is permitted to ask the non-Jew directly to extinguish the lights. This is permitted because most poskim hold that extinguishing a light on Shabbos is merely a Rabbinical prohibition,(7) and the basic Halachah(8) is that it is permitted to ask a non-Jew to perform a rabbinical prohibition on one's behalf in order to prevent a substantial loss.(9)

QUESTION: Does one need to wait six hours after tasting - but not swallowing - meat or chicken soup before eating dairy?

DISCUSSION: It depends on what, exactly, took place: Tasting: Merely tasting - not swallowing or chewing - solid or liquid meaty foods does not render one fleishig.(10) As long as one cleans and rinses his mouth he may eat dairy food immediately.(11) "Cleaning" the mouth is accomplished by eating a bulky parve food and chewing it thoroughly. "Rinsing" the mouth means washing out the mouth with water or taking a drink of water or any other beverage.(12) Chewing: One who chewed meat or chicken but did not swallow any, should clean and rinse his mouth and teeth, and wait at least one hour before eating dairy.(13) Swallowing: One who swallowed - even without chewing - any solid or liquid meaty food, should wait six hours before eating dairy.(14)

QUESTION: Within the same meal, may one eat cheese or other dairy food and then eat meat immediately thereafter?

DISCUSSION: According to the basic Halachah it is permitted to eat meat or chicken immediately after eating cheese or any other dairy food, even during the same meal; there is no requirement to recite Birkas ha-Mazon or a berachah acharonah between the dairy and the meat. The only separation required is to clean and rinse the mouth and teeth, wash the hands and clean the table [or change the tablecloth] to make sure that no dairy residue or crumbs remain. While there are scrupulous individuals who wait at least an hour(15) between eating dairy and meat in addition to reciting Birkas ha-Mazon or a berachah acharonah between them - and their custom is based on the Zohar and quoted by several poskim(16) - it is not required by the Halachah.(17) When "hard" cheese is eaten, however, the Halachah is different. Shulchan Aruch quotes an opinion that requires one to wait a full six hours before eating meat after eating hard cheese. This view maintains that the taste and oily residue of hard cheese lingers in the mouth long after the cheese has been consumed, just as the taste and residue of meat lingers long after consumption.(18) In addition, other poskim hold that hard cheese can get stuck between the teeth just as pieces of meat do.(19) While other poskim do not consider either of these issues to be a problem with hard cheese and permit eating meat immediately after eating hard cheese, Rama and the later poskim(20) recommend that one be stringent and wait six hours between consuming hard(21) cheese, and meat or poultry. Exactly how to define "hard" cheese is another controversial subject. All poskim agree that cheese which has been cured for at least six months before being packaged and refrigerated is considered hard cheese.(22) While many of the hard cheeses sold in the U.S. [or used in the making of pizza] are not aged for six months, there are several brands of cheese that advertise that they have been cured for 10 months or longer and those are surely considered hard cheeses. Parmesan cheese, for instance, is aged for at least a year, if not longer. The poskim are also in agreement that cheeses which are not aged six months but are cured long enough to become wormy,(23) are considered as hard cheese.(24) There are, however, some poskim who maintain that all hard cheeses, including all kinds of American

(yellow) cheese, etc., are considered hard cheese and one who eats them should wait six hours before eating meat.(25) While some individuals follow this opinion, the widespread custom follows the more lenient view.(26) It is appropriate, though, to wait at least one hour between eating any hard cheese and meat.

FOOTNOTES: 1 Shulchan Shelomo 320:31-3.

2 For two reasons: 1. Because of kavod ha-beriyos; 2. Because at this point, the person flushing the toilet certainly has no intention of coloring the water. While it is still inevitable that it will happen (pesik reisha), when gerama is combined with pesik reisha it is permitted according to many poskim; see Eglei Tal Zorea 21; Har Tzvi O.C. 188; Halachos of Shabbos, Zorea, pg. 59, quoting Harav M. Feinstein.

3 "Indirect movement" is explained in The Monthly Halachah Discussion, pg. 112.

4 1. The main purpose of the tablet is to disinfect the toilet; the color of the water is merely incidental and unintentional; 2. Coloring water is permitted as Coloring does not apply to foods or beverages.

5 See Tzitz Eliezer 14:47; Be'er Moshe 2:28; Az Nidberu 12:13.

6 Based on O.C. 307:2 and Mishnah Berurah 11 and O.C. 334:25 and Mishnah Berurah 61. See The Weekly Halachah Discussion, pgs. 124-128 for an in- depth explanation of this issue.

7 See Mishnah Berurah 278:3.

8 See Mishnah Berurah 307:22 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 334:57.

9 Melachim Omnyach 4:8 and 6, note 4. See Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 30, note 14.

10 Darkei Teshuvah 89:22, quoting Rav Shelomo Kluger.

11 Badei ha-Shulchan 89:16.

12 Y.D. 89:2. Brushing the teeth well is the equivalent of both rinsing and cleaning; Debreciner Rav, Pischei Halachah, pg. 112.

13 Rav Akiva Eiger Y.D. 89:1; Yad Yehudah 89:1; Darkei Teshuvah 89:22; Badei ha-Shulchan 89:38. Other poskim are more stringent and require a six hour wait in this case; see Pischei Teshuvah Y.D. 89:1 quoting Peri Megadim MZ 89:1.

14 Badei ha-Shulchan 89:17, based on Igros Moshe Y.D. 2:26.

15 Some wait an half an hour; see Peri Hadar on Peri Megadim Y.D. 89:16.

16 See Minchas Yaakov 76:5 and Beir ha-Gra Y.D. 89:2. See Darkei Teshuvah 89:14 who rules like these poskim.

17 Mishnah Berurah 494:16; Aruch ha-Shulchan Y.D. 89:9.

18 Taz Y.D. 89:4.

19 Peri Chadash Y.D. 89:2.

20 Chochmas Adam 40:13; Aruch ha-Shulchan Y.D. 89; and Mishnah Berurah 494:16 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 15. Sefaradim, however, do not follow this stringency; see Yabia Omer Y.D. 6:7.

21 If the hard cheese is softened through boiling or cooking, it is no longer considered hard cheese; Darkei Teshuvah 89:43. But if it is merely fried or baked [as in pizza], it is still considered hard cheese; Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (Sefer ha-Kashrus, pg. 280; Meor ha-Shabbos, vol. 3, pg. 426).

22 Shach Y.D. 89:

23 These "worms" are kosher and are permitted to be eaten as long as they remain within the cheese; see Rama Y.D. 84:16.

24 Taz Y.D. 89:4; Chochmas Adam 40:13.

25 Harav Y.Y. Weiss, quoted in Teshvos V'hanhagos Y.D. 1:388; Harav S.Z. Auerbach, quoted in Meor ha-Shabbos, vol. 3, pg. 427; Harav Y.S. Elyashiv, quoted in Sefer ha-Kashrus, pg. 280; Shevet ha-Levi 2:35.

26 See Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (Feiffer), pg. 138, quoting Harav A. Kotler; Debreciner Rav in Pischei Halachah, pg. 108; Mibeis Levi 6

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