

B'S'D'

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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON TOLDOS - 5762

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Mazel Tov to Yaakov (Kovi) Fleischmann on the occasion of his Bar Mitzvah from his parents Sharon and Barry Fleischmann, his sister Aviva, and his brother Yoni.

From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND ryfrand@torah.org
"RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Toldos
Being Tired Is Not A Jewish Concept

The Torah says, "And Esav returned from the field and he was tired (a-yef)" [Bereshis 25:29]. Rav Nissan Alpert notes that this is the first time in the entire Torah that we find the word "a-yef", that someone was tired. If we examine the life of Avraham Avinu, our forefather Avraham, we certainly find cause for him to be tired, but the Torah never says that he was.

Avraham lived a long, hard and arduous life. He had to leave his birthplace, give everything up, and travel to Canaan. In Canaan he was confronted by famine so he had to travel on to Egypt. After returning to Canaan, he helped set up his nephew Lot and became involved in what was literally the First World War, in order to save Lot. He had children late in life; he was confronted with the trauma of Akeidas Yitzchak [the Binding of Yitzchak]. Avraham had a hard, long, tiring life.

Nonetheless, the Torah never describes Avraham as tired. Avraham never starts to contemplate retirement. Eisav is the first person by whom we find the word "a-yef" written. What is this telling us?

Rav Alpert suggests that being tired from life is not a Jewish concept. If a person's life is involved in spirituality - in Torah and in Mitzvos - then there is a blessing: "Those whose hope is HaShem will have renewed strength; they will grow wings like eagles. They will run and not grow tired, they will walk and not grow weary" [Isaiah 40:31]. One does not become tired from doing Avodas HaShem [the Service of G-d]. Avodas HaShem is in fact rejuvenating. At times it may be frustrating and one may think that he is running out of strength, but the blessing is that he will not, in fact, run out.

It is a different matter when one is an Eisav and when one's primary role in life is being out in the field 'hunting'. Our Sages say that on the very day that Eisav came back complaining that he was tired, he had transgressed 5 horrible sins, including the 3 cardinal sins. Therefore it is no wonder that he came back claiming that he was tired. If a person's life is devoid of spirituality, when a person has no purpose in his life, then it is very easy to become worn out. When a person sits around all day playing cards, then one quickly tires of playing cards. But those who trust in G-d will not become tired nor grow weary.

Rav Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986) lived into his nineties. When Rav Moshe's condition weakened and he was taken to the hospital before he passed away, when he was literally on his death bed, he commented, "Ich hob mer nisht kin koach." [I have no more strength.] That was the end of his life. At that point his spiritual goal and his life's work were finished. When one's life work is finished, then there is no more strength. But up until that time, although he was 92 and had been sick, "those whose hope is HaShem have renewed strength."

Often our great Torah personalities, despite being very elderly, have the strength to remain on their feet and talk for hours. From

where do they get that stamina? This is the idea expressed by Rav Alpert - being tired is not a Jewish concept.

Avimelech Said It First: You Jews Are Too Rich

On many occasions we have stressed the fact that the overriding theme of the book of Bereshis is that the actions of the forefathers foreshadow the fate of their descendants [ma'aseh avos siman l'banim]. We have explained that this theme is not just a prophetic blueprint for what will happen to the children. Rather, the fact that the Patriarchs were able to endure certain experiences gives us the ability and strength to survive parallel occurrences in our own individual and collective lives.

In Parshas Toldos, we are introduced to an aspect of ma'aseh avos siman l'banim which has been with us since time immemorial - namely, Sin'as Yisroel, the hatred of Jews for no reason whatsoever. This concept is articulated when Avimelech tells Yitzchak that it is time for him to leave: "Go away from us, because you have become much mightier than us (atzamta mi'menu meod)" [Bereshis 26:16]. The Medrash elaborates on this charge of Avimelech: "All the strength and power that you have accumulated - is it not from us?"

To paraphrase the continuation of the Medrash: "In the past you had only one little shop, and now you own an entire mall". This is the prototype of all future anti-Semitism. No matter what the Jew does, the nations of the world will find a reason to blame him for his behavior.

The Reisha Rav suggests homiletically that the verse "Judah went into exile from poverty and from an abundance of work" [Eicha 1:3] hints at this same idea. Whatever we do, the nations will always find fault with us. When Yitzchak first came to Gerar, the population did not want to have anything to do with him because he was poor. "We do not like Jews. They are too poor!" When Yitzchak became wealthy, they said "We do not want you. You are too rich!" Sometimes they wish to send Jews into exile because we are too poor (galsa Yehuda m'oni) and sometimes they wish to exile us because we are too industrious or too rich (m'rov avodah). The bottom line is, whatever the reason may be, they will always find a reason to dislike the Jews.

November 7th was the anniversary of the communist revolution in 1917. This event is no longer marked in the former Soviet Union. They no longer celebrate communism; it has been sent to the ash bin of history. Is it not ironic: when communism started, we were blamed for being responsible for bringing it in. In the 1930s, the Jews were purged from being members in the communist party. Then, they blamed the Jews for being capitalists. Today, they are blaming the Jews for the fall of communism.

Make up your mind -- Did we start communism? Did we defeat communism? Were we capitalists? Were we communists? Did we make it work or did we make it fall? Tell us, what did we do?

The answer is that it does not make a difference. Judah is exiled for both wealth and for poverty. The nations do not like us however we are.

A famous story is told of a Jew walking along and being approached by an SS officer. The SS officer pushed the Jew onto the ground and asked him "Who is the cause of all the troubles in the world?" The Jew answered, "the Jews and the bicycle riders". The officer asked him, "Why the bicycle riders?" He responded, "Why the Jews?"

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, WA DavidATwersky@aol.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #305 The Bracha of "Baruch Sheptarani". Hashatz? Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Torah.org depends upon your support. Please visit <http://torah.org/support/> or write to dedications@torah.org or donations@torah.org. Thank you! Torah.org: The Judaism Site 17 Warren Road, Suite 2B Baltimore, MD 21208

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Enayim L'Torah [from last year]

The One and Only Bracha

By RABBI MOSHE DOVID TENDLER

The text in Parashas Toldos omits any details of the controversy between Yitzchak and Rivkah concerning their sons, Yaakov and Esav. The ex-istence of such a disagreement is hinted to in the enigmatic verse: "Va'yehav Yitzchak es Esav - v'Rivkaha oheves es Yaakov" (Bereishis 25:28). Was Yitzchak unaware of the reality that Esav was a ruthless Ish Sadeh whereas Yaakov was a Yosheiv Ohalim and therefore more deserving of this love and respect? The Malbim [27:5] deduces from the blessing given unwittingly by Yitzchak to Yaakov, that he hoped to encourage Esav the Ish Sadeh to lead a more moral life by showering him with material wealth. Yaakov, the Yo-sheiv Ohalim, was best left to continue upon his chosen path, commuting between the ohalim of Shem, Ever, and Avra-ham. It was Yitzchak's plan to arrange a Yissacher-Zevulun pact between his sons, in an attempt to dissipate any latent hostility between the brothers, satisfy Esav's egoism, and provide for Yaakov's sustenance.

Rivkah did not concur with Yitzchak's plan. She feared Esav's evil. She feared for Yaakov's life and soul, lest intimate association with Esav would lead her younger son away from his destined goal of being a Yosheiv Ohalim, the progenitor of the twelve Shivtei Hashem.

After Yitzchak realized that he had mistakenly given Yaakov the bracha intended for Esav, he sensed that Divine intervention affirmed the truth of his wife's position, and therefore exclaimed "Gam Baruch Yihiyeh" (27:33) But his subsequent behavior is in need of careful analysis. Why did he exacerbate Esav's animosity by refusing to give him his own blessing? Despite Esav's plea, "Barcheni gam ani avi," Yitzchak refused, claiming that he had no ability to give him his blessing--"U'lcha eifo mah e'eseh bni" (27:37-38). Why? As Esav pleadingly inquires of his father,

"Ha'Bracha achas l'cha avi?" Was Yitzchak authorized by Hashem to give but one bracha and no more? Yitzchak did finally respond with a magnanimous bracha, "Mishmanei Ha'Aretz u'Mital HaShomayim"(27:39). But why the ex-pressed reluctance of Yitzchak to bless Esav, further kindling Esav's anger against Yaakov?

Yitzchak had but one unique bracha to transmit to his son. This sole bracha was the "Bircas Avraham" to which he was heir, not the "Bircas Av" of a dying father which he had in limitless abundance for Yaakov and for Esav. Hashem had blessed Avraham with a "one and only bracha"--that of "Ein Mazal B'Yisroel" (there are no celestial signs holding sway over Israel [but rather Hashem's hashgacha and providence]), as a component of the covenant --the Bris Bein Ha'Bsarim.

As the Gemara relates: "Amar Avraham Lifnei HKBH Nistakalti b'itagninus sheli v'eini ra'uiy l'holid ben. Amar leih, tzai m'itagninus shelcha--sh'ein mazal b'Yisroel - Avraham said before HKBH 'I have already consulted my astrology, and I see that I am not fit to bear a son!' [HKBH] said to him: 'Go outside your astrology, for the celestial signs hold no sway over Israel!'" [Shabbos 156a].

Jewish survival throughout the millennia was guaranteed by this bracha to Avraham. "Your children will not be subject to the natural law governing all the nations." Which nation ever survived 2000 years of exile from their homeland, resisting homogenization by the dominant and pervasive cultures, and continual efforts to physically destroy them? The blessing of "Mishmanei Ha'Aretz" can be shared by both sons of Yitzchak. But only Yaakov was to inherit the Bircas Avraham of "Ein Mazal B'Yisroel", and with it the Divine right to claim Eretz Yisroel as an inheritance unto eternity.

From: Rafael Salasnik[SMTP:rafi@brijnet.org] Subject: daf-hashavua Toldot 5762/2001

Toldot-5762

UNITED SYNAGOGUE - LONDON (O)

SIDRA INSIGHTS

by RABBI PROFESSOR ABNER WEISS, Western Marble Arch Synagogue and Principal LSJS

And Isaac entreated the L-rd for his wife because she was infertile; and the L-rd let Himself be entreated of him and Rebecca his wife

conceived (Bereshit 25:21)

The infertility of the matriarchs of Israel is a Leitmotif in Torah literature. Both Sarah before Rebecca and Rachel after her suffered the same distressing condition. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, actually established the validity of silent personal intercession with G-d in her fervent plea for a child. The mother of Samson, too, suffered the anguish of infertility before the miraculous divine intervention.

Given our contemporary experience of the widespread problem of infertility and the extensive literature produced by women who long for children but are unable to conceive, it is easier for us to understand the profound depth of their anguish. Their feeling of unfulfilment and loss tears at our heartstrings. The alleviation of their pain is the goal of many psycho-therapeutic strategies and has become the focus of major medical research and advances in the treatment of infertility. Blessed are the families who benefit from these advances.

In pre-modern times and certainly in the time of our matriarchs and their husbands, sincere prayer was their exclusive hope. This is the background of our text. Astonishingly, however, the text refers only to the prayer of Isaac. It does not mention the prayer of his wife. To be sure, our Sages, cited by Rashi, assumed that they both prayed. This assumption was based upon the Hebrew word lenochach "in the presence". The Hebrew implies that Isaac prayed together with his wife: 'He stood in one corner and prayed and she in another and prayed'. Since both prayed for the same thing, why is it that G-d permitted himself to be beseeched by him and not by them?

Rashi suggests that the difference in their prayer was a function of their spiritual lineage, and, consequently, of their motivation. Isaac was the son of Abraham. He carried the divine imperative of maintaining his father's tradition and guaranteeing its transmission to all future generations. His motivation was spiritual and collective. He was not moved only by personal considerations. Rashi seems to imply that, like any other infertile woman, Rebecca's prayer expressed the pain of personal unfulfilment and, perhaps, her feelings of failure as a woman.

The Sages were not unsympathetic to maternal aspirations. They stated that a child is a staff for his mother's hand and a guarantor that she will not pass away abandoned and lonely (Ketubot 64a). Prayer which is motivated by personal anguish is acceptable to G-d. There are abundant sources in our literature that testify to its positive effects. However, disinterested prayer, motivated by non-personal concerns is even greater. This is why most of our prayer is in the plural.

Our text conveys a second message. It explains the Jewish attitude to children. Our children are a sacred trust for the fulfilment of our collective religious destiny. Our commitment to their adequate Jewish education is our primary parental obligation. In this way like Isaac, we recognise that our children are the only conduits of a living, vital religious heritage.

Ask the Dayan...Our Dayanim answer your questions

Q My Synagogue has installed a security system which incorporates a camera that continuously takes pictures on videotape. As those entering the building on Shabbat are allowing themselves to be photographed, are the laws of Shabbat being infringed?

A DAYAN CHANUCH EHRENTREU answers-

Rabbi Moshe Stern, Shlita, of New York, discussed this question in his responsa Beer Moshe (6:82). He maintains that one who enters the door of a house protected by a video system which automatically photographs those who pass by is in violation of a Rabbinic edict rather than a Biblical prohibition. Accordingly, in reliance on the authorities who maintain that where the underlying infraction is only Rabbinic in nature and the unintended effect of being photographed is of no benefit or concern to the one entering, the act is permissible (Pesik Reisha delo ichpat lei beisur derabbonan mutar).

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach ztl explained that the use of a video surveillance system that is activated before Shabbat is certainly Biblically permitted, seeing as when a camera snaps a picture no image is generated on the film. The picture emerges only when the film is developed. Accordingly, taking a film cannot be a form of writing which is prohibited on Shabbat. For this reason he permits entry to a building protected by video, for the prohibition involved could only be

of Rabbinic nature and there is no intention to be photographed.

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From: Rabbi Riskin's Shabbat Shalom List
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Parshat Toldot

by RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Toldot (Genesis 25:19-28:9)

The sibling enmity between Esau and Jacob, Rome and Israel, Gentile and Jew, reverberates throughout Jewish history and until this very day. Our Torah portion of Toldot records the birth and early development of the twin sons born to Isaac and Rebecca - and provides the origins of their deadly rivalry which caused such tragedy to them as well as their descendants. Could it have been prevented?

A penetrating commentary by Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch to the seemingly innocuous verse, "And the boys grew up; and Esau became a man who understood hunting, a man of the fields and Jacob became a whole-hearted man, a dweller in tents" (Genesis 25:27) suggests that it could harm - and at the same time gives critical advice to every parent concerned about bringing up a junior Jacob rather than a junior Esau.

But in order to understand Rav Hirsch's words in depth, let us first take note of an important midrash from last week's Torah portion of Hayyei Sarah. The Torah goes into exquisite detail in describing Abraham's appointment to Eliezer to find a suitable wife for Isaac and in detailing the precise incidents leading up to and following his selection of Rebecca; indeed, we read of Abraham's instructions to his servant, Eliezer's criteria and fulfillment of his task, and then of Eliezer's recounting of the entire procedure from beginning to end to Rebecca's father and brother. (Genesis 24: 1-67, 67 verses!). This elaboration of detail inspires Rashi to cite the midrash: "Rabbi Aha said, "the discussions of the servants of the patriarchs is more important than the actual Torah law of their descendants. After all, the portion dealing with Eliezer is repeated twice in the Torah and many specific laws are only given by allusion (and must be extracted by means of logical deduction)."

I believe that there are two crucial reasons of the proliferation of detail in this particular Biblical account. The first is the general principle that we learn best not from what people say but rather from what they do; the laws we receive from G-d on high (or even that are preached to us from family and teachers) will ultimately have less influence upon our lives than the actual deeds - the values expressed in action - that we have experienced from observing our parents and grand-parents in real life. All of the folio pages of the Tractate Shabbat, which thank G-d I have been privileged to study and teach more than once, have not entered my innermost soul as much as the memories of my grandmother's radiant face - suddenly transformed by the light of the Sabbath candles which had remarkably removed the worry-wrinkles and careworn tension from her eyes and brows - as she embraced me with her heart-felt words, "A gut Shabbes mein kind, a heilige shabbes, mein tayera anikel." (A good Sabbath, my child, a holy Sabbath, my beloved grand-son).

And here the message communicated is indubitably clear: the tremendous importance of choosing the proper wife, the most crucial factor in determining the continuity of our people.

Apparently Abraham comes to realize this great truth especially after Sarah's passing; Abraham's ministry begins when he is 75 years old - and G-d first speaks to him commanding his aliyah to Israel - and lasts for 62 years until the binding of Isaac, which is the last Biblically recorded conversation between the first patriarch and the Almighty. These are the years of Abraham's great accomplishments - and these are also the years of Sarah's life. Abraham lives another thirty-eight

years when he still remains vigorous enough to re-marry and have children. But there are no Biblically recorded accomplishments or conversations with the Divine. Sarah, apparently the crucial factor in the partnership which formed the people of Israel, was no longer alive. And the criteria for choosing the right wife - as we see from the details which follow - is hospitality and loving-kindness even towards a stranger, a stranger who was a servant and not a master in his own right, and even towards brute beasts. Moreover, this loving-kindness emanated from a woman of unique strength and independence - a shepherdess amongst shepherds - who consequently proves herself to be not only an enabler but also an initiator in the drama surrounding the succession to the Abrahamic leadership.

The second message of the detailed exposition is to demonstrate that Eliezer is much more than a mere agent, carrying out directions in a robot-like manner. Eliezer is an individual of rare and exquisite ingenuity, intelligence and sensitivity - and all come to play in the successful accomplishment of his mission. Indeed, the Torah and Midrash are critical of giving important tasks over to "messengers"; the effective individual, and especially the successful parent-teacher, does the job himself - thereby transmitting the important lesson by example and not merely by instruction! Hence, when the Torah describes Abraham's hospitality towards strangers, we learn that not only did the patriarch leave the Divine Presence to tend to the wayfarers but that he himself "ran to the livestock" to choose and prepare the meat and that "he himself waited upon them" (Genesis 18:1,2,7,8). But when Abraham relied on an agent - "let there be brought now a little water so that you may wash your feet" (Genesis 18:4) - the Sages chastise him: "he relied on an agent, so the Holy one blessed be He repaid his descendants with an agent," by having Moses extract water from the rock instead of G-d Himself providing the water just as he provided the manna; and from this agency - Moses struck the rock instead of speaking to it - there came tragedy to Moses as well as to Israel (Rashi ad loc).

It is on this basis that Rav Isaac Bemstein zt"l, the great Torah teacher of London, would interpret the passage in the Shema: "And you shall teach Torah diligently to your children." How can you be a successful parent-teacher? You must "speak with them" by teaching them yourself, and not watching T.V. while telling them to study! "When you sit at your home" - they must see you learning Torah and being involved with commandments during your time at home; "When you go on the road" - they must be aware that your vacation choices are places of Torah; "when you go to sleep and when you wake up" - they must see you fall asleep over a "sefer" and waking up to an early minyan.

Now we return to Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch. "And the boys grew up" - they seemed to have been allowed to reach maturity with almost no parental supervision or input. "No attention was paid to the slumbering differences in their natures; both given exactly the same teaching and educational treatment; the great law of education 'bring up each child in accord with his/her own way' was forgotten" (Hirsch, Biblical Commentary on Genesis, 25:27). Parents dare not trust to agents or osmosis of environment to be the agents in educating their children. We must actively teach them ourselves - and by personal example more than mere verbal instruction.

Shabbat Shalom.

You can find Rabbi Riskin's parshiot on the web at:
<http://www.ohrtorahstone.org.il/parsha/index.htm> Ohr Torah Stone Colleges and Graduate Programs Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, Chancellor Rabbi Chaim Brovender, Dean

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THE PRACTICAL TORAH

BY RABBI MICHAEL TAUBES

Parshas Toldos: The Yichus of the Sheliach Tzibbur

No definitive Halacha LeMa'aseh conclusions should be applied to practical situations based on any of these Shiurim.

The Torah tells us that after Yitzchak and Rivkah had been married for a while and had been unable to have children, they each davened

to Hashem, asking to be blessed with children (Bereishis 25:21). Despite the fact that the beginning of this Posuk (Ibid.) implies that both of them davened to Hashem, as pointed out by Rashi (Ibid. s.v. L'Nochach), the end of the Posuk (Ibid.) indicates only that Hashem responded to his prayers, meaning the prayers of Yitzchak. The Gemara in Yevamos (64a), quoted as well by Rashi in his commentary on the Torah (Ibid. s.v. V'Yaater Lo), wonders why the Torah does not say that Hashem responded to their prayers, and explains that the prayers of a Tzaddik who is the child of a Tzaddik are more powerful than those of a Tzaddik who is the child of a wicked person. Hashem thus accepted primarily the prayers of Yitzchak, since he was a Tzaddik who was the child of a Tzaddik, while Rivkah, though a Tzaddekes herself, was not the child of a Tzaddik. It would thus appear that one's Yichus, that is, one's family background, can play some role in the effectiveness of one's Tefillos.

The Rosh (Sheilos V'Teshuvos HaRosh Klal 4 Siman 22) quotes an authority who objected, possibly based on the above, to the appointment of Chazzanim who came from undistinguished families because it is a Bizui Mitzvah, a degradation of the Mitzvah, to have someone represent the community as the Sheliach Tzibbur if he does not come from a distinguished family. The Rosh himself (Ibid.), however, disagrees with this reasoning and states that one's Yichus should not have any bearing on his eligibility to be a Chazzan. He says that if a person comes from a distinguished family but is himself wicked, his Yichus is not worth anything to Hashem. On the other hand, if he comes from an undistinguished or even a non-observant family, but is himself a good person, he should, in the name of Kiruv Rechokim, be encouraged to be the Chazzan and thereby be brought even closer to Hashem. As a side point, the Rosh (Ibid.) does object to the practice of selecting a Chazzan only because people enjoy hearing his beautiful voice, ignoring the fact that he may be a wicked person; he concludes that Hashem has no interest in (only) a beautiful voice. The Rosh (Ibid.) clearly believes that the person serving as a Chazzan must himself be a righteous person, even though he need not come from a great family.

The Tur (Orach Chaim Siman 53) quotes this Teshuvah from his father the Rosh (Ibid.) that one's family background is not important in terms of his qualifications as a Chazzan, but the difficulty is that this position appears to go against the aforementioned Gemara in Yevamos (Ibid.) which states that the prayers of a Tzaddik from a righteous family are more powerful than those of a Tzaddik from a wicked family. The Maharshal (Sheilos V'Teshuvos Maharshal Siman 20) raises precisely this question against the view of the Rosh (Ibid.), and he suggests that perhaps the statement of the Gemara (Ibid.) refers only to when a person is praying for himself and his own needs. In such a case, the prayers of a Tzaddik from a family of Tzaddikim are indeed more powerful than those of a Tzaddik from a wicked family, because the merits of the former's righteous ancestors (Zichus Avos) are taken into account and benefit him, while the latter has no such merits to assist him. But as for serving as a Sheliach Tzibbur, if one is recognized as a pious person himself, the fact that he comes from a wicked or non-observant family is inconsequential. In fact, the Maharshal (Ibid.) adds, it is considered significant and especially meritorious in the eyes of Hashem that this person has abandoned the ways of his family and returned to the proper path. In view of that point, it may even be preferable to have such a person represent the community as the Sheliach Tzibbur. This notion may be based in part on the opinion quoted in the Gemara in Berachos (34b) that Ba'alei Teshuvah, from a certain perspective, are on a higher level than people who were always righteous.

The Bach, however, in his commentary on the Tur (Orach Chaim Ibid. s.v. V'Z"l A"A), quotes a view expressed by the Maharshal in his Sefer Yam Shel Shlomo on Chulin (Perek 1 Siman 48) that while it may be, from a Kiruv Rechokim perspective, good to encourage someone who is returning to observant Judaism from a non-observant family to be the Chazzan, if there are two people whose levels of personal piety and observance are equal, it is preferable to designate as the Chazzan the one who comes from a more distinguished family. He then adds that it is proper to be scrupulous about this, because the prayers of a

Tzaddik from a righteous family are greater than those of a Tzaddik from a less worthy family. The Perishah, in his commentary on the Tur (Ibid. Ot 7), quotes this view as well. The Magen Avraham (Orach Chaim Ibid. Sif Katan 8) likewise writes simply that one should make the effort to find a Sheliach Tzibbur who comes from a righteous family for this same reason.

The Taz (Ibid. Sif Katan 3), however, disagrees, referring back to the aforementioned Teshuvah of the Rosh (Ibid.), and pointing out that he implies that it is always preferable to select as the Chazzan the individual from the less pious family in order to bring that person closer to Hashem. He also writes that this person's Tefillos will be more readily accepted by Hashem than those of the person from the more righteous family. The Levushei Serad (Ibid.), commenting on this view of the Taz (Ibid.), explains this latter point by saying that Hashem will see that the Tzibbur asked this person to be their Chazzan as a means of drawing him closer to Hashem, whereas the righteous person from a righteous family did not have the same need to be drawn closer to Hashem; Hashem will thus more readily accept the prayers of this person on behalf of the Tzibbur. The Shulchan Aruch HaRav (Orach Chaim Ibid. Sif 7) suggests that the Tefillos of a Tzaddik from a wicked family may be better than those of the person from a righteous family precisely because the former has no Zichus Avos, meritorious family background; as a result, his prayers may be more pure and of a more humble spirit because he knows he must rely exclusively on Hashem accepting his prayers. He adds, though, that each situation depends on particular, individual circumstances. The Mishnah Berurah (Ibid. Sif Katan 13), writes, however, that it is preferable to have a Chazzan who is righteous and is from a righteous family for the reason cited above, and he quotes that when the Rosh in his Teshuvah (Ibid.) wrote that the Yichus of the Chazzan is unimportant, he meant to allow for a Chazzan from an undistinguished family, but not for one who comes from a wicked family. The former should be encouraged to serve as a Chazzan to bring him closer to Hashem, the latter, perhaps, should not.

It is interesting to note that when discussing the qualifications needed for one to serve as a Sheliach Tzibbur in general, the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim Ibid. Sifim 4-6) says nothing about the person's family background. Elsewhere, however, when discussing the qualifications relating to serving as a Chazzan on a public fast day, which is a time of great communal need, the Shulchan Aruch (Ibid. Siman 579 Sif 1) does mention that the person's family members ought to be free of sin as well, as implied by the Gemara in Taanis (16a). The Magen Avraham (Ibid. Siman 53 Sif Katan 6) writes that everything here must be determined based on the needs and circumstances of the particular case. The Kaf HaChaim (Ibid. Ot 41) quotes the different opinions on this entire issue, and as for the question of who takes precedence as the Chazzan, one from a distinguished family or one from an undistinguished family, concerning which the Maharshal (Ibid.) expressed conflicting views, as cited above, he too explains that it all depends upon the feelings and knowledge of the community which this Chazzan will be representing.

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Toldot

To Learn and to Teach

Rosh Hayeshiva HARAV MORDECHAI GREENBERG, shlita

"To you and your offspring I will give all these lands ... I will increase your offspring like the stars of the heavens ... Because Avraham obeyed My voice." (Bereishit 26: 3-5) It is very surprising that Yitzchak does not have independent merit, only in the merit of Avraham! Similarly, it says later on, "I am the G-d of your father Avraham. Fear not, for I am with you; I will bless you and increase your offspring because of Avraham My servant." (26:24)

The Sforno addresses this issue, and points out that we do not find this phenomenon regarding the other patriarchs. Regarding Yaakov, and certainly Avraham, the Torah does not attribute the fulfillment of

the promise to the merit of their fathers, but rather to their own merit. The Sforno answers (26:5 s.v. vayishmor mishmarti) that Avraham not only fulfilled the entire Torah himself, but rather he cared to go and proclaim the Name of G-d to others, as the Ramban writes, "His practice was to teach and publicize Divinity." Similarly, the Midrash comments, "He caused G-d's Name to be proclaimed by every person's mouth." Yaakov, as well, sat in the Beit Midrash of Shem and Ever -- "a wholesome man, abiding in tents" -- in order "to learn, and to teach the people wisdom, especially [those] in the tents of Shem and Ever, to where anyone who sought G-d undoubtedly went." (Sforno, ibid.)

However, we don't find that Yitzchak would teach others and proclaim G-d's Name. Since he didn't continue his father's endeavor, he didn't merit the blessing -- other than in his father's merit. Only later on does it say, "He built an altar there, and proclaimed Hashem's Name" (26:25), and immediately afterwards it says, "We have indeed seen that Hashem has been with you ... Now, you, O blessed of Hashem." (26:28-29) From here on Yitzchak is blessed in his own merit.

The importance of teaching others is addressed by the Sforno also regarding Noah, about whom it says, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of Hashem." (6:8) Noah was "a righteous man, perfect in his generation," so why was there a need for finding grace in order to save him, and not in the merit of his righteousness? The Sforno comments on this, at the end of Parshat Bereishit, "Noah found grace -- to save also his sons and daughters." In other words, Noah himself was saved in the merit of his righteousness, but his merit did not serve to save his children also, and they were saved only in the merit of grace. The Sforno (6:8) explains the reason for this:

Because they did not teach their generation to know G-d, as [did] Avraham, Moshe, Shmuel, and others. For, indeed, a righteous person who perfects himself alone -- he is worthy of saving himself alone, but one who perfects another -- he is worthy that he should save others.

The Sforno learns this principle from explicit psukim in Sefer Yechezkel (14:13-16):

Son of Man, when a country sins against Me, acting with treachery, and I stretch out My hand against it ... and dispatch famine against it, and eliminate man and beast from it, then even if these three men would be in its midst -- Noah, Daniel and Iyov -- they, by their righteousness, would save [only] their own souls ... they would save neither sons nor daughters; they alone would be saved, but the land would be desolate.

The Meshech Chochma explains along these same lines the following Midrash: "Moshe is more cherished than Noah. Noah, after being called "a righteous man" is called "man of the earth," whereas Moshe, after being called "an Egyptian man" is called "man of G-d." (Bereishit Rabbah 36:3) There are two ways in the service of G-d. One, a person who self-focuses and isolates himself for the service of G-d. Two, a person who involves himself in public needs and commits himself to the klal and forsakes his life for them. Logic says that one who self-focuses will rise higher and higher, while one who does not look after himself, but concerns himself with others will go down. Nonetheless, we find that Noah, who isolated himself and didn't rebuke the people of his generation --declined from the level of "a righteous man" to that of "man of the earth," while Moshe, who began as "an Egyptian man," and sacrificed himself for Klal Yisrael -- rose to the level of "man of G-d," which is the ultimate perfection.

<http://www.artscroll.com/parashah.html>

Parashah Talk

Parshas Toledos

Excerpt from Living Each Week,

by RABBI ABRAHAM J. TWERSKI, M.D.

[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: Yeshivat Har Etzion Office[SMTP:office@etzion.org.il] To: yhe-intparsha@etzion.org.il Subject: INTPARSHA62 -06: Parashat Toledot In memory of Aharon Ussishkin, HY"D, yet another victim of Palestinian terror. Refuah sheleimah to the wounded.

AVRAHAM'S PROPHETIC STATURE IN PARASHAT VAYERA by DAVID SILVERBERG

A. Overview of Parashat Toledot

This shiur will focus on the final section of Parashat Toledot, the blessings conferred by Yitzchak on his sons, Yaakov and Esav. This topic ranks among the most intricate, complex and perplexing issues throughout Chumash, one which directly involves much of the rest of Parashat Toledot. We must therefore begin with a brief overview of this parasha in order to have before us the relevant information that stood before the eyes of our commentators as they arrived at their respective conclusions.

Section 1: The Birth and Development of Yaakov and Esav (25:19-34)

I. Rivka's infertility and eventual pregnancy; her prophecy of "two nations" in her womb, the oldest of which will serve the younger. II. Yaakov and Esav's childhood and adolescence, the former growing into a "tent dweller" while the latter works as a hunter. III. Yaakov's sale of the birthright to Esav.

Section 2: Yitzchak's Travails in Gerar (26:1-33) I. Yitzchak's resettlement in Gerar to escape the famine; Rivka's abduction and return; Yitzchak's agricultural success, triggering jealousy from the local population and his banishment from the city. II. The struggle for ownership over Avraham's wells. III. Yitzchak's treaty with the king of Gerar.

Section 3: Yitzchak's Blessings to His Sons (26:34- 27:9) I. Esav's marriage to a Hittite girl, much to his parents' disappointment. II. Yitzchak's desire to bless Esav before his death and Yaakov's devious seizure of the blessing. III. Esav's threat to kill Yaakov, prompting the latter to flee to his uncle in Charan, where he is to marry one of his cousins, while Esav marries another cousin - Yishmael's daughter.

The fundamental question we will address is the same question that troubled the great minds of our commentators throughout the centuries: what did Yitzchak have in mind when he sought to bless Esav? This question consists of several components, including: what did this blessing entail? What was at stake that prompted such an extreme reaction on Esav's part? What did Rivka see that Yitzchak did not? We will survey the various approaches taken to these and related issues, scrutinizing and assessing each one in search of its strengths and weaknesses. In the process, we will encounter virtually every major factor that our commentators undoubtedly considered as they analyzed this most difficult - and fascinating - parasha.

B. Esav as Yitzchak's Heir?

The commentators seem divided over one critical issue relating to this incident: by conferring this blessing upon Esav, did Yitzchak express his selection of Esav over Yaakov as heir to G-d's covenant to Avraham? Towards the beginning of the parasha, we read that Yitzchak "liked" Esav (25:28). Does this mean he preferred Esav over Yaakov as his successor, and it is this blessing he wishes to bestow upon him?

The Ramban in fact adopts this approach, claiming that Yitzchak

intends here to appoint Esav his exclusive heir to the covenant of Avraham. For some reason, Rivka had never related to him the prophecy she received that "the oldest will serve the youngest," indicating that Yaakov, the younger twin, had been granted the status of heir apparent. The Ramban speculates that Rivka felt that telling her husband of this prophecy would insult him. Rivka therefore resorts to a cunning and shrewd plan to ensure the fulfillment of her prophecy.

This approach, taken as well by the Abarbanel, features one critical advantage over many of the alternatives: it explains the tension and riveting drama that characterizes this narrative. At stake here is not merely a kind word of good wishes from the father, but rather the entire family heritage and legacy of Avraham. At his mother's behest, Yaakov steals from Esav not merely blessings of success and prosperity, but rather the distinction and privilege of the covenant. If an ordinary blessing is not worth killing for, perhaps, in Esav's eyes, one's eternal legacy is.

At the same time, this theory raises many difficulties, most of which are noted in one form or another by other commentators. Most obviously, perhaps, how could we attribute such a grave error of potentially catastrophic consequences to our patriarch? How could Yitzchak have overlooked Esav's obvious grounds for disqualification, not to mention show preference to him over his righteous, scholarly brother? What more, just prior to this narrative we read of Esav's marriage to a Hittite woman, to which BOTH Yitzchak and Rivka react with "bitterness of spirit" (26:35). How startling it is, then, to find immediately thereafter Yitzchak's appointment of Esav as his sole successor!

The Abarbanel answers that the Torah itself alludes to an explanation in its introduction to this narrative: "When Yitzchak was old and his eyes were too dim to see" (27:1). Not only did Yitzchak's eyesight begin failing him, but so did his power of judgment, which was blinded by his affection for Esav. As bitterly disappointed he felt over Esav's choice of a wife, he held out hope that through a unique blessing, preceded by Esav's demonstration of devotion and love, he can pray on his son's behalf and positively influence his character. His emotions misled him to believe that a blessing will suffice to render Esav worthy of founding G-d's nation. Rivka, of course, had classified information to the contrary, and thus felt compelled to intervene.

This suggestion by the Abarbanel helps resolve another difficulty, as well. Why must Yitzchak designate a successor through the conferral of a special blessing? His father, Avraham, never conducted such a ritual. In fact, only after Avraham's death did G-d Himself personally appear to Yitzchak and bless him (25:11), presumably reaffirming his role as successor (Rashi's second interpretation there). According to the Abarbanel, Yitzchak faced an awkward predicament of sorts: his choice for heir to the covenant is not quite deserving of this honor and responsibility. He must therefore bestow a special blessing upon him so that he qualifies as Yitzchak's successor.

The notion that Yitzchak "had the wool pulled over his eyes" appears in earlier sources, as well. The Torah bases Yitzchak's particular fondness of Esav on the "game in his mouth" (25:28). Rashi offers two possible interpretations of this ambiguous clause. He first notes the translation of Onkelos, by which Esav earned Yitzchak's admiration by bringing him food. This would perhaps accommodate the Abarbanel's claim: the natural sense of appreciation for his son's devotion blinded Yitzchak to Esav's poor qualities. Secondly, Rashi suggests (based on the Midrash) understanding "game" here as a metaphorical reference to deceit. Esav successfully masqueraded himself before Yitzchak in a disguise of piety, to the point where Yitzchak mistook him for the destined bearer of Avraham's legacy. According to both interpretations, Yitzchak was "duped," plain and simple.

Another objection one could raise against the approach of the Ramban and Abarbanel involves the astonishing lack of spousal communication it presumes. Can we accept the fact that over several decades Rivka withheld from her husband her prophecy as to the future of their only two children? (Note that Chazal calculate the sons' age at this point at sixty-three years!!) Did the issue of a successor never come up in conversation between Yitzchak and Rivka? The Ramban's suggestion that Rivka feared the embarrassment Yitzchak might suffer, or the speculation that she assumed Yitzchak had received a similar prophecy, do not alleviate our astonishment at the couple's never having spoken openly regarding this issue.

The final and perhaps most troubling difficulty posed by the Ramban's approach emerges from Yitzchak's blessing itself. Nowhere in the

blessing conferred to Yaakov (disguised as Esav) does Yitzchak make even the slightest reference to the covenant of Avraham. He mentions this promise only later, when he sends Yaakov away to flee from Esav: "May Kel Sha-dai bless you. May He grant you the blessing of Avraham to you and your offspring, that you may possess the land where you are sojourning." (28:3-4). Apparently, the blessing intended for Esav served some other function and did not formally appoint Esav his father's successor.

C. Sharing the Legacy

Rejecting the possibility that Yitzchak planned on selecting Esav over Yaakov, several more recent writers have claimed that Yitzchak intended for both his sons to jointly continue Avraham's legacy. Probably the earliest reference to this theory appears in the commentary of the Malbim. The Malbim writes that as evidenced by Yitzchak's reaction to Esav's marriage, Yitzchak never deemed him a candidate for successor. Nevertheless, he figured that Esav's military and logistical talent would be of great service to his brother, who would emerge as the spiritual founder of G-d's nation. Yaakov, the "simpleton, a dweller of tents" (25:27), needed a partner who would oversee the administrative and political arrangements necessary for the cultivation of a thriving and prosperous nation. This partnership would allow Yaakov, the scholar, to devote his time and energy solely to the spiritual development of this nation, unencumbered by the mundane responsibilities otherwise cast upon his shoulders.

The most obvious proof to this approach lies within the text of Yitzchak's blessing. As noted, this blessing makes no mention of G-d's promise to Avraham. Instead, it speaks of economic prosperity ("May G-d give you of the dew of heaven and the fat of the earth") and military might ("Let peoples serve you and nations bow to you"). It concludes with the prayer that Esav become "master over your brothers," which we may easily interpret as a reference to governmental authority, rather than subjugation. This blessing, then, wishes upon Esav economic, military and political success - the three primary responsibilities charged upon a national government, which Esav is to form.

Rav Menachem Leibtag emphasizes a critical point relevant to this approach. Due to hindsight, we tend to take the selection of one of Yitzchak's sons over the other as a self-evident presumption. Rabbi Leibtag suggests that we change our entire mindset with regard to the process of transmission of Avraham's covenant. G-d had explicitly told Avraham that only one of his two sons - Yitzchak - will carry his legacy (17:21, 21:12). We find no recorded prophecy to this effect regarding Yitzchak's sons. Yitzchak thus had no reason to believe that either of his sons would be expelled from the covenant as his uncle Yishmael had been. He likely assumed that both Yaakov and Esav would share equally the patriarchal status vis-a-vis G-d's nation.

Rivka, of course, knew better. Unlike Yitzchak, she received an explicit prophecy that in her womb grew "two nations," with the younger of the sons overpowering the older. She understood that Yaakov alone was destined to establish G-d's nation, while Esav would remain outside the covenantal legacy of Avraham.

Of course, this analysis falls short of resolving the difficulty we encountered when studying the Ramban's position: why did Rivka never inform Yitzchak of her prophecy? How could she withhold such critical information from her husband?

However, this approach lends itself to a possible solution, one which requires us to slightly adjust our presentation of this position. In a VBM shiur several years ago, Rav Ezra Bick elaborated on the direction taken to this issue by Nava Gutman, in the Hebrew journal, Megadim (vol.21), which upholds the "shared legacy" theory while arguing that Yitzchak had full knowledge of Rivka's prophecy. G-d had told Rivka, "Two nations are in your womb, two separate peoples shall issue from your body" (25:23). Yitzchak may have understood these "two nations" as two tribes within the same nation. While both sons will participate equally in the formation and establishment of this nation, they will play different roles towards that end. As the twins grew and exhibited diametrically opposed interests and personalities, Yitzchak understood (so he thought) exactly how these two "sub-nations" would take shape: Esav's practicality would ensure the safety, security and stability of this nation, while Yaakov's wisdom and piety would lend the nation its unique spiritual character. We may add that Yitzchak himself personally experienced this need for the complementary cooperation between spiritual ideals and practicality. Chazal describe Esav as an "ola temima," a sacrifice that is burnt entirely on the altar and not eaten by

humans. The common explanation of this metaphor is that Yitzchak lived a purely spiritual existence, to some extent detached from the mundane realities of the world. This likely accounts for the crises he encounters in Gerar in the middle section of our parasha. When his mother, Sara, is abducted by the king of Gerar in a parallel incident, Avraham earns the respect and admiration of the local populace and the king offers him land for residence (20:15). Yitzchak, by contrast, is eventually banished from the city (26:16) and sees his wells stolen by the local inhabitants (26:17-21). He suffered from his inability to individually balance the ideal and the pragmatic. He therefore advocated a system of division of labor, or "two nations," by which one son manages state affairs leaving the other to engage undisturbed in spiritual endeavors.

Rivka, however, understood the prophecy differently. The mundane and the sublime cannot be so drastically wedged apart. Leaving all practical state affairs in Esav's wicked hands would undermine Yaakov's efforts in shaping the nation's spiritual quality. Instead, Yaakov himself must don "the hands of Esav," he must mold the nation's character by working from within, rather than from without.

D. A Different Blessing

Several factors likely prompted other commentators to dissociate this blessing entirely from the covenantal legacy of Avraham, viewing it as serving a purpose unrelated to the question of Yitzchak's successor. This group rejects the notion of Yitzchak entertaining the possibility of including Esav in the covenant. Influenced primarily by the Torah's record of Yitzchak's disgust at Esav's intermarriage, coupled with a rich tradition of rabbinic literature portraying Esav in the most contemptuous light, these commentators see Esav's exclusion as a foregone conclusion. Other issues we have encountered, including the prophecy to Rivka and Yitzchak's omission of any mention of the covenant in his blessing, also likely contributed to these authors' line of reasoning.

So, what kind of blessing is this? If Yitzchak does not intend here to bestow Avraham's blessing upon Esav, then what does he plan to do?

Two general alternatives are raised within this group of commentators.

Rav David Kimchi (the "Radak") argues that Yitzchak felt compelled to bless Esav specifically because of his unworthiness. Lacking sufficient merits on his own right, Esav faced the prospect of severe divine retribution, which Yitzchak, the loving father, wished to avoid through the conferral of a blessing. Rivka, however, misunderstood Yitzchak's intention as a plan to divert the birthright from Yaakov back to Esav, and thus felt required to intervene on Yaakov's behalf. Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin (the "Netziv"), explains differently, that Yitzchak wished to bestow upon his beloved son a special blessing of material success and prosperity. The Netziv likens this blessing to Noah's blessings to his sons, which, though certainly intended for the children's progeny, did not involve a specific historical process or destiny such as the transmission of the covenant. Rivka, however, wished even this blessing to be conferred upon his favorite son, Yaakov.

One immediate disadvantage such an approach would face relates to Esav's rage and fury over the loss of his blessing. If this blessing did not involve the issues of birthright or inheritance, why should Esav react with such vengeance? Additionally, Yitzchak at first cannot find a blessing for Esav after he had mistakenly blessed Yaakov (27:37). If this blessing did not involve a specific selection or designation of one son, why did Yitzchak hesitate before bestowing another blessing upon Esav?

One may suggest that one element in particular irked Esav: "Be master over your brothers, and let your mother's sons bow down to you" (27:29). Beyond prosperity, this blessing also included the recipient's superiority and dominion over his brother. The loss of this mastery of Yaakov likely fueled Esav's resentment and forced Yitzchak to somehow pacify his eldest son with some alternate blessing.

In conclusion, we have seen three general approaches towards the meaning and significance of these blessings. Yitzchak had either intended to name Esav the exclusive heir to Avraham's covenant, to charge Esav with the political and administrative responsibilities of the special nation he and Yaakov will jointly build, or to confer an independent blessing upon his beloved son, unrelated to the covenant of Avraham.

Methodological Points:

I. This discussion serves as perhaps a classic representation of traditional exegesis surrounding a particularly difficult and complex issue. After reviewing the various approaches one finds that virtually no single explanation resolves every difficulty to perfect satisfaction.

Commentators must carefully select which problems appear less troubling and can be left without total resolution, and which demand a satisfactory response.

II. The possibility of Yitzchak's mistaken judgment of Esav directly relates to the broader issue of questioning or criticizing our patriarchs' conduct. Different scholars throughout the years have exhibited varying attitudes in analyzing the actions of our spiritual heroes. Not surprisingly, the Ramban, who refers to Avraham's relocation in Egypt a "grave sin" (12:10), is the one who portrays Yitzchak in the most negative light in our context, claiming that he misread Esav as his destined successor. Other commentators refused to attribute an error of this gravity to Yitzchak. Interestingly, though, Rav Shimshon Refael Hirsch, in his commentary to our parasha, sharply criticizes Yitzchak and Rivka for their educational mishandling of Esav. He claims that they raised him as if he were of the same emotional and behavioral makeup as his twin, an error that resulted in Esav's corrupt character as an adult.

III. Recall the possibility suggested that Yitzchak understood Rivka's prophecy of "two nations" in her womb as referring actually to two tribes within the same nation. Such a notion depends on the likelihood of defining the Hebrew terms "goy" and "le'om" employed in this context to mean "tribes." This reflects the substantial interplay that exists between precise word definition and the broader, contextual understanding of the text. Very often, how one understands an entire section in Chumash can depend on technical nuances related to grammar and word usage.

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TorahWeb from last year

RABBI BENJAMIN YUDIN

MUCH MORE THAN SIBLING RIVALRY

Parshas Toldos presents a struggle and tension in the realm of ethics and etiquette. In the former, it is interesting to note that the Torah describes how Avraham catered to his guests, "and he ran towards them," (18:2), "vayemaher" (v.6), he hurried, "veel habakar ratz avraham" (v.7), "and Avraham ran to the heard." Similarly, Rivka extended her chesed, "vatemaher vatorev kadah" (24:18)-"She hastened and brought down her pitcher," "Vatemaher vatear kadah el hashoket"- "She hastened and she poured out her pitcher into the trough."

Yaakov, on the other hand, when commanded by his mother to bring the two goats for her to prepare, understandably in an effort to exact the brachos before Esav returned, the Torah teaches, "Vayelech vayikach vayavei leimo" (27:14), he went and took and brought them to his mother without any haste. Yaakov, the man of truth, found it most difficult to deceive his father. It is only after his mother, Rivka, assured him that she was prophetically informed that he would not suffer for this action that Yaakov acquiesced to her command (charge).

In the realm of etiquette, the Torah teaches that Esav returned from the field feeling faint. He then instructs Yaakov, who had prepared a pottage, to, "pour down my throat some of this red stuff, for I am faint (25:30)." Yaakov, who according to our Chazal (brought down in Rashi) is aware of the serious misdeeds of Esav that had contributed to his feeling faint, realized that his sibling was not worthy of representing his family in spiritual matters and sacrificial service. Yaakov therefore asked Esav to sell him his birthright. Had Esav spurned and shamed the birthright prior to satisfying his hunger, one could perhaps attribute his behavior to his famished predicament. However, the Torah informs us that, "He ate, he drank, he arose, and he went, and Esav shamed the birthright" (25:34).

Our rabbis see Esav's character in the word "vayibez" if he shamed the birthright. The Pirkei D'R' Eliezer (Ch. 28) teaches that Esav spurned and rejected bris milah. Moreover, in Megillas Esther, the verse states, "vayibez bainyan"- it was contemptible to Haman to harm Mordechai alone, so Haman sought to destroy all the Jews. The medrash (Esther Rabbah 7:10) calls Haman a bazuy ben bazuy if the disgraceful son of the (descendant) of the disgraceful one. The only other place that vayibez is used is with Esav, Haman's ancestor. Just as Esav belittled and disgraced the holy, so did Haman belittle and disgrace Israel, the holy people.

In contrast, our heritage is replete with dignity and respect, even when

it comes to eating. (See Derech Eretz Rabbah ch. 6-9.) The Shulchan Aruch in Orach Chaim (ch. 170) stresses that one is not to eat in a gluttonous fashion. We are to behave in a dignified manner in order to reflect the tzelem elokim, the sanctity and worth of man who is created "in the image of G-d." There is no license to "pig-out", as this is the pattern and behavior of Esav - one who divests himself of sanctity. We thus understand why our sages teach (Kiddushin 40b) that one who eats in the street is compared to a dog, and some say he is disqualified from testifying in court. Rashi explains that since he lacks self-respect and a sense of shame, two factors that provide a natural barrier to perjury, he can not be relied upon to give honest testimony.

One can appreciate and value their self-worth and dignity if they are ever cognizant of their "tzelem elokim" of their being created in the image of G-d. It is fascinating to note that the soul is called "kavod" - honor. We recite daily the Psalm (30:13), "Lema'an yizamercha kavod velo yidom," "So that my soul might sing to you and not be stilled". It is the soul and man's awareness thereof that affords him his dignity. Hillel taught his students the same important lesson, when upon leaving them one erev shabbos, he told them he was about to perform a mitzvah. He piqued their interest, and they inquired as to the specifics. Hillel then told his students that he was about to take a bath. When he noticed their amazement, he added that as guards in a museum wash the busts and statues of the king as a sign of respect, I, who was created in the image of G-d, must certainly do so (Vayikra Rabbaj 34:3).

(There is a delicate and difficult balance between acknowledging one's kavod and worth, and haughtiness. If one is aware of their worth, then their actions, prayer, and Torah study affect, not only to themselves, but to the environment. The Tifferes Shlomo on parshas Noach teaches that Noach did not pray on behalf of his generation as he did not believe that his prayers could have made a difference. How wrong he was.

In addition, the Bach in his commentary on the laws of chanukah writes that the reason the Temple was taken over by the rebels was that the Jewish nation did not show sufficient respect for the Beis HaMikdash. When they did demonstrate their willingness to fight for, and lay down their lives for it, it reverted to being in their hands. When we honor Hashem, man, mitzvos, and Torah, we are honored in return.)

R. Yochanan used to refer to his clothes as "those that honor me." The Talmud (Shabbos 113a) explains the verse in Isaiah (58:13), "vechibadeto measot derachecha" "and you shall honor it (the shabbos) by not doing your ways". Your shabbos garments should not be the same as your weekday clothes. Moreover, regarding King David, the Talmud (Berachos 62b) teaches that as he "cut off the corner of Saul's cloak" (Samuel I 24:5), "whoever dishonors clothing will in the end not have use of them." Though David's motivation was sincere - he had wanted to show his father-in-law, who wanted to kill him - that when David had the opportunity to inflict harm on Saul, David refrained. Nonetheless, his cutting the corner of Saul's garment resulted in his garments, in later years, being insufficiently warm, as we are taught (Kings I 1:1), "They covered him with garments, but they did not warm him." The Talmud reinforces the principle that only if one gives respect does he receive it in return.

It is interesting to note that the Mishna (Avos 3:15) teaches that if one humiliates another individual in public, you lose your share in the world to come. Yet, if one actually murders somebody, the murderer is subject to capital punishment, but does not lose his share in the world to come. Humiliating another individual deprives him of his kavod of dignity. The Navi Isaiah (43:7) teaches that, "Everyone who is called by My name, and who I have created for My glory", i.e., man's purpose is to increase the honor of Hashem in this world. By honoring another individual, we acknowledge their worth. Thus teaches Ben Zoma (Avos 4:1) who is honored? He who honors others."

Esav is the epitome of "bizuy" - disregard. The Navi Obadiah refers to him as, "you are very despised". Yaakov is the personification of reverence and respect. He wrests the birthright from his brother, and as Rashi explains (Bereishis 25:31) Yaakov felt that an evildoer such as Esav was not worthy of the sacrificial service. It was not for his own kavod that he purchased the birthright, but for the honor of Hashem. Yaakov understands the worth and significance of the avodah.

Parshas Toldos provides us with a great deal more than a tale of sibling rivalry. It prompts us to ask ourselves - do our mitzvos and tefillos reflect the proper kavod shamayim of honor to Hashem or our own? Often, our prayers are not answered because they only reflect our personal and communal needs. All prayers must include the underlying theme that we want our lives to increase kavod shamayim. We are trying to attain in this world what we

are told of Hashem's world: "In His temple all proclaim glory" (Psalms 29:9).

From: Yeshivat Har Etzion Office[SMTp:office@etzion.org.il] Subject: SICHOT62 -06: Parashat Toldot

In memory of Hadas Abutbul, mother of four, and Aharon Ussishkin, father of three, HY"D, the most recent victims of Palestinian terror. Refuah sheleimah to the wounded. Please pray for a refuah sheleimah for Sharona Rivka bat Reena Yehudit, seriously injured in the recent attack on Bus 25, in Yerushalayim.

RAV YEHUDA AMITAL

"AND YITZCHAK LOVED ESAV"

"And the boys grew up, and Esav was a man who knew hunting; a man of the field, and Ya'akov was a simple man who dwelled in tents" (22:27).

The Ibn Ezra explains the contrast between Esav and Ya'akov as follows: Esav was a person who was full of cunning - it is impossible to hunt animals without deceiving them (by means of traps, etc.). Ya'akov, on the other hand, was "a simple man (ish tam)" - entirely innocent (tamim) and completely devoid of guile. Rashi provides a similar interpretation, explaining that Esav deceived his father by asking him how salt is to be tithed (knowing full well that no tithe need be taken from salt) in order that Yitzchak would consider him righteous and punctilious in his mitzva-observance, while Ya'akov had no idea how to deceive. "That which was in his heart was also in his mouth; someone who does not have the requisite sharpness to deceive is called "tam" (innocent)."

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

One of the most outstanding characters among the Tannaim was Rabbi Meir. The gemara in Eruvin 13b teaches:

"It was revealed and known before the One Who spoke and the world came into being that there was no one in the generation of Rabbi Meir who was like him (i.e., equal in Torah scholarship). So why was the halakha not established according to his opinion? Because his colleagues could not fathom the depths of his knowledge; he would say of something impure that it was pure, and provide proofs, and he would say of something pure that it was impure, and provide proofs. It is taught: His name was not Rabbi Meir, but rather Rabbi Nehorai; so why was he called "Rabbi Meir?" For he would illuminate (meir) the eyes of the Sages concerning halakha... Rabbi said: "The fact that I am sharper than my colleagues is because I saw Rabbi Meir from the back. Had I seen him from the front, I would be even sharper."

Rabbi Meir's greatness lay in his daring: he was prepared to prove that something that appeared to be impure was actually pure, and vice versa; he was unafraid to differ with the accepted, simple path. The pasuk, "And G-d saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good (tov meod)" (Bereishit 1:31) appeared in the Torah of Rabbi Meir as follows: "... and behold, death is good (tov mavet)" (Bereishit Rabba 3:2). The pasuk, "And Hashem G-d made for Adam and his wife garments of skins ("or," spelled with the letter 'ayin') (3:21) appeared in his version as "...garments of light ("or," spelled with the letter 'aleph') (Bereishit Rabba 20:12). He interpreted the pasuk, "You are children to Hashem your G-d" as teaching us that "When you behave like His children, then you are called His children. If you do not behave like His children, then you are not called His children" (Kiddushin 36a). Rabbi Meir had the courage to stray from the "peshat" - the simple understanding of the text - and to arrive at far-reaching interpretations. The gemara in Hagigah 15 teaches that Rabbi Meir studied with Elisha ben Avuya ("Aher") after the latter became a heretic, because he was able to distinguish and imbibe only the positive in his teachings: "Rabbi Meir found a pomegranate: he ate the inner fruit and discarded the peel." Hence, his daring caused him to be a greater Torah giant than anyone else of his generation.

The forefathers had an important function in the world: to sanctify the name of Hashem; to serve as a "light unto the nations." Avraham was particularly successful in this endeavor - he became a "father of many nations" (both physically and in terms of his spiritual influence) and his greatness was universally recognized. Yitzchak, in contrast, was far more passive. The gemara in Pesachim 85a compares Avraham to a mountain and Yitzchak to a field. Avraham stood out and was easily identifiable, even from a great distance, as a 'mountain'. He was known everywhere. Yitzchak was like a field - focused inwardly, and not visible at a distance. "All the wells that the servants of his father had

dug, during the lifetime of Avraham, his father, had been blocked up by the Pelishtim and filled with dust" (26:15) - Kabbala teaches that the converts whom Avraham had introduced to monotheism returned to their evil path in the days of Yitzchak. Yitzchak's era was hence characterized by a regression in the sphere of activity among the nations of the world. Yitzchak was aware of this failing, and wanted to ensure that the next generation would witness its correction. It was for this reason that he pinned his hopes on Esav. Ya'akov was a great scholar - a man who "dwelled in (the) tents (of Torah)," but in Yitzchak's view Torah learning was not the most vital characteristic that was needed at the time in order to exert influence among the nations. The fourteen years that Ya'akov spent studying in the Beit Midrash of Shem and Ever had certainly made him a great Torah scholar, but they had not helped him in any way to sanctify and publicize Hashem's name in the world. Therefore Yitzchak perceived Esav - the cunning, daring, courageous one; the "man of the world" - as a person with the ability to correct the situation and to act in the world, and hence as the proper successor to the line of Avraham.

Rivka loved Ya'akov, for she knew with Divine inspiration that Hashem had chosen him ("the older shall serve the younger"). Hashem expresses this explicitly through the prophet Malakhi: "I loved Ya'akov, and I hated Esav" (1:2-3). The Zohar has an interesting interpretation of this statement: "I hated the secondary aspect (tafel) of Esav, but I loved the main part ('ikar)." What does this mean?

The background to this explanation of the Zohar is to be found in the gemara (Sota 13a) that narrates how, when Ya'akov's sons wished to bury him in Ma'arat HaMakhpela, Esav appeared and claimed that he, as the elder son, should be buried there rather than Ya'akov. The brothers sent Naftali to Egypt to bring proof of Ya'akov's purchase of the birthright, but while he was away, Hushim the son of Dan arose and beheaded Esav. Esav's head was indeed buried in Ma'arat HaMakhpela, but his body was buried elsewhere.

This Midrash (as well as the Zohar quoted above) seems to be indicating that from the point of view of the essential characteristic (the "head") of Esav - i.e., his daring - he was indeed worthy of being buried in Ma'arat HaMakhpela. Hashem needed to demonstrate quite explicitly that He - the sole arbiter in deciding and selecting the proper successors of the line of Am Yisrael - had chosen Ya'akov, although Esav was more appropriate from the perspective of a certain character trait. But Hashem also ensured that this important trait - daring - would not be lost altogether from Israel. A descendant of Esav - Rabbi Meir! (who was a convert) - eventually appeared and reconnected it in the Chosen Nation.

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From: Jeffrey Gross[SMTP:jgross@torah.org] Subject: Weekly Halacha - Parshas Toldos

By RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT

Rav of Young Israel of Cleveland Heights

A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

MARRIAGE IN HALACHA

The following are some lesser-known halachos and customs of marriage that do not fall strictly within the domain of an officiating rav, but are vital for a couple, their parents, and their wedding guests to know:

DURING THE ENGAGEMENT: All of the restrictions of yichud and physical contact between men and women are in full effect for an engaged couple until after the chupah(1).

An engaged couple may not live together in the same house even when there is no question of yichud (2).

It is an ancient and widely accepted custom for the groom to send(3) gifts to the bride during their engagement. To avoid the danger of the gifts being mistaken for a form of kiddushin(4) - a legitimate concern especially when a ring is given as a sign of commitment(5) - the following precautions are recommended: No witnesses should be present at the time the gifts are given to the bride or when the groom gives the gifts to the messenger to give to the bride. The groom should not say that the gift is being given as a token of commitment or as an engagement present; rather it should be given simply as a gift.

Although it is a widespread custom to do so, it is improper to write a pasuk, or part of a pasuk, on a wedding invitation, since invitations are

generally discarded(6).

THE PROPER TIME AND PLACE OF THE WEDDING:

If two brothers or two sisters [or a younger sister and an older brother(7)] are engaged to be married at the same time, the older one must get married first. It is permitted, however, for a younger brother or sister to become engaged and married before their older sibling becomes engaged(8).

There is a custom followed by some people not to get married in the second half of the Hebrew month(9). If, however, this constraint will delay the wedding unnecessarily, many authorities agree that the custom should be sidestepped to avoid undue delay(10).

When scheduling a wedding, it is important to allow enough time to finish all the pre-chupah arrangements in time for the chupah to take place on the date which is written on the kesubah. Some poskim maintain that if the kesubah has a different date from when the kiddushin actually took place, the kesubah is invalid(11). At the very least, it is important to make sure that the legal transaction of the kesubah (kinyan) takes place before nightfall(12).

It is an ancient custom(13) to perform the chupah ceremony under an open sky(14). Several poskim mention, however, that if the bride and groom insist on the chupah taking place inside, there is no reason to object and argue about it since it is not forbidden to do so(15).

THE DAY OF THE WEDDING:

It is customary for the bride and groom to fast(16) on the day of their wedding [except on the days when it is forbidden to fast(17)], until after the chupah(18). They are allowed to rinse their mouth or brush their teeth, even with toothpaste(19).

If the chupah is delayed well past nightfall and the bride and groom are hungry, they may break their fast before the chupah, provided that no alcoholic beverages are consumed(20).

A bride and groom who find it very difficult to fast do not have to fast at all(21), but they should eat only a limited amount of food(22).

If the day of the wedding falls on a day when the Torah is read, the groom must be called up to the Torah. His "obligation" supersedes anyone else's, such as a bar mitzvah or a person whose parent's yahrtzeit is that day(23).

Traditionally, the bride and groom recite aneinu(24) and add the viduy supplication at the conclusion of their Minchah prayers(25). The groom, however, should not forgo davening with a tzibbur for this or any other reason(26).

UNDER THE CHUPAH:

Relatives of the bride, groom, or each other, either by blood or marriage, are not valid witnesses for the kiddushin. Although certain distant relatives (e.g., a cousin's cousin, a brother-in-law's brother-in-law, a brother's father-in-law) may be allowed halachically, some poskim advise that no relative - however distant - act as a witness for the kiddushin(27).

The groom should not speak between the blessing over the kiddushin and the placing of the ring on the bride's finger(28).

The bride and groom must have specific intent to be yotzei with the blessing over the kiddushin and the blessing of Borei pri ha-gafen(29).

The ring must be paid for entirely(30) and belong to the groom exclusively(31). If the groom's parents or anybody else bought the ring, the groom must "buy" the ring from them in a halachically binding purchase (kinyan)(32).

DURING THE MEAL:

It is a Rabbinical(33) mitzvah to rejoice with the bride and groom at their wedding. Everybody in attendance is obligated to do so and may discharge their obligation in a number of ways(34): 1. Dance and sing along. 2. Recite one of the seven blessings under the chupah or in Birkas ha-Mazon; 3. Praise the groom to the bride or vice-versa; 4. Engage the bride or groom in small talk about the happiness of the occasion; 5. Give a gift.

A dignitary discharges his obligation by merely being present.

FOOTNOTES: 1 Chelkas Mechokek E.H. 55:1. 2 Rama E.H. 55:1 and Knesses ha-Gedolah, ibid. See also Sdei Chemed (Chasan v'Kalach 12). 3 Through a messenger; see Ta'amei ha-Minhagim 938. 4 See E.H. 45 for the many views and possible problems which may result. 5 Kisvei Harav Henkin (Perushei Ivra 5:13). 6 Igros Moshe Y.D. 2:135; Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (Apiryon I'Shelomo, pg. 25). See also Mishnah Berurah 638:24, who prohibits writing a pasuk on fruit which will be used as a succah decoration. 7 There are conflicting opinions, however, as to whether a brother must allow his older sister to get married before he does, since the brother is explicitly commanded to get married, while the sister is not; see Maharsham 3:136, Avnei Cheftetz 25 and Chelkas Yaakov 1:125. 8 Shach Y.D. 244:13, as explained by Maharash Engel 6:102 and Igros Moshe E.H. 2:1. See also Igros Chazon Ish 1:166. 9 Rama E.H. 64:3. Others have a custom that a wedding may take place until the 18th or the 22nd day of the month. In addition, some do not follow this restriction in the months of Tishrei, Kislev, Adar, Iyar, Av, and Elul. 10 Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 166:3. See also Aruch ha-Shulchan E.H. 64:13 and Igros Moshe

E.H. 1:93, who maintain that most people do not follow this custom. 11 Igros Moshe E.H. 4:105-3; O.C. 5:9-2. See also written responsum from Harav S.Z. Auerbach (published in Kovetz Aharon v'Yisrael, Cheshvan 5755) that such a document is completely "false". 12 Beis Shemuel E.H. 66:7. According to Igros Moshe (ibid.) this is not sufficient. 13 Sefaradim, however, did not accept this custom; Sdei Chemed (Chasan v'Kalah 1). 14 Rama E.H. 61:1. Some insist that the chupah take place outdoors [not in an enclosed room with an opening in the ceiling like a skylight], and there is a valid source for their custom; Eizer Mekudash 55:1. 15 Imrei Eish O.C. 9; Igros Moshe E.H. 1:93; Yabia Omer 3:10. See these sources for a similar discussion regarding a chupah in a shul. Many poskim in Europe prohibited it for various reasons but others ruled more leniently.

16 No pre-acceptance of the fast is required; Mishnah Berurah 562:11; Be'er Moshe 3:75. 17 On certain days throughout the year, such as isru chag, Rosh Chodesh Nissan, Lag ba -Omer, and others, there are conflicting opinions and customs as to whether a bride and groom fast. A rav should be consulted. 18 Rama O.C. 562:2 and 573:1. This custom, too, was not accepted in most Sephardic communities since they considered the day of their wedding as a Yom Tov. Even today, Sephardic Jews should uphold their custom and not fast; Yabia Omer 3:9. 19 O.C. 567:3 and Mishnah Berurah 12. 20 Chochmas Adam 115:2; Pischei Teshuvah E.H. 61:21; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 146:1; Sdei Chemed (Chasan v'Kalah 4); Harav Y. Y. Kanievsky (Orchos Rabbeinu 2:164). See Aruch ha-Shulchan E.H. 61:21, who maintains that when possible, the fast should continue until after the chupah, even if it is after nightfall. 21 Aruch ha-Shulchan E.H. 61:21. 22 Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 573:4. 23 Beur Halachah 136:1. It remains unclear, however, if this is so if the chupah will take place after nightfall. 24 Rama O.C. 562:2. 25 Pischei Teshuvah E.H. 61:9; Mishnah Berurah 573:8. These customs, too, were not accepted by the majority of Sefaradim; Yabia Omer 3:9. 26 See Sha'arei Teshuvah O.C. 562:2. 27 Harav S. Vosner (Apiryon l'Shelomo, pg. 40). See also ha-Nisuin K'hilchasam 8:24. 28 Pri Megadim (Pesicha, Berachos 14); since some Rishonim maintain that the blessing over the kiddushin is a birkas ha-mitzvos. It is prohibited to speak between a blessing and the mitzvah which follows. 29 See Pischei Teshuvah E.H. 34:5 and Afikei Yam 2:2. 30 Avnei Miluim 28:33. 31 E.H. 28:1. 32 Aruch ha-Shulchan E.H. 28:84. See Otzar ha-Poskim 28:1-9,1-19. 33 Rambam, Hilchos Avel 14:1. 34 See E.H. 65:1 and Eizer Mekudash for the many ways in which this mitzvah can be fulfilled. Weekly-Halacha, Copyright 1 2001 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org. The author, Rabbi Neustadt, is the principal of Yavne Teachers' College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is also the Magid Shiur of a daily Mishna Berurah class at Congregation Shomre Shabbos. The Weekly-Halacha Series is distributed L'zchus Doniel Meir ben Hinda. Weekly sponsorships are available - please mail to jgross@torah.org . Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/>