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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET  
ON **TOLDOS** - 5769

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**Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger**  
**The Blessed Life**

Yitzchok's uncertainty is finally resolved and we expect the blessing to gush forward from father to son. Yet we are hardly past the first phrase of the blessing and the ba'al koreh stops, and the person called for shishi comes forward. Only after that pause do we resume the familiar "V'yiten" in which Yitzchak asks Hashem to bestow bountiful physical blessing on Ya'akov. Why the pause in mid sentence?

Truth be told, many are quick to point out that we are not sure of the pedigree of these pauses and who determined their location. Nevertheless they are in this case, as in most cases, widely held practices and as such deserve some attention.

Nonetheless even if the pause would not pique our curiosity, the pasuk which begins this blessing deserves comment. "And he approached him and he kissed him and he smelled the scent of his clothes and he blessed him, and said: Look the scent of my son is as the smell of the field that Hashem blessed" (27:27). Apparently the Torah sees that calling attention to the scent of his clothes is part of the blessing. Not only is it introduced as such but it is followed by the conjunctive "vov", tying it to the material blessing which follows. Moreover, Rashi explains that Yitzchak perceived the aroma of Gan Eden unexpectedly overwhelming him and it is that fragrance, that he insists impresses Yaakov prior to bestowing a blessing.

Perhaps Yitzchak first instructs his son how to effectively receive a brocho and how to best prepare oneself for the blessings and prayers of others. Moments of brocho in our experience usually come at the beginning of new stages and most often at celebrations of those beginnings. We too would do well to take lesson from these pesukim.

It would seem that the first part of every blessing and prayer is to appreciate what one has already. "Re'eh bini"; see and realize and be grateful for the scent of Gan Eden that is already yours. A blessing, a prayer or a blessed life begins with dwelling on one's strengths and gifts. How sad it is to see people totally unaware of their G-d given talents, often casting

about for years if not decades till they contribute in a self fulfilling manner. On the other hand, isn't it almost inspiring to see people who live with self awareness and profound gratitude and seek out opportunities to simply be grateful? Perhaps that is why Klal Yisrael, the wisdom of whose customs we have long come to expect, has us pause when Yaakov is being forced by his father to become aware and absorb his own blessings.

Perhaps Yitzchok wants to make sure that his son realizes these strengths and aspires to great heights to which they can bring. If one indeed catches the whiff of Eden in one's coats, is there any limit to where bestowed blessings will take him?

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From: **Rabbi Goldwicht** [[rgoldwicht@yutorah.org](mailto:rgoldwicht@yutorah.org)] Sent: Friday, November 24, 2006 12:38 AM To: Shulman, Charles Subject: Parashat Toldot 5767 Parashat Toldot

In the parasha of the blessings, the Torah tells us that Yitzchak requested that Eisav prepare matamim (delicacies) for him before he blessed him. The matamim are repeated six times in this short parasha. Why are these matamim so significant that the Torah repeats them again and again?

Additionally, when Yaakov stands disguised before Yitzchak, Yitzchak asks his son to approach him and kiss him. As Yaakov does this, Yitzchak smells his clothing, blesses him, and says, "See, the scent of my son is like the scent of a field blessed by Hashem" (Bereishit 27:27). The Rishonim challenge this, asking why Yitzchak refers to this as the scent of his son when it is really the scent of his son's clothing. The Chizkuni explains that the passuk should be read as if it was written as follows: "See, my son, the scent of these clothes is like the scent of a field blessed by Hashem." However, in the course of things, we will try to understand the passuk as it is actually written, explaining what Yitzchak really meant by mentioning "the scent of my son" rather than "the scent of my son's clothing."

The passuk describing the scent of Yaakov's clothing is problematic in another way as well. After Yitzchak smells Yaakov's clothing, the Torah says: "And he blessed him and said, "See, the scent of my son is like the scent of a field blessed by Hashem." The very next passuk quotes the actual blessing: "May Hashem give you the dew of the heavens?" Seemingly, the phrase "and he blessed him" is in the wrong place! It should appear immediately before the actual blessing, not before Yitzchak describes his son's scent!

The answer to these three questions is as follows: Yitzchak knew exactly who his children were. Before the blessings, the Torah tells us how disappointed Yitzchak was when Eisav married two Hittite women (26:34-5). Before he died, Yitzchak wanted to inspire Eisav to do teshuvah. Yitzchak hoped that after Eisav prepared the matamim?turning raw, bloody meat from an animal in the field into sumptuous meat?and brought them before his father, Yitzchak would be able to ask him why he couldn't analogously improve the quality of his own life, inspiring him to do teshuvah. The matamim take up such a great role because they were meant to be the tool through which Yitzchak wished to illustrate for Eisav what he needed to do to himself. What Yitzchak didn't realize, however, was that it was impossible for Eisav to add quality to his life, since he lacked reiach (scent). Reiach represents pnimiut. (The gemara says that reiach is something only the neshama benefits from.)

When Yitzchak smells Yaakov, however, he detects not only the smell of Yaakov's clothing, but of Yaakov himself. Yitzchak is able to see that the reiach of his son, not his clothing?his pnimiut, not his chitzoniut?is like the reiach of Gan Eden. This declaration is part of the blessing as well. "And he blessed him" does not refer only to the material blessing of the dew of the heavens and the fat of the land, but to the spiritual blessing that Yaakov would always retain his pnimiut, to guide his actions and protect him.

The sense of pnimiut is exactly what the nachash wanted to harm in Adam and Chava, but, baruch Hashem, he did failed to do so. He succeeded in damaging four of the five senses: sight ? And the woman saw that the tree was good for food? (3:6); sound ? Chava listened to the nachash, and Adam listened to her; touch ? Chava touched the Eitz haDa?at; and taste ? Adam and Chava ate of the fruit. However, he could not touch their sense of smell, their reiach, their pnimiut. This enabled them to go on to build the world despite their sin.

Yosef understood a similar lesson about pnimiut on his descent to Mitzrayim. The Yishmaelim who brought him down with them, who normally transported bad-smelling kerosene, happened to be transporting spices on this trip. Yosef understood from this sweet reiach that his mission would be to protect his own sweet reiach, his pnimiut, under all circumstances. This would give him the power to survive in Mitzrayim and eventually lead Am Yisrael in Mitzrayim.

Yeshayah haNavi tells us that one of the unique qualities Moshiach will have will be his ability to smell yirat shamayim. He will smell fear of G-d; he will not judge by the vision of his eyes or rebuke according to what he hears with his ears? (11:3). Moshiach will be able to smell our pnimiut and judge us based on this.

The importance of reiach is highlighted by Yechezkel haNavi, who says that the future geulah will take place in the merit of the reiach of the ketoret. This is because the ketoret combines sweet-smelling perfumes with chelbenah, a very bitter-smelling spice. The lesson is that even those who are far from Hashem have a reiach of some sort, have some sort of pnimiut. We must not judge them solely on the basis of their externalities. When we understand how to connect with even those who are far from us, we are essentially bringing together reiach and ta'am (taste, quality). This will merit the reiach and ta'am of the geulah, speedily in our days.

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Response Ability **by Rabbi Darren Blackstein**

In the beginning of our Parashah, we are told that Yitzchak prayed to Hashem regarding his wife, Rivkah, because she was barren. The Torah states this explicitly in the Pasuk, "VaYe'etar Yitachak LaShem LeNochach Ishto Ki Akarah Hi," "Yitzchak prayed to Hashem for his wife, because she was barren" (BeReishit 25:21). Rabbeinu Bachya raises two questions concerning this Pasuk. Firstly, the Pasuk should have stated first that Rivka was barren, and then, due to this, that Yitzchak prayed for her. Secondly, why does the Pasuk use the word "VaYe'etar" for prayer, instead of the standard word, "VaYitpaleil"?

Rabbeinu Bachya answers the second question based on a Gemara in the first Pereuk of Mesechet Sukkah. The Gemara asks why the prayer of the righteous is compared to an "Attar," a pitchfork. It answers that this comparison is made because just like a pitchfork turns the floor of the threshing ground upside down, so too, the prayer of the righteous convinces Hashem to turn over His mindset from the attribute of justice to that of mercy. This explains the word's relevance to Yitzchak's prayer. Upon Hashem's use of the attribute of mercy, Rivkah was able to conceive. It is

simply astounding to consider the idea that man's prayer can be so influential!

Regarding the order of events in the Pasuk, Rabbeinu Bachya explains that if Rivkah's barren state was mentioned first, it would become the factor that receives the most attention. By first stating that Yitzchak prayed to Hashem, the praying itself becomes the main focus in the Pasuk, and not the inability to conceive. This point is emphasized by a Midrash in Shir HaShirim Rabbah which asks why the matriarchs were barren. The Midrash answers that Hashem desires the righteous' prayers. Coupled with the answer to the question above, it would seem that Hashem desires our prayers as a crucial and determining factor in the way that events unfold.

After contemplating Rabbeinu Bachya's words, I began to worry whether his answers might have raised even more devastating questions. Perhaps these Pesukim are misleading! It is wonderful for Rivkah that Yitzchak's prayers were answered. However, most of us don't seem to be this fortunate. We pray for the alleviation of sickness and tragedy in many people's lives, only to witness many unfortunate, painful endings. We don't seem to be the beneficiaries of prayer in the way that Hashem treated Yitzchak and Rivkah. Additionally, is the Midrash in Shir HaShirim Rabbah suggesting that Hashem puts us in dire straits just to have us pray? It is frightening to think that Hashem would cause suffering merely to hear our verbal anguish.

Upon further examination, I found that Rabbeinu Bachya's words are not meant to raise these difficult issues. Surely, man will always wonder as to when, if at all, his prayers seem to be answered. Man will always wonder about the timing and purpose for any human suffering. These issues, to be sure, are fully recognized as beyond human understanding. In our particular case, we see that Yitzchak's prayer was answered rather rapidly. Hashem decided to allow his prayer to be effective and we cannot question this. We should be honored that the Chumash lets us in on such personal details of their lives. Regarding the matriarchs' inability to conceive, we must sharpen our understanding of the Midrash. I believe that the Midrash was not trying to establish a causal relationship between their inability to conceive and their prayers; Hashem was not using an illness to motivate them to pray. That's why her status is not mentioned in the beginning of the Pasuk. If it were mentioned first, it would be used as a cause of prayer. By mentioning it second, the Pasuk shows us that it was an opportunity for prayer, an activity that was uniquely embraced by the matriarchs and patriarchs. They loved to pray to Hashem; Hashem loved hearing them. This does not mean suffering is made to cause prayer. It means that Yitzchak is teaching us that man's first response to any suffering should be to engage Hashem in prayer. Hashem loves to see that under all circumstances, good and bad, we feel the need to communicate and express ourselves to Hashem. While we leave it up to Hashem's wisdom to determine how our prayers are handled, we acknowledge, in Yitzchak's merit, that prayer is our first response ability. May Hashem bless us to use this ability to draw closer to Hashem and to deepen and strengthen the connections between all of Bnei Yisrael.

### **The Geirut Controversy - Part 1 by Rabbi Chaim Jachter**

Introduction In the past year there has been much rancorous debate in the Jewish media regarding standards for Orthodox conversion (Geirut) both in Israel and North America. Some of the debate was generated by the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) and Beth Din of America issuing its Geirus Policies and Standards (GPS) which accept a conversion only if it is clear to the Beit Din (rabbinic court) that the convert will fully observe the laws of the Torah. In the next two essays we demonstrate that the RCA guidelines represent the mainstream Halachic viewpoint.

A Bizarre Question Some time ago an acquaintance approached me with a highly unusual question. This young man sadly was dating a non-Jewish woman but she had expressed willingness to convert to Judaism. She was even willing to observe the Mitzvot of the Torah as she found the

observant Jewish lifestyle highly appealing. However, a serious impediment was the fact that she, Rachama LeTzlan (heaven forbid), unabashedly denied the existence of a Creator. The acquaintance asked if she would be eligible for conversion. I responded that such a conversion is patently absurd. The essence of Geirut is expressed by the quintessential convert, the Biblical Rut, who declared her commitment to Torah so magnificently and succinctly, "Ameich Ami VeElokaiyich Elokai," "Your nation is my nation and your G-d is my God" (Rut 1:16). Indeed, Boaz (Rut 2:12) so beautifully describes Rut as "having come to seek shelter under the wings" of Hashem the G-d of Israel. Rambam (Hilchot Issurei Biah 13:4) employs similar terminology. He describes a convert as one who "wishes to enter the covenant, seek shelter beneath the wings of the Shechinah (the divine presence) and accept the yoke of Torah." Rambam continues that such an individual requires immersion (Tevilah) in a Mikveh and Berit Milah for a male (and a Korban, sacrifice, when the Mikdash functions). Accordingly, an individual who harbors no ambition to establish a close bond with Hashem is not a viable candidate for conversion. Certainly, one who is entrenched in their denial of Hashem cannot be admitted by a Beit Din for conversion. Even if such an individual undergoes the process of conversion with all the necessary trappings, including immersion and acceptance of Mitzvot before a Beit Din consisting of Orthodox rabbis, the conversion is invalid. There is a fundamental distinction between Geirut and other Jewish procedures such as Kiddushin (Jewish marriage) and a Get (Jewish divorce). A Jewish marriage ceremony or divorce proceeding that is conducted in full conformity with Halachic standards is completely valid even if either the man or woman is not committed to Torah observance and belief. Conversion rituals, on the other hand, are processes which must express a deep commitment to Hashem and His people in order for it to be a meaningful act. An example from another area of Halachah would be helpful in clarifying this matter. One who recites every word of Tefillah (prayer) perfectly and precisely but lacks Kavanah (feeling or intention to connect with Hashem) does not fulfill the Mitzvah of Tefillah (Rambam Hilchot Tefillah 4:1 and Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 101:1). Tefillah is the external manifestation of an internal worship of the heart. Similarly, Milah and Tevilah are meaningless unless they are external expressions of a desire "to enter the covenant, seek shelter under the wings of the Shechinah and accept the yoke of Mitzvot."

**A Delicate Balance** A Beit Din that assumes the awesome responsibility to accept Geirim (converts) is charged with the difficult mission of striking a very delicate balance between competing principles. On one hand, the Gemara (Yevamot 109b) makes a remarkable statement that "evil after evil will befall those who accept converts." Tosafot (ad. loc. s.v. Ra'ah) limit the Gemara's declaration to a Beit Din that either seeks to convince Nochrims to convert or converts individuals indiscriminately or impulsively. If, Tosafot continue, the candidate is persistent in his desire to convert (Tosafot allude to Rut 1:18) we should accept them. Indeed, I heard Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik declare that a non-Jew who is sincerely committed to Torah enjoys the right to be converted. Tosafot support their assertion by citing examples of outstanding Batei Din and converts such as Rut, Yehoshua, who, according to the Midrash, accepted Rachav as a convert, and the colorful Geirim accepted by Hillel (Shabbat 31a). Although the individuals who came to him were hardly viable candidates for conversion at first, Hillel was confident that with patience and wisdom he would be able to shepherd them to full acceptance of Torah, an expectation that was fulfilled. Moreover, Tosafot cite the example of Timnah (Breishit 36:12) who according to Chazal (Sanhedrin 99b) was unjustifiably denied conversion by our Avot (forefathers) and out of bitterness agreed to be a concubine to Eisav's son Eliphaz and bore Amaleik, who perpetually inflicts great pain upon Israel. Accordingly, Beit Din must exercise caution and not hastily or indiscriminately convert candidates for Geirut, but must not reject those with genuine commitment to become successful Geirim who will lead fully observant lives.

**Hillel's non-Believing Convert – Rashi and Maharsha** Accepting the yoke of Torah is an essential component of Geirut. The Gemara (Bechorot 30b) in fact states that even if a convert is willing to accept all of the Torah except for one rabbinic precept we do not accept him as a candidate for conversion. A Giyoret Tzedek (righteous female convert) who is a passionate vegan related to me that the Beit Din that converted her inquired as to her willingness to partake of the Korban Pesach (Pesach sacrifice) when the Beit HaMikdash will be rebuilt, in light of her vegan convictions. She responded without hesitation that she would consume a Kezayit (the minimum amount required) of the Korban Pesach. This answer reflected well on her candidacy as she verbalized her recognition that divine commands take priority over one's ethical intuitions (manifested in Biblical examples such as by Akeidat Yitzchak, Isaac's binding). Accordingly, by what right did Hillel have to convert the gentleman who stated that he believed only in the divine authority of the Written Law and not of the Oral Law? After all, by rejecting the Oral Law, this candidate expressed his lack of acceptance of the vast majority of Mitzvot, such as lighting Chanukah lights or the proper placement of Tefillin. Rashi (ad. loc. s.v. Gayarei) explains that since the candidate "did not deny the authority of the Oral Law, he merely did not believe in its divine origin; Hillel was convinced that after he will teach him that he will rely on him" and grow to believe in the authority of the Oral Law as well. Maharsha (ad. loc. s.v. Amar Lei) clarifies that Hillel did not convert this gentleman at the time that he did not yet believe in the Oral Law. Hillel merely accepted him as a viable candidate for conversion. Had Hillel not accepted him as a feasible candidate it would be forbidden to teach him Torah as it is forbidden to teach Torah to a Nochri (Chagigah 13b) unless he is doing so in contemplation of conversion. Maharsha explains that Hillel converted the gentleman only after he came to believe that even the Oral Law is from Hashem.

**Hoda'at Mitzvot and Kabbalat Mitzvot – Rambam and Chemdat Shlomo** Rambam (ad. loc. 14:17) and Shulchan Aruch (Y.D. 268:12) rule that if a convert is not informed of the Mitzvot the conversion is nonetheless valid BeDiEved (after the fact). This is based on the Gemara (Shabbat 68a) that discusses one who converted, is unaware of the obligation to observe Shabbat, but is recognized as a full-fledged Jew. Tosafot (ad. loc. s.v. Geir) clarify that this individual certainly converted before a Beit Din since the Gemara (Yevamot 47b) states a conversion is invalid if it is not conducted in the presence of a Beit Din. Tosafot explain that the Beit Din, however, erred and did not inform the convert of the Mitzvot and he therefore did not know about Shabbat. This ruling of Rambam appears to contradict his aforementioned assertion that acceptance of the yoke of Torah represents the essence of the Geirut. If Hoda'at Mitzvot (informing the convert about the Mitzvot) is not essential, how can Kabbalat Mitzvot constitute the most important component of a conversion? Teshuvot Chemdat Shlomo (Y.D. 29-30, referenced in the Pitchei Teshuvah 268:9) draws a fundamental distinction between Hoda'at Mitzvot and Kabbalat Mitzvot. Chemdat Shlomo argues that although Hoda'at Mitzvot is not essential, Kabbalat Mitzvot is crucial. The convert's commitment to observe Mitzvot signifies the core of the conversion. If in a peculiar case the Beit Din mistakenly failed to inform the convert of the Torah's obligations, the Geirut is acceptable BeDiEved. However, if the convert is not committed to accept the Torah's rules when he finds out what they are, the conversion is invalid. The Chemdat Shlomo's distinction has been accepted by the overwhelming majority of Poskim. These authorities include Rav Yitzchak Shmelkes (Teshuvot Beit Yitzchak Y.D. 2:100), Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook (Teshuvot Da'at Kohen 147), Teshuvot Devar Avraham (3:28), Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky (Teshuvot Achiezer 3:26 and 28), Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe Y.D. 1:157), Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (citing his father in footnote 22 to Kol Dodi Dofeik), Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (Teshuvot Minchat Shlomo 1:35) and Rav Yosef Shalom Eliashiv (Kovetz Teshuvot 1:104). These authorities rule that if a covert did not commit to observing the Torah, the

conversion is invalid. In accordance with the consensus opinion, the RCA's GPS document (available at [www.rabbis.org](http://www.rabbis.org)) sets forth systems and standards in which Batei Din can be reasonably assured that individuals approved for conversion are sincerely committed to Torah observance and belief.

**Conclusion** Next week we shall present three lenient approaches to conversion articulated by twentieth century Poskim and show how the consensus opinion of Halachic authorities rejects these leniencies.

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Esau to Jacob: 'Carpe Diem, Dude'

The most famous meal in the Bible - Jacob's pot of lentils. His brother Esau comes from the field hungry and asks about the red stew. 'Who died?' - knowing that lentils are the food of mourners. 'Our grandfather, Abraham' - Jacob replied. Esau halted - 'Zeidi is dead?' Jacob nods, Esau pauses, composes himself and proclaims - 'if Abraham is dead, there is no Judge and no Justice,' and sells his birthright to his brother Jacob. Esau did not think that Abraham was going to live forever. To be sure, Abraham told his children and grandchildren the covenant that G-d had sealed with him - that his seed would inherit the land of Israel. Esau knew as much. He also knew that his grandfather would die - at 'a ripe age,' as G-d had told him - before seeing that inheritance. But there was another part of G-d's message that Esau also remembered: that Abraham's offspring were to be enslaved as 'strangers in a strange land' where they would be 'oppressed and enslaved for four hundred years.' Esau was the first born, and he thought he would bear the brunt of the exile. 'Not for me,' he thought. So our sages reveal the motivation for what the Bible tells us happened next: Esau 'ate, drank, got up and left, and scorned his birthright.' From Esau's perspective, as long as Avraham was alive, as long as the family dwelled together in the Land of Israel - so long as G-d's presence was immediately felt, then he could believe in the one true Judge and his Justice. But when Abraham died and there was the likelihood of exile, then Esau claims 'there is no Judge and no Justice.' No more birthright. Better to enjoy, to eat and drink. 'Pass the lentils,' he tells his brother. Carpe diem. Sieze the day for tomorrow we die. For now, it's party on. Jacob however is different. His faith is born when G-d's presence is no longer immediate; in the face of loss and death and exile, he agrees to buy the birthright -with all that entails. Esau knows for a certainty that his grandfather's seed will inherit the land. Just as assuredly as the 'tick' of a clock is followed by a 'tock,' Esau knows that the descendants of Abraham will receive their portion. But the duration between the 'tick' and the 'tock' - between the promise of redemption and its fulfillment - is interminable to Esau. The interim promises too much hardship. So he proclaims: 'There is no Judge, and no Justice.' Jacob by contrast - when he purchases the birthright - shows himself ready to suffer the long night of exile. Jacob embodies the faithful waiting of Israel - even after Abraham is dead - when there is no prospect of redemption, but rather suffering. As a people, today, we have our own 'tick'-'tock,' beyond the inheritance of the land promised to the Patriarch. Our 'tick' is Genesis, our 'tock,' the end of days, the coming of Mashiach. Sometimes the wait - the duration between the 'tick' and the 'tock' - seems interminable. So long that we may forget the end: 'is this the promised end?', Shakespeare's King Lear asks anxiously.

Not yet... When Maimonides lists his principles of faith, number twelve of the thirteen is the belief in the Mashiach, the messenger of G-d - he is not divine himself - who proclaims the end of days. Maimonides does not merely say: 'I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Mashiach.' You would have thought that would suffice, but in an uncharacteristic expansiveness, Maimonides continues: 'and even though he delays - with all of this - I will wait, every day, for him to come.' Even though he delays, the duration between the 'tick' and the 'tock' does seem endless! Yet even though he delays, **אם כל זה** - 'with all of this' - I will wait. 'With all of this' - if a principle of faith can be poignant and poetic this qualifes. This' - this is what Esau will not bear - the suffering, the anguish, the waiting for redemption. Yet the children of Israel, with all of this they declare, with all of this - they will nonetheless wait every day for him to come. And how much of this there has been! My twelve year old daughter asks: 'Is Mashiach coming?' 'Yes! He is!' 'We want Mashiach now!' We are a generation of instant gratification - even when it comes to Mashiach! Children can afford such an attitude. But as adults, it sometimes seems like there is 'no Judge and Judgement,' like the clock has permanently stopped, and that the 'tock' will never come. So we teach our children - and ourselves - not to be like Esau. For with the need for instant gratification comes disappointment, and the indulgence in the pleasures of the moment dressed up in Esau's resigned 'carpe diem!' Yes, we know Mashiach is coming - he is! - but we also know the fine art of waiting. 'With all this' - with Jacob - we still believe!

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Mussar HaTorah Torah Insights into Human Nature – Dedicated in memory of **Rabbi A. Henach Leibowitz zt"l**

"And the man [Yitzchok] was great...and the Plishtim were jealous of him...all of the wells that Avraham's servants had dug...the Plishtim stopped up..." (Bereishis 26:13-15)

The Plishtim were very jealous of the wealth that Yitzchak had accrued. The simple reading of the pasuk describes how this jealousy motivated the Plishtim to destroy some of Yitzchak's material possessions – the wells that his father Avraham had dug. However, Rabbeinu Bechaya (ibid.) gives an alternate explanation for these verses. He says that the "wells" refer to Avraham's students, whom he had converted to belief in Hashem. Driven by their jealousy, the Plishtim "closed the hearts" of these converts by luring them back to their original idolatrous beliefs. Yitzchak had to use his "might," Rabbeinu Bechaya tells us, to overcome their efforts and bring his father's students back to monotheism.

This was not a theological quarrel that the Plishtim had with Yitzchak. Avraham's conversions are not mentioned by the pasuk nor by Rabbeinu Bechaya as being the source of their envy. They were jealous of Yitzchak's material acquisitions, not his spiritual accomplishments. If so, why did they express their hostility against Yitzchak by corrupting the disciples of his father Avraham? Avraham's students had nothing to do with Yitzchak's material wealth!

Secondly, how were they able to destroy all of Avraham's efforts? Avraham was a highly skilled teacher and motivator; the Plishtim had none of these skills. Outreach was Avraham's *raison d'être*, his lifelong quest to

benefit others with the ultimate chesed – serving Hashem as the only true G-d. We can be sure his students did not take a “quickie” conversion course, but rather built their emunah methodically and carefully, recognizing Hashem’s kindness and exposing the falsehood and emptiness of idolatry. Before converting, they had to have the moral strength and courage to stand up against the entire civilized world. How could such great talmidim be influenced by the Plishtim, working with the falsehood and deceit of idolatry, and motivated by petty and illogical jealousy?

There is no such thing as “petty” jealousy. One who is jealous of another human being is afflicted by a disease which consumes him, rotting his very bones (Mishlei 14:30). As the Mesilas Yesharim explains, it is a form of foolishness which gains nothing for the person and doesn’t inherently affect the other person.

The only loser is the envious person himself, who stew in bitterness for no practical benefit. From the Plishtim we learn that this insanity can drive a person to destroy indiscriminately, without limits, without rhyme or reason. We also derive that this evil trait has such power that it can motivate and empower unskilled, inexperienced people, using only lies and falsehood, to conquer the living spiritual fortresses created by the true teachings of an Avraham Avinu. On the other hand, we can see the power of emes, of the strength of Torah. Despite the spiritual devastation the Plishtim had wrought, stopping up and closing the hearts of these converts, Yitzchak was able to overcome these forces of evil and restore their belief in Hashem. One person, with the searchlight of truth, can dispel a vast sea of darkness fueled by powerful, venomous jealousy. May we recognize the powerful spiritual forces at play in our lives, to beware of the lethal effects of jealousy and other negative middos, and to use the potent energy of Torah and mussar to illuminate our lives as we climb ever higher in serving Hashem.

Based on the talks of Rabbi A. Henach Leibowitz zt”l, Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim – RSA © 2008 by Rabbi Aryeh Striks & Rabbi Shimon Zehnwirth. For more information call (818) 505-7999 or e-mail mht@vths.org

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from Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com> to Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com> date Thu, Nov 27, 2008 at 2:28 AM subject

**Peninim on the Torah  
by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum**

PARSHAS TOLDOS Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite his wife...Hashem allowed Himself to be entreated by him. (25:21) Yitzchak Avinu and Rivkah Imeinu both stood in supplication to Hashem, beseeching Him to grant them a child. Hashem listened to Yitzchak’s entreaty because there is no comparison between the prayer rendered by a tzaddik ben tzaddik, the righteous child of a righteous person, and that of a tzaddik ben rasha, righteous child of a wicked person. Why? One would think that Rivkah, as the righteous child of a wicked parent, had attained a greater achievement than Yitzchak, whose roots were meritorious. Horav Dovid Povarsky, zl, cites a pasuk in Yeshayah 29:13 as basis for his explanation. The Navi says, "Their fear of Me is like rote learning of human commands." This gives the impression that the critique of the people was their complacency in serving Hashem. In other words, they put on Tefillin and observed Shabbos and all of the other mitzvos. The problem was that they did not display any enthusiasm. They acted by rote; the manner that they put on Tefillin yesterday was the same way in which they put it on today - without excitement or fervor. While this may be reason to critique them, why does the Navi say that their fear of Hashem was deficient? Does a lack of excitement connote a lack of fear? Furthermore, is it possible that a generation of righteous, observant Jews was guilty of complacency in mitzvah performance?

Rav Povarsky explains that when one emulates the observance of his predecessor or parent, without adding any creativity of his own, he is guilty

of complacency. A Jew must grow spiritually. To do this, he cannot retain the status quo of observance. The people basically continued observing as they and their predecessors had in the past. They remained carbon copies of those before them without initiating anything of their own.

The righteous child of a righteous parent refers to an individual who forges on ahead beyond his parent. He strives to achieve on his own and in his own right. Resting on past laurels and standing on the shoulders of predecessors does not make one a tzaddik. Thus, the tzaddik ben tzaddik has a difficult path before him as he trail-blazes new heights in avodas Hashem, service to the Almighty. It is not as challenging for the righteous child of a wicked parent. His path to creativity is not as tenuous. Indeed, whatever he does is creative, because his past contained nothing at all. This does not in any way minimize the awesome challenge of overcoming one’s past. That alone is a remarkable feat. In the area of spiritual creativity, however, the one who descends from righteous parents has to exert himself greatly, expending much effort to achieve his own spiritual plateau - on his own.

Every day, every prayer, must be a new experience. To observe in a manner similar to the day before-- or to pray today without giving it a second thought-- is to deprive oneself of spiritual growth and to relegate the mitzvah to complacency. Rav Povarsky adds that this similarly applies to the concept of chazarah, review. We often find that despite one’s review of a subject, he still has difficulty remembering the material. This is because when the individual reviews, he does not learn anew and analyze again what he had once learned. He simply recapitulates what he had previously learned. This is not chazarah. A review should trigger new questions, stimulate new insights. If the review does not generate renewed interest in the material, it is an indication that it had been an improper review.

Yitzchak entreated Hashem. (25:21)

Yitzchak Avinu was not the first Patriarch to be childless at first. His father, Avraham Avinu, was quite old when his mother, Sarah Imeinu, gave birth to him. If so, asks the Zohar HaKadosh, why do we not find that Avraham prayed for a child? While he does say, "See, to me You have given no offspring," (Bereishis 15:3) this is more of an aside during a conversation than an outright prayer. The Zohar replies that our Patriarch was fully secure that if he would entreat Hashem for a child, his wish would be granted. Since he was not yet commanded regarding the mitzvah of Bris Milah, he did not want to have a child - yet. He wanted to wait to have a child b’kedushah, when he was sanctified through Bris Milah. He was willing to wait, to suffer in silence, until such moment that the child would be the product of total sanctity.

Horav Chaim Zaitchik, zl, emphasizes the enormous sacrifice this must have been. Avraham Avinu had been waiting his entire life for the opportunity to establish a legacy, to have a son that would follow in his ways. Clearly, this aspiration monopolized his every waking moment, becoming the focus of his every supplication to Hashem. His pain must have been intense; his emotions under intense pressure. Yet, he persevered and withstood the pressure, because he looked at the big picture. Yes, he truly wanted a son, but he wanted the heir to the Avrahamitic legacy to be conceived and born in kedushah. The tears would continue; the pain would not dissipate; his aspirations were not yet ready to be realized. He was waiting for the word from Hashem to have his Bris Milah. Then, he would be ready to have his son.

How often do we rush things impatiently, not allowing for the proper scenario to unfold at the proper time? We are in need, and we have become greedy. We have been waiting so long for salvation that we are prepared to settle for anything - even if it is half-baked and inappropriate. Anybody, anything, will suffice, as long as it "seems" to fit the bill, to fill the immediate need. Avraham waited, because he knew that there was a time and a place, and it had not yet arrived. His personal pain would have to continue. Hashem Yisborach has a Divine plan. We must be patient and allow it to play out. When we really believe and really care, when it extends

beyond our personal vested interests, and it is about glorifying Hashem's Name, then we wait for Him to give the "go ahead."

There is an incredible story about self-imposed restraint, similar to that evinced by our Patriarch, which was assumed by a simple, righteous woman living in Soviet Russia, a country infamous for the fetters it imposed on its citizens. One of the areas of Jewish observance in which these impediments were most visible was concerning the mitzvah of Bris Milah. Circumcising a newborn son was asking for serious governmental repercussions. Hence, most Jewish boys in Soviet Russia did not have a Bris. Nonetheless, Jews have lived in fear throughout their history. At the risk of their lives, they have taken chances to fulfill Hashem's command. Often parents in Russia would wait a few weeks or even months until the "coast was clear" and then have their son circumcised. One family waited an entire year until they were advised that it was "safe" to have the Bris. Finally, the closest of trusted friends were invited; the mohel was called, and the group gathered clandestinely in a basement to celebrate the entry of another Jewish child into the Covenant.

The Bris was performed, the mazel tovs were wished, and the child was taken back to the room where his mother was eagerly awaiting his arrival. Suddenly, a piercing scream was heard, followed by wailing and crying, and then a heavy thud as if someone had fallen to the floor. They ran into the room to find the mother passed out on the floor. After reviving her, she related an incredible story to those assembled.

Living in the Soviet Union, she had feared that her son would never have the good fortune of having a Bris. Apprehensive that her longing to see her son circumcised would be stifled over time and that fear of the authorities would prevail over her awe and love of the Almighty, she was determined to set a safeguard against this realistic concern. She undertook something that would compel her to not give up yearning for her son's bris, something that would constantly be on her mind every waking moment of the day. She vowed not to kiss her son until he had a Bris!

For a year she suffered the pain of holding her son in her arms and not being able to kiss him. The pent-up emotions that only a mother can feel increased with each day, until the moment that she held him close and was finally able to kiss him. She did so fervently, but it was too much. So long, so much pain and emotion - she fainted. This was a Jewish mother's superhuman constraint - a strength of character she had inherited from our Patriarch, Avraham.

And he ate and drank, got up and left, thus Eisav spurned the birthright. (25:34)

Chezkuni teaches us that even following the sale, Eisav reiterated that the birthright was of no value to him. It was there to serve his present purpose - to fill his belly with some warm soup. Otherwise, there was no intrinsic value to the birthright. The Midrash says that Eisav gathered together a group of his followers and actually made light of the sale, scorning the birthright and everything connected to it. Hashem responded by saying, "You spurned the birthright; by your life, you will be spurned by generations." Horav Sholom Kluger, zl, explains that it was Eisav's distorted sense of values - not so much by his sale of the birthright for a pittance, but for his cynical contempt toward the spiritual and moral values of the bechorah, birthright, that earned everlasting scorn. By the words and gestures following the sale, after satisfying his hunger, he indicated that his act was motivated not so much by need, as by a vulgar sense of values.

There are two disparate attitudes to non-observance - neither of which are acceptable, but one of which is understandable. There are those who have been subject to a laxity of observance and to religious illiteracy. While this is inexcusable, it is regrettably something that does occur for a number of reasons, some of which are not the fault of the individual. What is especially reprehensible, however, is one who has a disrespect and irreverence for the ceremonies and rituals of Judaism. The Rambam considers the individual who is malig al ha'mitzvos, disparages the precepts, debases the rituals and, with vulgar jest, scorns the ceremonies that have

such profound meaning, to have committed one of the twenty-four transgressions which withhold the acceptance of teshuvah, repentance.

Making fun of religious observance, acting in a lightheaded manner towards one who is enthusiastically and passionately expressing himself to the Almighty is despicable. Such an individual cannot perpetuate Judaism. Some people are lax in observance because they are victims of life's difficulties; they have fallen prey to its vicissitudes, and it has turned them off. They are different from the cynic who shows callous disrespect for his religion. If he is exposed to a different, more positive climate, if conditions become more favorable, the former will quite possibly alter his attitude and amend his opinion. The latter is doomed to spiritual deflection, because he has trampled-- and continues to trample upon-- the hallowed and sacred traditions of our religion.

A memorable story is told about a Lubavitcher chasid who was condemned to eight years of hard labor in Siberia for some trumped-up charge. Upon reaching the prison camp, the proud and courageous Jew told the police authorities that under no circumstances would he violate the Shabbos. Regardless of the consequences, Shabbos was sacrosanct, and nothing they could do to him would sway his commitment. He did, however, have an "offer" to negotiate with them. He was willing to spend additional years in the camp in hard labor to make up for the Shabbosos he would not work. Even the hardened commissars were moved by this man's dedication and unswerving commitment to his religion. His determination was real and quite awesome. Against their better judgment, they decided not to compel him to work on Shabbos. After hearing of such an experience, one cannot help but reach the conclusion that reverence and fidelity to an ideal can successfully defy even the most hardened commandment.

The question that we ask is: If the Soviet commissar was moved by a dedicated Jew's loyalty to his religion, why is it that some of our alienated coreligionists harbor such disdain for their more observant brethren? The answer is simply that our actions reflect their rebellion. If we can be observant in today's contemporary world, why can't they? They have two choices: join us and live the committed life or ignore us - respectfully. Regrettably, some still make the negative choice. Hopefully, one day they will realize the error of their ways.

Thus, Eisav spurned the birthright. (25:34)

Rashi explains that the Torah is teaching us that Eisav denigrated the service that is performed to Hashem. It seems that Eisav Ha'rasha, the wicked, did much more than that. Chazal tell us that he committed five sins that day, including murder and immorality. If so, why does the pasuk focus on his spurning the birthright? Clearly, this should hold a far second place to murder and immorality. If the Torah seeks to emphasize his evil, it should have selected his more nefarious activities.

Horav Aharon Kotler, zl, gives us insight into the character of Eisav. When we better understand the person and his hashkafos, outlook and perspective, we better understand his evil. This will also serve as an opportunity for developing a more penetrating insight into the actions and activities of others who have greatly harmed the Jewish nation, but whose actions at the time seemed innocuous and certainly not evil. Many think that Eisav sold the birthright because he did not appreciate its eternal value. He viewed the birthright as an equal exchange for the bowl of lentils. This is wrong. Eisav was very clear in his understanding of the value of his birthright. The mere fact that he despised Yaakov Avinu for receiving Yitzchak's blessing is a clear indication that Eisav valued the spiritual dimension. He cried bitterly, and we are still paying for that great weeping.

Eisav knew and understood that the birthright was a great blessing. He was also acutely aware of the intrinsic value of Yitzchak's brachah, blessing, but this awareness did not traverse over to his heart. It stayed in his head. Eisav was intellectually aware of Judaism's verities, but could not harness this knowledge to control his base instincts. A large gap separated

his intellect from his emotions. His mind could not discipline his body. He knew he was acting inappropriately, but he had no way of stopping himself.

Horav Avraham Schorr, Shlita, explains that while the mind is capable of grasping the profundities of kedushah, holiness and esoteric wisdom, and it fully understands the tragedy of wallowing in moral pollution and drowning in one's base desires, it has no control over itself. The mind is not able to influence the physical dimension, one's emotions, his desires, his physical tendencies. The only thing that can make a difference, that can harness the body and subject it to reason and understanding, is the Torah. This Divine gift from Hashem can reign in the body and exert control over it. Rav Schorr cites the Chidushei HaRim who explains that this is specifically why a Torah scholar is called a talmid chacham, "student" of wisdom, as opposed to a chacham, wise man. A true Torah scholar understands that he studies Torah wisdom, and it influences him. As a student of the Torah he is shaped by it, so that he develops an outlook on life based upon the Torah.

A budding young scholar visited the Kotzker Rebbe, zl, and proudly declared that he had already learned the entire Shas. The Kotzker Rebbe looked at him and asked, "And what did the Shas teach you?" When we study Torah it is not like other educational material through which, when one masters its knowledge, his level of intelligence increases. Torah study addresses much more than one's intelligence: It concentrates on the student of Torah, transforming him as he absorbs the lesson. One who has not undergone such a metamorphosis has not studied Torah. He has merely studied the Torah's wisdom. The Torah has taught him nothing.

This was the character of Eisav. Indeed, when he attempted to prevent Yaakov's body from being buried in the Meoras Ha'Machpelah, he incurred the wrath of Chushim ben Dan, who was not prepared to allow his grandfather's body to just lie there, while the brothers sent one of their own to retrieve Yaakov's contract affirming Eisav's sale of the birthright. When Chushim slew Eisav, his head rolled into the cave, indicating that Eisav's "head" was worthy of burial in that holy place. Eisav had a head filled with intellectual knowledge concerning right and wrong, good and evil. Regrettably, his head was unable to reign over and influence the rest of his body.

Awareness of evil and its consequences does not necessarily save a person from becoming its victim and falling into its snare. This is especially clear in contemporary times when we see the effects of a hedonistic, self-gratifying society. Does it have the power to prevent us from joining in the "fun"? No. All of the wisdom in the world will not save a person. The only thing that can guarantee our survival is the Torah. By studying Torah, one develops the tools and skills necessary to prevail over the forces of darkness. The Torah imbues the individual with a depth of understanding that transcends the here and now, as it penetrates to the essence of life and connects the individual to his eternal source. Without Torah, one might go so far as to sell all of the intellectual knowledge he has accumulated for a bowl of lentils. After all, is there such a great distinction between the pleasure one receives from deferring to his base desires and the satisfaction he has from eating a bowl of soup? They are both fleeting, enjoyed for the moment, soon to be forgotten and immediately driven for more. One is never satisfied, because he is not in control. He is controlled. Torah teaches the individual how to live, the correct path of life to choose, as it infuses him with holiness, serenity and inner joy. It gives him the fortitude to triumph over life's challenges. He becomes a true chacham because he is a "talmid" of chochmah.

Then Yitzchak trembled in very great perplexity. (27:33)

Chazal tell us that Yitzchak Avinu trembled twice in his life: once, when he lay bound at the Akeidah, prepared to serve as a sacrifice to Hashem; second, when Eisav brought him the hunt, and he realized that his father had already given the blessings to Yaakov. Chazal then ask which of these two tremblings was greater. They reply that the trembling he experienced when Eisav came to him was greater. Let us think about this. What really happened is that Yitzchak realized the tremendous spiritual gap that existed

between Yaakov and Eisav. Apparently, it became clear to him who Eisav really was. His son's estrangement from the spirit made Yitzchak tremble. The thought of losing his son spiritually had a greater impact upon him than the fear of his father's plunging blade!

What a lesson for all of us. A man has less fear of his own mortality than of his child's spiritual demise - or at least he should. A child's disenfranchisement with Judaism is a terrible pill to swallow. How terrible? Yitzchak viewed it with more fear than his own death. Perhaps this is a message to be conveyed to children: Your spiritual welfare is the most important thing in my life. In fact, it is more important than my life! When children hear such a declaration articulated by parents, as well as experiencing living proof of their commitment to the way of life they expound, the child establishes a firm foundation upon which to build his own life. In contrast, when parents are "wishy washy," vacillating between what they say they want, and the way they actually act, children receive mixed messages. A child raised on mixed messages grows into a confused adult.

Chazal teach us that Avraham Avinu died five years younger than Yitzchak, who lived to be 180 years old, so that he would not witness his grandson's sinful behavior. Indeed, on the day of Avraham's funeral, Eisav's sinfulness became public knowledge. Hashem spared Avraham this tremendous tzaar, pain, and took him from this world prematurely. Can we even begin to imagine the incredible spiritual loss that was sustained by the premature death of our Patriarch? Five fewer years of mitzvos and good deeds! All of this so that Avraham would not suffer the immeasurable pain of seeing his grandson - not his son, but his grandson - leave the Torah way of life. What an incredible lesson for us. We now know why Yitzchak trembled. Perhaps if we tremble now, we will circumvent anxiety later on in life.

Sponsored in loving memory of Mrs. Grace Venee` By her son, Larry

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from Torah MiTzion <please-rather-send-to--office@torahmitzion.org> to internetparshasheet@gmail.com dateThu, Nov 27, 2008 at 9:38 AM subject eBulletin: Parshat Toldot

#### **Religious Zionist Paragons of Virtue:**

#### **Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlap**

#### **Rosh Yeshivat Mercav HaRav**

Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlap was one of the Gedolim whose greatness was manifest around the clock. He was devoted to his Creator, as a servant before his master. His proficiency spanned the entire Torah: halachah and aggadah, Jewish thought and kabbalah. Also, he was extraordinarily careful to observe each and every one of the 613 mitzvot with incredible fervor. Thus, as far as he was concerned, nothing separates the Torah from Am Yisrael and Torat Yisrael, because everything is contained in the Torah and the mitzvot. He was a man of Eretz Yisrael, who always said that his thoughts focused exclusively on Eretz Yisrael.

The Gaon R' Zevulun Charlap, a dayan in Rav Diskin's beit din, planted five cedars in Israel's vineyards. The fifth one was Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlap, who was born on Shabbat, 29 Shvat 5642.

As a child, he attended the Etz Chaim Talmud Torah, where he excelled in terms of his talents and diligence. Yerushalayim's elders recall the tall 13-year-old Yankel Charlap with his long peyot, sitting and learning in the Churvah of R' Yehudah HaChassid (the site of the yeshiva) as his voice would ring throughout the galleries. The Gaon R' Shmuel Salant, the Chief Rabbi of Yerushalayim, knew and cherished the boy. Whenever an important visitor would arrive in Etz Chaim, R' Shmuel would call out, "Where is young Yaakov Moshe? Let him come here and show the guest the wisdom of the children of Yerushalayim."

In 5658 (1898), he got married, and the couple made their home in Yerushalayim.

In 5654 (1904), the Gaon Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook arrived in Eretz Yisrael, where he was appointed Chief Rabbi of Yafo. Some time

later, on Shavuot, Rav Frank introduced Rav Charlap to Rav Kook. Rav Frank noted that Rav Diskin had said that Rav Charlap was someone who knew how to learn. Rav Kook invited the young man to his home for seudah shlishit. During the course of the meal, Rav Charlap was exposed to new gates of learning and wisdom, and from then on, Rav Charlap considered himself to be Rav Kook's disciple.

In 5671 (1911), a year after Yerushalayim's Shaarei Chessed neighborhood – known for its many Torah scholars - was established, R' Yaakov Moshe was offered the position of Rav. Due to his innate modesty, he initially refused the offer, but his teachers and friends eventually convinced him to change his mind. The k'tav harabbanut, signed by the neighborhood's residents, includes the names of Yerushalayim's notables.

5672 (1912) proved to be a turning point for Rav Charlap. Etz Chaim opened a yeshiva for older bachurim, and R' Yaakov Moshe was appointed as a Ra"m and thus began his career as a Torah educator.

In 5678 (1918), while Rav Kook was abroad, Rav Charlap started the process of establishing "HaYeshiva HaMercazit HaOlamit" (literally, "the Central Universal Yeshiva").

Many of Eretz Yisrael's top yeshiva students came to learn under Rav Charlap. Together with Rav Kook, he was the head of Yeshivat Mercatz HaRav from the time of its founding. His shiurim in halachah and aggadah were extremely popular, and many students would flock to hear his words of Torah.

Even while serving as Rosh Yeshiva at Mercatz HaRav, Rav Charlap maintained close ties with the Gedolim of the haredi world. Indeed, he was viewed as a bridge between the two worlds. His opinions carried great weight, and many times, his rulings were able to put contentious issues to rest. In several cases, he was able to calm emotions when controversies raged.

After the State of Israel was established, Rav Charlap was a member of the delegation which visited David Ben-Gurion and convinced him that yeshiva students should not be drafted. In fact, Ben-Gurion later stated that R' Yaakov Moshe's tears were the prime factor behind his decision to leave the Torah world as it was then.

Throughout his life, Rav Charlap was physically weak, and during the final two years of his life, he suffered from heart disease. Although his ill-health prevented him from attending to many public and private matters, he continued to deliver his shiurim in the Yeshiva.

On 7 Kislev 5712 (1952), at age 70, R' Yaakov Moshe Charlap's presence was requested in the yeshiva shel maalah (the "Heavenly Yeshiva"). The holy city of Yerushalayim lost a precious jewel, and the neighborhood of Shaarei Chessed lost its magnificent crown.

He left behind over 100 handwritten volumes containing his chidushim and responsa as well as discourses on aggadah, and many other Torah subjects. To date, sixteen volumes of "Mei Marom" and six volumes of "Beit Z'vul" have been published. These works serve as testaments to the depth of his thinking and the breadth of his knowledge of the Talmud and the poskim – both the Rishonim and the Achronim.

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