

BS"D



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**Rav Soloveitchik ZT"L** Notes ( Volume 3)

[Notice These are unapproved unedited notes [of R.Y.?] of classes given by Rav Soloveitchik. We do not know who wrote the notes. However we offer this to the world that maybe someone can get some use out of these notes. A member of the family has looked at the notes and said that look like the real thing. [Thanks to David Isaac for typing these notes]

Lecture delivered by Rabbi Soloveitchik Saturday evening, November 24, 1979

"Toldoth" I have three thoughts on today's parsha and one is a very important one from last week's parsha.

(I) "Ayleh Toldoth Yitzchak" - These are the generations of Isaac. "Avrohom Holid Es Yitzchak" - Abraham begot Isaac. Of course, the question is, why the duplication? One "pshat" (explanation) is that Yitzchak was born to Abraham after the name was changed from Abram to Abraham. The emphasis is placed on the "Hey". The emphasis is that Avrohom begot, not Avrom. Yitzchak was thus born as a prince, not a plebian. Abraham is the father of many peoples, an international community. Abraham, himself, was not born a prince but he strove and he conquered and he deserved to be a king. As a youngster, he knew nothing of G-d but was a pagan, searched for the truth and discovered it. This is why G-d waited so long to change the name (till Abraham was 99 years of age) - so that Yitzchak should be born into royalty.

Secondly, everyone acquiesced that Yitzchak was the son of Abraham, not an adopted son. It is strange that Torah paid attention to gossip here. The faces of father and son were identical; no one could deny the fact because the resemblance was so close.

We find the same Rashi previously when Sarah gave birth (Hashem Pokad Es Soro - G-d remembered Sarah). Who would believe that she would nurse children at her advanced age! Everyone brought infants along on the given day of the celebration to discredit her. "An adopted child" did they proclaim. They brought children and she was capable of feeding many. Again, it was gossip. In that sedra of Vayera, the facts are denied that both Abraham and Sarah could sire a child. Today's "rechilas" (gossip) in sedra Toldoth was different. Sarah as the mother was accepted - okay, but not Abraham the father. Now they claimed that Abimelech was the father. How was it to be proved? "Avrohom Holid Es Yitzchak" - the faces were identical. Interestingly, here Rashi call them the "mothers" of the generation but not there in sedra Vayera. Rashi terms them here as "Letzim" - evil persons - one who commits harm. Why was he not impressed there but definitely impressed with their remarks here? There it makes sense. Sarah was old and it is logical that she couldn't bear children. Here, Abraham should be no problem. He had already sired Ishmael when Sarah was still barren. Here the "letzim" imply - "Abimelech, the father." Here, they simply wanted to destroy Abraham and Yitzchak. Here, they

imply there is no such thing as a covenant with G-d and that it's all false. Torah here is interested in denying the malice so Yitzchak's countenance becomes identical. Henceforth, no one dares to deny it is "Avrohom Holid Es Yitzchak."

Ibn Ezra and also Onkeles give a different interpretation. They say that "Holid" is not begot but educated. The first one is biological, the second is teacher. Apparently, Abraham neglected the education of Ishmael. All that was given to Abraham was conditional that a father is not only biological but that he is a teacher.

As long as Joseph was alive, he was not only the viceroys of Egypt but the teacher of the nation viz his grandsons. The proof of this we find in chapter 50, line 23 of sedra "Vaychi". "And Joseph lived to see the 3rd generation "Al Birkay". This 'Al Birkay' means teaching the generations. What did Abraham teach Yitzchak? He taught the same doctrines which he tried to teach Mitzraim and which he tried to teach Sodom and Gemorah. With these he failed; with Yitzchak he had "hatzlocho" success.

Interestingly, it is the basis for the interpretation of the Bikurim, bringing the first fruits to the Bais Hamikdash and the recitation of "Arami Ovad Avi" as found in sedra Ki Sova (Deuteronomy, chapter 26, line 5). Yearly, each person brought the first fruit in a basket, laid it down before the Kohan and recited, "My father was a wanderer, etc." It is a recitation of thanks, of gratitude for bringing him to the promised land and for the bountiful produce. There is a 'machlokos', a controversy between Rabbi Yehuda and Chazal as to what shall a 'gayr' declare ( a convert). Can he say, "we prayed to the G-d of my fathers?" The sages say that he should eliminate the statement. Tosefta mentions that Rabbi Yose declared: "He does recite; he does say 'G-d of our fathers.'" When he recites the silent prayer "Shmono Esrei" he also says "Elokanu, Vaylokay Avosaynu" - Our G-d and G-d of our fathers. Rambam decides as does Rabbi Yose. He says that Abraham is father of the entire world, of all who join the Covenantal Community of G-d. Chazal meant well! Tosefta says nothing. But Rambam clarifies it. The father is the 'rebbe', the teacher. The 'rebbe' is the father. Where is it derived from? The answer is: "He will be the father in that eschatological messianic age when Abraham's doctrine will be universally implemented. Everything a son does for a father -- feeds, clothes, shelters, cares for, a pupil is obligated to do for his teacher. This is the concept: "Rebbe - father". In "V'shinantom L'vonecho" - you shall teach your children, the equation of father-son, Rabbe-student is formulated. This is the central motif of Yehadus -- Jewish theology. This is the concept of Avrohom Holid Es Yitzchak. The importance is not so much biological but teaching and it is the basic halachic thinking. The fact that one is a son of Abraham is no guarantee in the genetic code. As an example, we have Ishmael. Also, we have Yitzchak and Esau. This is the best proof. Why didn't Abraham educate Ishmael? It doesn't say, "Avrohom Holid Es Ishmael." The education of Ishmael was handed over to his mother Hagar and although she was a fine woman, apparently she was not a proper teacher.

Interestingly, there is the haftora of Yom Hatzomos -- fast days. The prophet speaks about the efficacy of repentance and declares, "let him turn from his sinful ways." Actually, the damage has already been done. By the person shouting, "Chotosi" - I have sinned. Can this undo that which has been done? Yet, the Alm-ghty declares, "Change! Do Tshuvah! Your thoughts are not my thoughts. T'shuvah is efficacious!" We find it in the prophecies of Ezekiel where the people say, "We are overwhelmed by "Chet". We cannot change after so much evil!" G-d answers, "Observe the law and my salvation will come despite the fact that you don't understand the efficacy of T'shuvah.

Biologically, man is connected with his parents even though they are dead throughout the millenia. On the other side, he is connected with the future generations even though we don't know who they will be. The "Gayr" or convert is only connected with the future. Let him not say "Havdayl Yavdilani Hashem" - G-d has cut me off from my people. Neither let the eunuch say, "I am a dry tree!" The eunuch is connected with the past but

not with the continued genetic code. If they say this, it is as the Bal T'shuvah who declares, "I cannot come back!" The "Gayr" wants to feel that he has no share. "Yetzias Mitzraim" - the Exodus from Egypt. However, their share are those whom they will teach and will bring up. The same answer goes back to the Bal T'shuvah. The same as the "Gayr" in retrospect becomes connected with the community, so is the Bal T'shuvah. If not so it would be impossible for the "Gayr" to fit into the picture, the experience. What makes "Garus" the possible experience? It is the "Hey" in Avrohom and the "Hey" in Sarah. It is the greatest relationship -- not the parental but the scholastic. Therefore, Abraham is not merely the father but the "rebbe".

A very interesting episode in Jewish history was the case of the man referred to as the "Gayr Hazedek" -- the righteous convert, Graf Patotsky. His father, the graf (count) Patotsky was of great Polish nobility and to him belonged a tract of land which included the entire Vilna in the 18th century. He had a "ben Yoched", a single son who was drawn close to Judaism and he came to the Vilna "Bes Din" -- the Jewish court to be converted. This was very dangerous both for the Jews and for the convert for the penalty from the church was death. Therefore, he was advised to go to Amsterdam for conversion where the laws were much less stringent. There he went, became a devout convert to Judaism and sat and studied for a goodly time. However, he became lonesome for his land and so he returned and chose a small village to reside in around 50 miles from Vilna. By now, he was a "Lamdan" and he sat and studied. No one knew him or inquired about him. Once while he was either giving a Shiur or was studying, someone created an interruption and he chastised the youngster, telling him to be quiet. The boy went home, told his father who in turn took offense and declared, "that "Meshumed" (convert), I'll fix him. The authorities were informed. Patotsky was arrested at once as were the rabbis of the locality. The rabbis could not be prosecuted for "Garus" for they had nothing to do with it but Patotsky was sentenced to death. The populace tried to bribe the archbishop and the police but it was impossible for they wanted to show their strength. On the first day of Shavuoth, Patotsky was burned to death. I visited his grave and saw a peculiar phenomenon. There grew a straight tree by the gravesite but one branch had curved out in a sweep, covering the entire grave to show that "Someone protected the grave." The night before the execution, instead of going to "Tikun Shavovoth" the Vilna Gaon went to visit the "Gayr Zedek" and found him crying. "Why are you crying?" he asked. "Are you afraid of the pain of death?" "No," he answered. "I cry because I'll be lonely in the world to come. I have no past and I leave no future." The Gaon answered from scriptures. "Ani Rishon V'ani Acharon." G-d declares, "I am the first and I am the last. I am the first one if the person has no 'father' and I am the last one if he leaves no children." This is the idea of "Avrohom Holid Es Yitzchak."

II. Vyagayd L'Rivka Divrei Esav - And the words of Esau were told to Rivka. She spoke to Jacob: "Your older brother is ready to kill you. Escape to my brother Laban and stay with him "Yomim Achodim" - a few days until his bitterness has left him. Actually, "few days" -- Yomim Achodim -- means a few years but, of course, hashgocha had different plans and it was 20 years. The tragedy was that she didn't live to see him again. "Stay till his wrath will subside and he will forget what you did; I'll send someone to bring you back." The problem, of course, is why it didn't happen. Nothing is told of the death of Rivka. Of Sarah and of Rachel we are told.

"Vatomer LiYitzchak" -- To Yitzchak, she declared "My life is said because of the wives of Esau and I don't want Jacob to marry the same." Therefore, he called him and advised, "Don't marry from the daughters of Canaan. Go to Laban." The motivations of the two, Rivka and Yitzchak, are different. She was motivated by fear; his motive was, "Get a wife." The m'forshim raised the question: "She didn't want to hurt Yitzchak's feeling and suggest that Esau was capable of murdering his brother. He had apparently a high opinion of Esau and was willing to give some blessings to him (although not the blessings of Abraham. That he intended for Jacob all

along.) Of course, she also meant a wife but the dominant reason was "murder".

I believe there is more. One reason is "Kibbud Ov V'Aym" -- honoring father and mother. We know the reasons why Torah states first father when referring to honor and why it states first mother when it refers to fear. One has an inclination to honor mother more so Torah specifically places father first. We generally fear father more so Torah places mother first. He is very close to mother from the day he is born. The function of mother and father differ. The first consideration of mother is the safety of the child. During pregnancy and lactation she protects the child. The child feels the mother is his protector. It almost becomes an obsession with the mother. Mother often protects the child when he should be protecting her and therefore she often fails to realize he is an adult. The father relationship is that of a teacher. Father wants the child to grow up as soon as possible, from a dependent infant to an independent adult. Also, to marry off the child is the duty of the father. The mother's tendency is not to marry off the child. One of the duties is that of marrying off the child at the justified age as delineated in Pirke Avoth chapter 5 - the "stages of life". Rivka was the mother and therefore what bothered her was the safety, the prime reason for sending him to Choron. The marrying role she left to Yitzchak as part of halacha. Therefore, she told Yitzchak a different reason than what she intended.

The beginning of Chaye Sora. Torah declares that her life was 100 years and 20 years and 7 years (instead of 127). The word "Shonah" - year is mentioned after each number. Rashi answers that the 100 should be understood differently than the 20 etc. "She was an innocent at 20 as she was at 7 and as beautiful at 100 as at 20. This is not important. The importance is what Rashi really wants to impart to us.

Basically, 100 means old age. Twenty means an age of great capabilities and 7 is a child. The ages per se are biological concepts of tissue growth. What is the difference of ages? Young age helps tissue grow; old age destroys tissue. These are the differences. Man does not die at one time but gradually -- tissue deterioration. Finality is complete death.

There is youth psychologically. It characterizes the human development as a spiritual revelation. What is the difference? "Bas Koof" - a woman (or man) -- 100 years old is old. We have two Bar Mitzvoh, age 13 and 20. Thirteen is the Bar Mitzvah of "Bes Din Shel Maale" - the heavenly court where acceptance of the Mitzvoh becomes binding. Twenty is the bar mitzvah of physical development. The difference between biological and spiritual development is: "You cannot interrupt the tissues from growing or from dying. They are successive biological stages. Where you use it on the spiritual level, you find in some people that they can retain youth as advanced adults while others can be old while they are young. Quite often the restlessness of youth is experienced in old age. Some people are always restless. Sometimes the quietness of age was characteristic when he was young. Each age is marked by a central capability. The old man is quiet and introspective; the youth is energetic. Physically, a man should not try to be a youngster when he is old or should he be physically old when he is young. When we analyze the "mishna" of ages (Perek) we find the role: "Be, live, experience whichever stage of age you represent." Psychologically, sometimes you meet elderly in whom the child has not left. I believe a great person cannot lose his childhood. The greater man, the greater the child was. For instance, my grandfather Reb Chaim, I recall as an intellectual giant who revolutionized the entire process of teaching Talmud -- the philosophy of it. But he had the virtues, the sincerity, the naivety of a child. He was unable to tell an untruth. Einstein was the most naive person on the globe. He absolutely didn't understand the subtleties of the Communists and consequently got mixed up in their activities without ever suspecting it when they desired to sue his name for their endeavors.

Interestingly is the relationship of G-d to the Covenantal Community. Israel is described in the Rosh Hashonah liturgy as "Yeled Shashuim" -- the "beloved child" although we are very old, three and a half thousand years. We are described as a "baby with whom one plays." This is the ideal personality -- a profound mind, a ruthless mind on one hand. On the other

hand, we are naive, devoted, very truthful. You have to be a child for that. If you are a child, you are naive. It means psychologically you are old -- spiritually you are young. Be frail psychologically but have a strong character. What does 100 years and 20 years and 7 years mean? It means a man can live several lives. As a young girl, Sarah acted as an old person. She had unlimited knowledge of people and could sacrifice her life. At the same time, she was 20 or 7. Therefore, regarding some matters she was 100, regarding others she was 20, while others she was 7.

However, can it be explained "halachically"? You have to introduce proof. This what we say of Sarah, can it be proved of her?

Does her action, her spontaneous joy have a counterpart in Tanach? The answer is found in sedra Shemini's Haftora. When David was able to move the Ark containing the tablets of the Decalogue, he was so joyful that he rejoiced with all his might and personally served bread and meat to all present. When G-d is gracious and bestows Chesed - loving kindness, a person has to thank G-d. If a man has been saved from disaster, there is a mitzvah to thank G-d. There is a difference, however, how a child displays thankfulness and how an adult expresses his gratitude. When a child feels gratitude he thanks G-d aloud. He doesn't mask his feelings. He dances for joy and makes noisy performances, with kisses and adulation. "I'll show it to my companions; they didn't believe I'll get it!" If things go wrong he cries.

What is an adult's way of expressing gratitude? It is in a restrained manner. The eyes show what the lips cannot pronounce. Sometimes, silence expresses what words cannot. A mature person should feel he is obligated to do something. G-d's kindness generates new duties or actions on the part of man. Should I act as an adult or as a child? Merely "benching Gaymal" is not enough. David's wife Michal observed his actions through the window and reproved him for his "undignified" actions. And this was the cause of the controversy between them. David was happy as a child that G-d allowed the Ark to be brought into Jerusalem. He jumped for joy and was exalted. His first reaction was to jump, to dance, to mingle with the people. Michal's reaction was different! Her opinion was that a person should always be a king, always held in great esteem and never abandon decor. David disagreed! She had contempt for him. What is the halacha, according to him or to her? She became a barren woman. Therefore, he was right -- she wrong. The halacha must be implemented according to the action of David! It must be implemented as a child.

The same halacha was implemented at the occasion known as "Simchas Bays Hoshoeva" or the 'drawing of water' on the second day of Succoth in the evening. It is said that he who didn't experience the joy expressed on this occasion has never truly understood the meaning of joy. At this time, a small amount of water was drawn for the well of Siloom near the Temple Mount and was offered on the Mizbayach. The prayer or petition to G-d was: "We have drawn a small amount of water and offered it on the altar. Grace is with Your bountifulness and grant us a season of proper rain so necessary for Israel's economy."

On this occasion in the evening, the entertainers were the sages, the "Lamden" of Israel. They sang. They juggled. They played instruments. The audience consisted of the common people.

A man should rejoice when he performs a mitzvah. Whoever assesses himself too greatly because of the sense of dignity and refuses to participate reduces himself. Shlomo Hamelech says, "Don't try to practice pride in the presence of the "King" - G-d. The halacha is K'Dovid. If you rejoice, rejoice as a child. In the morning, the Temple service already was organized and dignified.

Was Sarah as David or Michael? When Yitzchak was born, Sarah rejoiced. Was there a happier mother? She rejoiced by saying, "Tzchok Olo Li Hashem." This is the laughter of a child; she felt this was the law.

But didn't she understand the importance of the event? When she saw the business of Ishmael misguiding Yitzchak, she understood the future of Jewish history better than Abraham. She was both a child and an adult. When the destiny of the Jewish nation was involved, she could be old! This

is why the three stages of her life are written together as they are in scripture.

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From: ravfrand-owner@torah.org on behalf of **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** [ryfrand@torah.org] Sent: Wednesday, November 22, 2006 1:27 AM To: ravfrand@torah.org Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Toldos "RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Toldos

How Can The Oath of the Heretic Eisav Be Believed?

Chazal say that on the day Eisav sold his birthright to Yaakov, he had transgressed five other severe sins. One of these five sins was being "kofer b'Ikar". [He denied G-d's existence.] This is derived from his words "Behold I am headed to death, of what value is the birthright to me? (lamah ZEH li bechora)" [Bereshis 25:32]. The word 'ZEH' [this] has a special connotation, which is alluded to by the pasuk [verse] in the Song at the Sea: "ZEH Keli, v'Anvheu [THIS is my G-d and I will glorify Him]" [Shmos 15:2]. It alludes to the Almighty.

In affect, when Eisav said "Lamah ZEH li..." he was asking, "Who needs G-d, anyway?"

I saw an interesting insight from Rabbi Avigdor Nevensahl. In the very next pasuk, Yaakov demands an oath from Eisav that the deal will be binding. However, what is an oath? An oath means that one swears to G-d. If Eisav was a "kofer b'Ikar" who denied the existence of G-d, of what value would his oath be? Yaakov would certainly not have accepted an oath in the name of Avodah Zarah [idols], nor would he have accepted a perfunctory verbal statement with nothing behind it. Apparently, when the pasuk says [25:33] "and he swore to him" and Yaakov accepted the oath, Eisav swore to G-d and Yaakov felt he meant it.

How do we reconcile this with the statement that Eisav became a "kofer b'Ikar" on that day.

The Alter from Slabodka makes an interesting observation. The Torah says that Yitzchak loved Eisav because "tzayid b'piv" [usually translated 'venison was in his mouth' - meaning that Yitzchak had a predisposition for meat, which Eisav the hunter satisfied]. Rashi, however, quotes the famous Medrash that "tzayid b'piv" refers to Eisav, not Yitzchak, and it indicates that Eisav "trapped" Yitzchak so to speak with his disingenuous comments and questions. He would, for example, ask his father the correct way to tithe salt and straw (items which do not need to be tithed).

The Alter from Slabodka says that Eisav was not asking these questions to 'fake out' his father. He really meant it! At that moment, he was in fact righteous. His problem was that he could not make up his mind. He vacillated between being a Tzadik and a Rasha. One moment he could ask a question indicating great piety and sincerity. The next minute -- if his passion so moved him -- he could commit any of the most hideous crimes.

This is the difference between a Tzadik and a Rasha. A Tzadik is consistent. There will always be tests, trials and tribulations, in life. There are always things that come up. The righteous person stays the course. Eisav, because of his wickedness was fickle. He could change from minute to minute. He could ask his father how to tithe salt and then turn around and rape a betrothed maiden.

The pasuk in Mishlei [10:20] says, "Lev Reshaim Kim'at" -- "the heart of the wicked can change quickly" Mishlei [10:20]. Similarly in Sefer Yeshaya, the wicked are compared to a wave. We look at the ocean and see a wave. One moment it is six feet tall, a few minutes later it will be flat as a board. The wicked are like waves. They can be one way one minute and the other way the next minute.

One minute Eisav said (when he needed the bowl of soup, when he had to satiate his desire), "Of what value is the birthright to me?" -- I don't need the Almighty. Two pasukim [verses] later he swore in the Name of G-d and mean it wholeheartedly. That is the nature of the wicked -- driven by the whim of the moment.

Rav Baruch Sorotzkin references a Talmud Yerushalmi in Nedarim [38a]: "In the future the wicked Eisav will wrap himself in a tallis and sit together with the righteous in Gan Eden. But G-d will yell at him and kick him out."

The standard interpretation of this passage is that Eisav never stopped being a faker. Even in Gan Eden and he still thinks he can fake everyone out like he faked out his father. Rav Baruch Sorotzkin understands it differently. This is the same Eisav, but he thinks he belongs in Gan Eden. He has these moments of righteousness in which he is convinced that he belongs in Gan Eden. That does not stop him from turning around a moment later to become a total heretic (kofer b'ikar).

That is the difference between a Tzadik and a Rasha.

#### Eisav's Distinguishing Character Trait: Cynicism

The pasuk states: "And Yakaov gave Eisav bread and lentil stew; and he ate and drank, got up and left; thus, Eisav spurned the birthright." [Bereshis 25:34] Eisav sold Yaakov the birthright for a bowl of soup. He got up and walked away from it. He scoffed at the value of the birthright.

Rashi comments that this action testifies to Eisav's wickedness, for he scorned the Service of the Almighty. The Sifsei Chachomim points out that this comment of Rashi comes to answer a question. The question is "Why does the Torah need to tell me 'Vayivez Eisav es haBechora' [that Eisav scorned the birthright]?" It should be obvious to anyone who reads the pasukim that Eisav scorned the birthright! Rashi states that the Torah wanted to explicitly "put it on the record" that Eisav in fact scorned the birthright.

I saw a comment from Rav Hutner, zt"l, in his Pachad Yitzchak on Purim. The pasuk 'Vayivez Eisav es haBechora' is a fundamental pasuk. It has to do with Jewish history throughout our existence. The Torah is teaching that Eisav's sin was not that he sold the soup for the birthright. That was a stupid mistake, but that was not the sin. The sin was that he scorned and scoffed at the birthright. The cynicism he exhibited to anything having to do with the Service of G-d was his primary crime.

"All these things Yaakov told me about the duties of the first born are not worth a bowl of soup. I'm getting the better of the deal!" He exhibited a quality that is among the worst traits that a person can have – the ability to take that which is important and sacred and noble and to say it is worth nothing. This is Eisav's sin and this is Eisav's distinguishing character trait.

The reason this is so fundamental is because Eisav had a descendant that played a significant role in Jewish history -- then and in the time of Moshe Rabbeinu and in the time of Shaul and up until even our days. That descendant is Amalek. The distinguishing character trait of Amalek that he inherited from his grandfather Eisav is this ability to look at something that is holy and good and to say it is not worth anything.

Klal Yisrael came out of Egypt. "Nations heard about it and trembled. Panic took hold of the inhabitants of Pelashes" [Shmos 15:14]. This is one of the most outstanding events in the history of the world. It made an impression on the whole world. "Look at G-d! Look at his people!" This was a revolutionary moment in the global perception of Divine Providence.

There was one nation however that came along with that same scorn and derision, the same tendency to nullify that which is sacred and unique. They said "this is nothing!"

"And Amalek came and they did battle with Israel." [Shmos 17:8] Chazal say that they were burnt. They suffered from it. But -- "asher karcha ba'derech" (literally "they cooled you off on the road"). They took the effect of the Exodus and they ruined it! With his scorn and derision and nullification, he ruined it for the whole world. Before Amalek, no one wanted to start up with Klal Yisrael. Everyone recognized "The Great Hand" that the Almighty acted out in Egypt. The sanctification of G-d's Name was awesome!

It takes only one idiot to come along and say "Agh! This is nothing but nothing to get excited about." This is a characteristic that exists potentially in all of us. It is the trait whereby we can hear words of inspiration or we can witness near miraculous events that impresses everyone -- everyone,

except for that one guy in the crowd who says "Agh!" One nay-sayer pushes away one thousand expressions of chastisement.

That is why the Almighty has this eternal battle with Amalek. That is why Amalek has to be eradicated and wiped out. My Throne cannot be complete until Amalek is eradicated. As long as Amalek survives there will always be someone who says "Agh! This is nothing!"

Where did this originate? It originated with the sin spelled out in this week's parsha. "And Eisav scoffed at the birthright." This crime resounds throughout all generations in his descendant Amalek.

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These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #525, Maris Ayin 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.

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From: "Richard" <belgo@pandora.be> Date: Thu, 23 Nov 2006

To: "Davidovici-Richard" <belgo@pandora.be> Subject: toldoss

Last night, **Rav Frand** told over an unbelievable story that I thought you'd all appreciate. He received a letter from a rabbi who lives in Israel. This rabbi was sitting on a bus one day recently when a soldier sat down next to him. The soldier asked: "Are you a rav?" They ended up getting into a deep conversation and the soldier revealed a story that happened to him and his shipmates during the recent battle with Hezbollah. This soldier was on the Israeli boat that was hit by a missile (it was all over the news when it happened because it showed Hezbollah was stronger than the world thought). Anyway, all who were on that boat witnessed a nes from Hashem.

It was a Friday night and several of the orthodox Israeli soldiers on the ship approached their captain with a request. They explained how crucial they felt it was that everyone eat a Shabbos meal that night. That is apparently not the norm for that ship, but these few soldiers begged their captain to not only permit this request, but also allow everyone to do it together. They said they need Hashem's help to stay safe in this battle. Furthermore, to have all the crew members of a war ship together eating at once was never done. Normally, they ate in shifts so as not to be vulnerable to the enemy at any point. However, nes number one occurred when the captain granted these frum yiddin their wish (only caveat was that there had to be 4 soldiers on the deck at all times watching the situation outside).

The soldier then explained where he was in all this. He had been very tired and his next shift of duty was at 12am midnight that Friday night. So he was planning on getting to sleep and skipping dinner so that he could be re-energized for his shift. However, when he heard everyone was eating together he decided to pop in for a few minutes before his nap. When he got there every soldier (less the 4 outside) was davening together. It was an unbelievable scene to see all these Israelis on different points of the religious spectrum answering kaddish and saying l'cha dodi in unison. Following kabbalat shabbat, they all sat down to have the shabbos meal together. Not only are the meals usually in shifts, but they are also a bit rushed. Similar to eating lunch in the middle of a work-day, these soldiers have many responsibilities and cannot take their time. This time, they were all together laughing, eating, enjoying and singing for several hours. When the meal ended, they started the bircat hamazon.

The soldier told the rabbi on the bus that he ended staying for the entire meal and blessing afterwards. His plans to sleep were foiled. However, he now has great appreciation to Hashem that he missed his nap. Moments

after bircat hamazon began, the ship was smashed by a Hezbollah missile. The soldier explained several possible scenarios that should have happened. First of all, the size of the missile should have sunk the ship. A big enough hole should have been created to drown the vessel. But, the missile hit a huge anchor being stored on the deck that absorbed a lot of the impact. Another nes. He also explained that the ship caught fire and the tons of stored fuel in close proximity to the flames should easily have exploded... they did not. Nes number three. Then the most obvious of the nissim- if the crew had eaten according to their normal schedule, tens of soldiers would have been killed. They were saved because everyone was eating together in one room on the opposite side of the ship from where the rocket hit.

The soldier ran down to his quarters and found his entire room, belongings, and bed melted to ashes from the heat of the fire. He personally knew what his fate would have been had the big shabbos meal and davening not taken place. He has become an orthodox Jew from the experience. But there's more to the story. Upon searching the ship after sustaining the missile attack, soldiers found an open book in one of the rooms. It was Sefer Tehillim. What was it open to? Chapter 124. Rav Frand was explaining how we may be powerful, smart, etc., but it is Hashem taking care of us and giving us success that allows us to survive. That is exactly what that kapitel tehillim is saying. But the language used is what is so eye-opening: "A song of ascents, by David. Had not Hashem been with us- let Israel declare now! Had not Hashem been with us when men rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us alive, when their anger was kindled against us. Then the waters would have inundated us; the current would have surged across our soul. Then they would have surged across our soul- the treacherous waters. Blessed is Hashem, who did not present us as prey for their teeth. Our soul escaped like a bird from the hunter's snare; the snare broke and we escaped. Our help is through the name of Hashem, maker of heaven and earth."

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From crshulman@aol.com  
Dvar Torah - Parshas Toldos  
by Chaim Ozer Shulman

The end of this Parsha describes how Yitzchok wanted to bless Eisav before he died, and told him: Hineh Na Zakanti . . . Viatah Sa Na Keilecha . . . Vitzeh Hasadeh Vitzudah Li Tzayid, Viaseh Li Mataamim Kaasher Ahavti . . . Baavur Tevarechicha Nafshi Biterem Amus. (27: 2-4) Hunt for me delicacies the way I like them so that I may bless you before I die. Why did Yitzchok need to eat his favorite dish in order to bless Eisav?!

We are actually told earlier in the Parshah: Vayeehav Yitzchok Es Eisav Ki Tzayid Befiv. (25:28) Yitzchok loved Eisav because he enjoyed the meat that he hunted for him. Again, its strange that he should love Eisav because of the food!

From Chazal we see that Yitzchok loved Eisav, not because he enjoyed the food, but because Eisav was so zealous in Kibud Av. As the Midrash tells us (Bereishis Rabbah 65): Amar Rabi Shimon Ben Gamliel, Kol Yamai Hayisi Meshamesh Es Abba Viloh Shimashti Oso Echad Mimeah Sheshimesh Eisav Es Aviv. Eisav Bishaa Shehaya Mishamesh Es Aviv Lo Haya Meshamsho Elah Bibigdei Malchus. Even Rabi Shimon Ben Gamliel's Kibud Av did not compare with the Kibud Av of Eisav, who put on royal clothes to serve his father. Similarly, its brought down from the Zohar that there was no one in the world who honored his father like Eisav did, and that Zechus protected Eisav in this world.

Yaakov, on the other hand, was not as careful as he could have been with Kibud Av, as we see from the fact that he had to mourn Yosef for 22 years as a punishment for the 22 years that Yaakov stayed away from his father, the 20 years in the house of Lavan and the 2 years on the way back. (37:34)

What remains to be understood, though, is why was it so important that Eisav be Osek in Kibud Av at the same time that he receive the Bracha?

I believe that there is a direct connection between Kibud Av and the Bracha of Veyiten Licha Elokim Mital Hashamayim. Veyiten Licha Elokim Mital Hashamayim Umishmanei Haaretz is a blessing for the material gifts of this world. Kibud Av, the Sefer Hachinuch tells us, is a Mitzvah of Hakaras Hatov to our parents for bringing us into this world. And in fact, in the Aseres Hadibros we're told that we should honor our father and mother Limaan Yaarichun Yamecha. If we honor our parents we will be rewarded with a long life. Long life is an appropriate reward, Midah Keneged Midah, for one who shows appreciation for life by honoring one's parents who gave life in the first instance.

Because Eisav was zealous in Kibud Av his father thought that he should get the Bracha of Olam Hazeh as a reward for recognizing the value of life and of parents. Its therefore understandable why Yitzchok felt that in order for such a Bracha to take effect Eisav must be Osek in Kibud Av at the very moment of the Bracha.

Several Mefarshim point out that Yitzchok always intended to give what is known as the "Birchas Avraham" to Yaakov. Before Yaakov leaves for Lavan, Yitzchok says to him Viyiten Licho Es Birchas Avraham Licho Ulizareicha. (28:4) This Birchas Avraham is the promise given in Parshas Lech Lecha, Veeeshcha Ligoy Gadol, that Avraham's descendants will become the Am Hanivchar. The Birchas Avraham, is in a sense the spiritual Bracha, while Veyiten Licha Mital Hashamayim is the physical Bracha. Yitzchok always intended that the spiritual Bracha of Avraham should go to Yaakov.

The Bracha of material wealth, however, he wanted for Eisav. Rivka, on the other hand, felt that even the worldly blessing should go to Yaakov. She was right. In fact Yitzchok in the end realizes this same conclusion when he says Gam Baruch Yihiyeh (27:33). He saw that when Yaakov entered the room the Reiaich of Gan Eden entered with him, while when Eisav entered he saw Gehenam open up under him. He also saw that Yaakov spoke in a soft respectful manner - Kum Na, while Eisav spoke in a commanding manner - Yakum Avi. Thus, Eisav was lacking in Morah Av, which Yaakov had. The Gemarah says in Kidushin (30:) Hishveh Hakasuv Morah Av Vaem Limorah Hamakom. The Torah equates Mora Av VaEm with Morah Hamakom. Fear of one's parents comes with fear of God. Eisav could never achieve this fear. Thus, the Torah acknowledges that Yaakov properly merited not only Birchas Avraham but also the physical Bracha of Mital Hashamayim Umishmanei Haaretz.

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From: owner-weeklydt@torahweb2.org on behalf of TorahWeb.org [torahweb@torahweb.org] Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2006 9:35 PM  
To: weeklydt@torahweb2.org Subject: Rabbi Benjamin Yudin - A Man's Work is Never Done

the html version of this dvar Torah can be found at:  
[http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2006/parsha/ryud\\_toldos.html](http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2006/parsha/ryud_toldos.html)

### **Rabbi Benjamin Yudin**

#### **A Man's Work is Never Done**

The gemara (Bava Kamma 65b) cites the passuk (Vayikra 22:27), "When an ox or sheep or goat is born", to teach, "shor ben yomo karui shor - an ox immediately upon birth is called an ox". Chazal are teaching us that whatever the ox needs in the way of intelligence and self preservation has been given to it from birth. This is also the norm regarding the rest of nature. A fish immediately upon being hatched no longer recognizes its parent. Moreover, it has the radar to know which fish are friendly and are foe. It is propelled naked into cold water and survives. Similarly, a bird might need the nurturing of its mother for a month, but afterwards is completely independent. Without being taught or shown by others, it knows how to construct a home for itself. In fact, an experiment was done in which a bird was taken away from its mother prior to hatching and lo and behold, exactly the same day that the mother flew southward, so did its young. The cat needs its mother for three months.

How different is man! A young child even of five years, if left alone might well die, not yet possessing the maturity and know-how of self-preservation. Why did Hashem make the human being the exception to the rule? Man too could have been born self-sufficient like the rest of nature!

An answer is that though man is endowed with the greatest mind, intelligence and potential, he begins the journey of life weak, defenseless and completely dependent on others. As he is influenced by parents, teachers and his environment from conception, so he grows and absorbs knowledge, values, and understanding throughout his life. Man enters this world dependent upon others, and ideally never loses the recognition that there is always much to learn from others. As he grows from infancy to adolescence to maturity in a physical manner, so does he grow in his realm of understanding, until he too not only takes but also gives to others.

This is the norm. Rav Hirsch (Breishis 25:25) and the Minchas Yehuda, by Rav Yehuda Horowitz zt"l note that the name given to the first son of Yitzchak and Rivkah is Esav, which comes from "asui" - an already finished and completely made man. This name was given in response to the fact that his hair was more fully developed than that of a newborn, and similarly were his nails. The Targum Yonasan ben Uziel adds to this list that Esav was born with teeth and developed gums. That Rabbis understand that it is not just his physical demeanor that was unique, but that this was a portent of his philosophy of life, "I am complete, know it all, don't need your input and guidance." Indeed, when Esav meets his brother approximately one hundred years later (Breishis 33:9) he describes himself as "yesh li rav - I have plenty". In sharp contrast is his brother Yaakov, the yosheiv ohalim. After being charged by his parents to go to Lavan's house and marry one of his cousins, he detours for fourteen years to the yeshiva of Shem and Ever. Yaakov is constantly growing.

Rabbeinu Bachya in Chovos Halevavos (Shaar Habechina chapter 5) draws our attention to the wisdom that Hashem displays in every facet of man's being and development. He notes that even the painful experience of teething for a baby is to teach us to learn from infants that there is no gain without pain.

It is interesting to note that while Esav was born differently, perhaps gifted, it is what he did with this phenomenon that counts. Moshe too was born differently; "she saw that he was good" (Shemos 2:2) is understood by Chazal that he was born circumcised and the home was filled with light. Moshe channeled his Divine gift towards the service of G-d and Esav allowed himself to not only be pampered and self-centered as a result of his differences, but also to rebel against man and God. In fact, the Ohr Hachayim (Devorim 32:1) notes that Moshe is called Ish HaElokim because he constantly worked on his character development. He was not naturally a modest man, but became the most modest man. He is endowed with the coveted title of Ish HaElokim upon blessing the very same people that challenged him personally throughout his four decades of leadership. Both Esav and Moshe had free will.

Interestingly, notes the Maharal, that while all the animals came forth from the adama, none are called Adam but man. He notes that each animal remains the same, retaining its characteristics. Similarly, if one plants wheat or an apple tree, the best one could hope for would be the growth of wheat or apple trees. Man is different. He comes from adama but is unlimited in terms of his potential.

The very growth of man is most exciting. By being the beneficiary of parents' love, teaching, and direction, a child, as is explained in mitzvah thirty-three of the Sefer HaChinuch, not only has thanksgiving to his parents, but is able to transfer this positive appreciation to Hashem.

The navi says that Hashem loves Israel - "ki na'ar Yisroel voa'haveihu" - because he is a na'ar. This is understood by Rav Yisroel Salanter to mean that just as a young man, a na'ar, is always questioning, probing, studying, and growing, so are the Jewish people. Make time to incorporate more chessed in your life. Make time for yourself and incorporate more Talmud Torah in your life. This is the way of Yaakov - a life of growth. Esav who

didn't need and had it all, didn't give or grow. Yaakov who realized how much he received from others never stopped giving and growing.

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From: webmaster@koltorah.org on behalf of Kol Torah [koltorah@koltorah.org] Sent: Friday, October 27, 2006 4:28 PM To: Kol Torah Subject: Kol Torah KOL TORAH A Student Publication of the Torah Academy of Bergen County Parshat Noach 6 Cheshvan 5767 October 28, 2006

**Introduction to the Laws of Yerushah and the Ethics of Jewish Estate Planning – by Rabbi Chaim Jachter**

(assisted by **Martin M. Shenkman, Esq.**)

Introduction Seven years ago, Kol Torah published a series of essays on the topic of estate planning and Torah values. Since then, we have received countless requests for these articles to be republished and made available on the internet. In addition, I have researched this subject further, discussed it with a number of Rabbanim of eminent stature, and lectured to a wide variety of audiences from whom I have learned a great deal. Beginning this week, we shall present a series of revised essays on this vital topic. In this introductory issue, we will discuss the background of the Torah's requirements for inheritance (Yerushah) and some basic Torah values that should serve as guidelines when drafting a will that conforms to both Halacha and the spirit of the Torah. I thank attorney Martin M. Shenkman for his assistance in the preparation of this series. I assume the responsibility for any mistakes that might appear in any of the following essays.

**Torah Order of Succession** The Torah (Bemidbar 27:8-11) outlines the Halachic order of succession: If a man dies and has no son, then you shall cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter. And if he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. And if he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers. And if his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to the relative who is closest to him of his family, and he shall inherit it. This shall be for the children of Israel as a decree of justice ("Chukat Mishpat"), as Hashem commanded Moshe.

**Understanding the Torah's Order of Yerushah** A number of points must be clarified regarding the Torah's order of Yerushah. The Mishnah (Bava Batra 8:2) explains that the lineal descendants of anyone with priority to succession take precedence. For example, the grandchild (son of a son) of the deceased has priority over the daughter of the deceased. If a man dies with no living son, the inheritance passes to any deceased son's lineal male descendants (the grandsons or great-grandsons of the deceased) and only then to a daughter. Sons, as stated clearly in the Torah, have the first priority to inherit. If the deceased was not survived by any sons, his daughters inherit all. The Mishnah explains that the decedent's father is third in the line of succession, after sons and daughters, even though the father is not explicitly mentioned in the Torah's list. Thus, if the decedent was not survived by children, his father inherits all. If the father is not alive, then the decedent's brothers inherit. If no brothers survive, then the relative who is closest to him inherits. (See Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat 276 and Pitchei Choshen 8:1 for a thorough description of the Torah's line of succession.)

**The Special Status of the Firstborn (Bechor)** The Torah (Devarim 21:16-17) commands us to give a first born male a double portion of the estate. Thus, if the deceased was survived by five sons, the Bechor receives two-sixths of the inheritance, and the other sons each receive one-sixth of the estate. There are several important exceptions to this seemingly simple Halacha. Firstly, a son born by Caesarian section does not qualify for the double portion (Bechorot 8:9). In addition, the Mishnah (Bechorot 8:9) teaches that the Bechor is entitled to receive a double share only from assets held by the decedent at the time of his death ("Muchzak"). The

Bechor does not receive a double portion from the contingent assets ("Ra'ui) to which the decedent had a right at the time of death but were not actually held by him ( e.g. an unpaid debt). There is considerable debate concerning the implementation of this rule. For example, Rav Ovadia Yosef (Teshuvot Yabia Omer 8:C.M. 8) and Rav Yaakov Blau (Pitchei Choshen 8:2:26) rule that money deposited in a bank is considered Ra'ui. On the other hand, Rav Hershel Schachter reports (in a Shiur delivered at Yeshiva University) that Rav Moshe Feinstein believes that money deposited in a bank is considered to be Muchzak. A similar dispute exists between Rav Yechezkel Landau (Teshuvot Noda BeYehuda C.M. 1:34) and the Aruch HaShulchan (C.M. 278:13) as to whether government bonds are considered Ra'ui or Muchzak. A full presentation of the details concerning the special entitlement of the Bechor appears in Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat 277 and Pitchei Choshen 8:2.

**Spouses** The husband is heir to his wife's estate and takes precedence over all other heirs. There is considerable debate whether this Halacha is a Torah law or a Rabbinic enactment (see Rambam Hilchot Nachalot 1:8 and the comments of the Raavad, Maggid Mishneh and Kesef Mishneh there.) The wife, in contrast, does not inherit her husband's estate. She is merely entitled to be supported out of the husband's estate until she remarries or demands payment of her Ketubah (Ketubot 4:21). This obligation raises an important issue. Do the common elder law, Medicaid, and nursing home planning in which many families in the United States engage violate this Halachic support requirement? Elderly parents often give away all of their assets so that state programs will pay nursing home bills and the assets may be preserved for their children. Since a husband's obligation to support his wife includes medical care, may he engage in this type of planning? I posed this question to Rav Feivel Cohen, who responded that this does not contravene the obligation to support one's wife from one's estate since the government programs pay for her food and medical care.

**Daughter's Inheritance** Although a daughter does not inherit if there are sons, each unmarried daughter is entitled to ten percent of the estate to be used for her dowry (Ketubot 6:6, Ketubot 68a, and Shulchan Aruch Even HaEzer 113:1). Attorney Martin M. Shenkman suggests that this distribution is to be determined net of any estate tax because Dina DeMalchuta Dina, we are bound by the laws of the country in which we reside. In addition, a daughter is to be supported by the estate until she is betrothed or reaches the age of Bat Mitzvah (Ketubot 4:11).

**Contemporary Wills – Halacha and Torah Values** The most common method of distribution in our times is for children, sons and daughters, to share equally in the estate and for one's wife and mother of his children to inherit his estate. How can one achieve this personal objective without violating the Halachic requirements of Yerushah? We shall discuss a number of proposed approaches to this challenge, which will help us construct a will that satisfies both the needs of the family and Torah Law. We should note, however, a few basic points about how to construct a will in harmony with both Halacha and general Torah values.

**Ethical Wills** Rav Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky, in his classic work Geshet HaChaim, writes that everyone should write an ethical will in addition to writing a will concerning how to distribute one's assets after death. He cites Bereishit 18:19 as the source for this practice. This celebrated Pasuk states that Hashem considers Avraham special "because he commands his children and his household after him that they keep the way of Hashem, doing charity and justice." Moreover, the Ralbag (Melachim 1:2:46) writes that everyone should learn from the example set by Moshe Rabbeinu, Yehoshua and David HaMelech (we may add Yosef to the list), all of whom presented ethical wills before they died. There is a long tradition among great rabbis, including the Vilna Gaon, Rav Aryeh Levine, and Rav Shlomo Wolbe to follow the example set by these biblical figures. A will, or preferably a separate personal letter, stating one's Torah vision for his family is a vehicle that can encourage the family and children to follow the Torah lifestyle he wishes for them. Such a personal

communication can be an extraordinarily important benefit for children and other heirs. The last communication from parent to child should not be only about money.

**Shalom Bayit** The Rambam (Hilchot Nachalot 6:13), in the midst of presenting detailed Halachot concerning inheritance, adds an ethical statement. This is surprising because the Rambam's Mishneh Torah is a Halachic code, and ethical statements are almost always confined to specific sections of this work, such as Hilchot Deiot, and the concluding paragraphs of major sections. Thus, it is quite noteworthy that the Rambam interjects, "Our rabbis have commanded that one should not treat one child differently than another child even regarding small matters, lest the children come to competition and jealousy, such as what occurred with Yosef and his brothers." It appears that the Rambam is teaching that maintaining Shalom Bayit should be a prime objective of estate planning. Most obviously, one maintains familial harmony by fairly distributing one's assets in the will. One should take special care to avoid using the will as a tool for revenge. Moreover, a Beit Din might invalidate a will if it is evident that the testator sought to take revenge on a family member (Pachad Yitzchak entry Maaveer Nachala and Techumin 17:301-311). The clearer the parent's desires concerning the distribution of assets, the less chance there is for fighting among family members. Pitchei Choshen (8:168-169) urges one to plan his will with extreme care in order to avoid family disputes. He writes that one should spell out the terms of his will as clearly as possible, vigorously avoiding any ambiguity. Examples of horrific consequences of an improperly drafted will are presented in Techumin 20:94-99. This author believes that one should not discuss the disposition of one's assets with his heirs. The will should serve as the exclusive (and absolutely clear) determinant of the distribution of assets. Oral instructions create the potential for disharmony as heirs may note discrepancies between the will and the oral instructions. One should also carefully choose the executor of the will based not only on his financial acumen and honesty but also on his ability to resolve conflicts and promote Torah values. He should be familiar with the unique familial dynamics so he can manage challenges prudently and sensitively. Furthermore, if the parent provides a mechanism for deciding delicate issues (such as designating a specific Rav or Beit Din to settle any disputes that may arise, see Teshuvot Tzitz Eliezer 5:29 for an example of such a resolution), the chances for preserving familial harmony will be greater. These issues include many of the topics that we discussed in previous issues (available at [www.koltorah.org](http://www.koltorah.org)), such as transplants, autopsies, end of life health care, truth telling to patients, arrangements for nursing home care and burial arrangements. One should clarify where he wishes to be buried ( i.e., Israel, family plot, etc.). A person minimizes the chance of fighting about difficult issues if one either states his wishes or provides a specific mechanism to resolve any question that may arise. The need to take these steps is even greater in families in which second marriages have occurred. Special care must be taken in these situations to maintain Shalom Bayit. Attorney Martin M. Shenkman suggests that one consider including a carefully written letter explaining why one chose to distribute the assets in the manner spelled out in the will in an effort to avoid potential familial discord.

**Tzedakah and Truthfulness** The Chafetz Chaim specifically felt that large charitable gifts should be made in a person's will (Ahavat Chesed, 3:4). The Gemara (Shabbat 55a) states that truth is "the seal" of Hashem, the emblem by which Hashem is known. Truthfulness mandates presenting an accurate picture of an estate on any tax filing. A heroic example of honesty in connection with estates is the story Rav Chanoch Teller (in his work Builders) relates about the great Rav Aharon Kotler. Next week, we shall discuss options for disposing of one's assets to non-Halachic heirs in a manner that does not contradict Halacha.

Editor-in-Chief: Josh Markovic Executive Editor: Avi Wollman .. To request mail, fax, or email subscriptions, or to sponsor an issue, please contact us at: Kol Torah c/o Torah Academy of Bergen County 1600 Queen Anne Road Teaneck, NJ 07666 Phone: (201) 837-7696 Fax: (201) 837-9027 [koltorah@koltorah.org](mailto:koltorah@koltorah.org)

<http://www.koltorah.org> This publication contains Torah matter and should be treated accordingly.

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From: weekly-bounces@lists.ohr.edu on behalf of Ohr Somayach [ohr@ohr.edu] Sent: Wednesday, November 22, 2006 6:49 AM To: weekly@ohr.edu Subject: Torah Weekly - Parshat Toldot

TORAH WEEKLY - For the week ending 25 November 2006 / 4 Kislev 5767 - from Ohr Somayach | [www.ohr.edu](http://www.ohr.edu)

Parshat Toldot

by **Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair** <http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/2801>

INSIGHTS As Close To Eternity

“Yitzchak loved Esav, for game [food] was in his mouth; but Rivka loves Yaakov.” (25:28)

Not far from where I lived as a child there was a particularly fascinating shop. On the sides of the entrance doors two mirrors faced each other, and as you extended your leg over the threshold, millions of legs, in perfect synchronization, also extended themselves to your right and left.

It seemed that the reflections went on forever. And indeed they did. There was no beginning and no end.

To my young mind this was as close to eternity as you could get.

Of all the misrepresented words in the English language, “love” must be up there with the top scorers.

Love is unique because it’s like those mirrors. In love, the cause and the effect are indistinguishable. Any love that depends on a reason will evaporate when the reason is no longer valid. If you love someone because they are young, their old age will not appeal to you; because they’re beautiful – they better watch the lines around their eyes, the chins under their chins and the escalating battle of the bulge. Love that depends on something else isn’t really love. It’s love of... love of this; love of that.

Real love is defined as zero distance between cause and effect.

G-d chose Noach because he was a righteous person. In Parshat Lech Lecha, however, the Torah describes how G-d chose Avraham without mentioning anything about his prototypical kindness or his hospitality or any of his other merits. The reason is that G-d chose Avraham for no other reason than that He loved him. Why did He love him? Because He loved him! The cause was the effect, and the effect was the cause, like an infinite unceasing reflection.

“Yitzchak loved Esav for game [food] was in his mouth; but Rivka loves Yaakov.”

The grammar of this verse is strange: The love of Yitzchak for Esav is described in the past tense “Yitzchak loved Esav...” The love of Rivka for Yaakov, however, is portrayed in the present: “Rivka loves Yaakov.” The love of Yitzchak was a love that depended on an outside factor: He loved Esav because “game was in his mouth.” When that external reason turned out to be misplaced, the love ceased. Rivka’s love, on the other hand, was a love that was self-sustaining, it needed no cause, and thus the Torah describes it in the present tense, for it never came to an end.

- Based on the Ramban and the Shelah HaKadosh Written and compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

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From: peninim-bounces@shemaisrael.com on behalf of Shema Yisrael Torah Network [shemalist@shemaisrael.com] Sent: Thursday, November 23, 2006 3:30 AM To: Peninim Parsha

**Peninim on the Torah**

by **Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum**

- Parshas Toldos

...

Because Avraham obeyed My voice, and observed My safeguards, My commandments, My decrees, and My Torahs. (26:5)

The four categories of mitzvah observance, as explained by Rashi, are: Mishmarti, My safeguards, referring to Rabbinic decrees which serve as barriers against transgressing a Biblical prohibition, mitzvotai; My commandments, denoting those laws that man’s moral compass demands, chukotai; My decrees, which are laws that defy human rationale; Torasai, My Torahs, which is a reference to the two Torahs, Torah She’BiKsav, Written Law, and Torah She’Ba’al Peh, Oral Law. This basically includes everything that a Jew must observe. What, then, is the meaning of Koli, “My voice?” To which mitzvot does “My voice” refer?

Horav Aizik Ausband, Shlita, cites the Rambam at the beginning of Hilchos Taanis, who writes, “This is one of the ways of teshuvah, repentance. At a time that a calamity or trouble befalls the community, the people are to cry out and to blast the shofar. They should know that what occurs is the result of their evil deeds. By correcting their ways and repenting, they will cause the decree to be rescinded.” By extension, this idea should apply to all incidents which occur in our lives. Everything that takes place does so for a reason and flashes a unique message intended specifically for the individual who has experienced the incident. Hashem is talking to him, telling him something. He should wake up and listen!

This is the meaning of “obeying Hashem’s voice.” One understands that everything that happens is Hashem’s voice calling out to him, an awareness that should effect an appropriate response. Avraham Avinu taught us to listen to Hashem’s voice, to be acutely aware that Hashem speaks to us through the episodes that happen in our lives. We must open up our eyes and “listen” to those hidden messages.

The stellar pasuk in Jewish life, the one that accompanies us through hardship and even death is, Shema Yisrael - “Hear O’ Yisrael.” We have to “hear” what Hashem is saying even if He does not articulate His messages in words, but, rather, in actions. Everyone has moments in his life when Hashem speaks to him. At times, it is a warning; alternatively, it may be an opportunity. If the individual is not listening to the message, however, it is wasted.

Harav Yissachar Frand, Shlita, relates the following story which gives us an insight into the meaning of listening to our messages. There is a small, nondescript, bleak town in northern England called Gateshead, right across the river from the well-known coal-producing town of Newcastle. The shochet, ritual slaughterer, of the Jewish community, Reb David Dryan, had a strange idea. He wanted to bring a group of young Torah scholars to the community to establish a kollel. He saw that his community lacked much in its spiritual dimension, and he felt the kollel would stem the tide, elevating the community. Little did he dream of the consequences of his actions. He was a determined man, and he began writing letters to no less than twenty-two rabbanim, inviting them to Gateshead to head this project. Twenty of these rabbanim did not even take the time to respond. One of them was kind enough to demur the invitation. The last one, the esteemed author of the Michtav M’Eliyahu, Horav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, zl, wrote back, “The next time you are in London, we should talk.” Rav Dessler went to Gateshead and established what was to become the world class kollel of Gateshead. Indeed, Gateshead became the largest, most prestigious center for Torah study in Europe, replete with a Yeshiva, a Bais Yaakov High School and a Seminary. All of this occurred because one man listened to his messages. Rav Dessler certainly had enough items on his daily agenda that he could have easily placed the letter at the bottom of his pile of correspondence. He was a Torah scholar of distinction, a man to whom the entire world turned. Yet, he took the time to return a letter to a shochet in Gateshead, because he viewed everything that occurred in his life as a message from Hashem.

This thesis is in no way meant to cast aspersions on any of the other rabbanim who ignored Reb David’s letter. Surely, each of them had an important reason for what he did not do. After all is said and done, however, they all missed the opportunity of a lifetime.

We have to ask ourselves: how often has this happened in our own lives? How often have we taken our time responding to a request - or even

responded in the negative, only to see someone else respond and achieve incredible success. That success could have been ours, or perhaps, if we would have reacted positively, we would have achieved even greater success. There are people who respond to the message and take advantage of the good fortune, because they know that Hashem is affording them an opportunity. There are, alas, those who do nothing but complain when others are successful. We should each ask ourselves: Which one am I?

And it came to pass when Yitzchak had become old, and his eyes dimmed from seeing. (27:1)

Rashi cites a number of reasons for Yitzchak Avinu's failing eyesight. One reason which he mentions is that when our Patriarch was laying on the Akeidah, bound and prepared to be offered up as a sacrifice, the ministering angels wept over him. Their tears fell into his eyes, dimming them. Obviously, there is a deeper meaning to this experience and these eye-dimming tears. The question that we might ask is: Yitzchak was involved in an incredible act of mesiras nefesh, self sacrifice. Was this his reward for such an unprecedented act of devotion to the Almighty? He was the one that planted the seeds of Kiddush Hashem, sanctifying Hashem's Name. Did he deserve to lose his eyesight for that?

When we think about it, the question is short-sighted. It is only due to Yitzchak's dimmed eyesight that Yaakov Avinu was able to receive the blessings from his father. Otherwise, Eisav would have been the beneficiary of the coveted blessings. In other words, Yitzchak's dimmed eyesight was a blessing in disguise. We see how what appears to be a punishment or a negative experience can really be a positive occurrence.

Rivkah grew up in Besuel's home. Her brother, Lavan, must have been a great source of nachas, pleasure, to his wicked father. Like father, like son. Why did Rivkah have to be there? Surely, she could have been raised in a home more suitable to her exemplary character traits. Did she not deserve better than that? Another perspective is that exposure to corruption and swindling educates a person to be aware and apprehensive of such behavior. A person raised in this type of environment can discern a swindler and prevent a mishap. Rivkah's "education" gave her a perceptive eye to see through Eisav's ruse and cunning. It is because of her background that she was able to save Yaakov and enable him to receive the blessings. Once again, we see that what appears to be negative, can really be a hidden blessing.

We all undergo experiences in life when what seems to be a negative occurrence is really a source of blessing. I am certain that this Torah thought will stimulate my readers to remember their own experiences. The following story, related by Rabbi Yechiel Spero in "Touched By A Story (2)", is an inspiring one: One of the major philanthropists of our generation is an individual who not only gives of his material assets, but also opens his heart to the needs of those seeking his support. Every tale of woe, of sadness and misery, finds a receptive ear. He does not merely want to give money and say goodbye. He wants to lend a sympathetic ear.

Every year he and his family would spend Succos in Yerushalayim, where he was besieged with people seeking his help. While he usually took care of the contributions himself, this year he had hired a man to be his gabbai tzedakah, secretary to disburse the charitable funds. He figured that this way he would have more time to listen personally to each person's needs. He would hand each person a card with a code denoting a specific amount of money. There were a total of five cards. While they represented clearly defined amounts, the gabbai had the right to render his own decision if he felt that his employer had underestimated the gravity of the situation.

The weeks went by, and the process went along smoothly. One day, a distinguished rabbi came to plead on behalf of his sick nephew. With tears in his eyes, he explained how his twenty-two year old nephew had been born with a brain tumor which, at the time, seemed non life-threatening. Over the years, it had shifted and now had to be removed. The surgery, which was dangerous and difficult, could only be performed in the United States. This operation involved a fortune, and there was no insurance.

Could he, please, help? Without the surgery, his nephew, who had recently become engaged, had only three months to live.

The philanthropist himself was moved to tears. He immediately gave the rabbi a card indicating by code that the gabbai should extend all courtesies to this man and give him significantly beyond the usual amount. He wanted to make sure that the surgery and all ensuing costs would be addressed. He never told his gabbai to overrule him, but, this time, he hoped that he would.

The next day the gabbai came to his employer with an incredible story. "Twenty-four years ago, my wife and I lived in an apartment. We had two children, a two year old and a three month old. One day, a terrible fire broke out in the apartment. My wife thought I had escaped with both of our children. When we looked at each other and realized that the baby was still sleeping in the apartment, we became hysterical. The firemen would not let us return to the apartment, claiming it was too dangerous. We would never emerge alive. It was Hashgachah, an act of Divine Providence, that a bus returning from Tel Aviv stopped in front of the blazing apartment, at the behest of one of the passengers. This man ran out of the bus and, after assessing the situation, ignored everyone, ran to the rear of the building, climbed the fire escape and, with Hashem's help, saved my baby's life. That man was the father of this young man whose life is in danger. Twenty-four years ago, he saved my child's life. Now, I have the opportunity to repay this favor. I beg you to allow me to give him whatever he needs."

The philanthropist needed no encouragement and gave his gabbai a blank check to cover all expenses. We do not know why things happen the way they do. We live through what seems to be an isolated experience, only to discover many years later that it was an act of Providence to enable us to merit further deliverance. We must remember that nothing occurs in a vacuum and without reason. Hashem is the Source of all activity, and it is His way of calling to us. We should listen and respond accordingly.

Sponsored in loving memory RABBI SAMUEL STONE By his children and grandchildren Peninim mailing list Peninim@shemayisrael.com [http://www.shemayisrael.com/mailman/listinfo/peninim\\_shemayisrael.com](http://www.shemayisrael.com/mailman/listinfo/peninim_shemayisrael.com)

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Covenant & Conversation  
Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

**Sir Jonathan Sacks**

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth  
[From 2 years ago - currently 5765]

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Toldot The other face of Esau

Last year, in Covenant and Conversation, I pointed out the other side of the Esau story. There is a midrashic tradition that paints him in dark colours. But there is a counter-tradition that sets him in a more positive light.

First, Esau was indeed blessed by Isaac. In fact, his blessing came true long before Jacob's did. The Torah emphasises the point: "These are the kings of Edom [i.e. the descendants of Esau] who ruled before any king reigned over Israel" (Gen. 36: 31). Esau's descendants were settled in their land while Jacob and his children were enduring exile.

Second, Moses commands the Israelites: "Do not hate an Edomite, for he is your brother" (Deut. 23: 8). G-d too commands the people: "You are about to pass through the territory of your brothers the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. They will be afraid of you, but be very careful. Do not provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land, not even enough to put your foot on. I have given Esau the hill country of Seir as his own" (Deut. 2: 4-5) Esau's children and their territorial integrity were to be respected.

Third, the sages admired Esau's intense love and devotion toward Isaac. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said: "No man ever honoured his father as I honoured mine, but I found that Esau honoured his father more than I honoured mine." The Zohar states that "No one in the world honoured his father as Esau honoured his."

The result is a significantly more nuanced portrait of Esau, the son Isaac loved.

One reader, however, asked me the following question: How could I say this in the light of the verse from Malachi:

"I have loved you," says the Lord. "But you ask, 'How have you loved us?' "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" the LORD says. "Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have

hated . . .” The question is fundamental. The answer is, firstly, that the verb s-n’, which usually means “to hate,” has a different meaning in biblical Hebrew when contrasted with the verb “to love.” Then it means not “hated” but “loved less intensely, less intimately.” That, as Ramban and Radak point out, is what it means in the passage: “Jacob cohabited with Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah . . . When the Lord saw that Leah was hated [senuah] . . .” Leah was not hated; she was merely less loved. That too is its meaning in Deuteronomy: “If a man has two wives, one loved, the other hated [senuah] . . .” Here again, the meaning is not “hated” but “less loved.”

Second, there is the remarkable comment by the Vilna Gaon that the phrase, “Esau I have hated” refers only to “the peripheral part of Esau” not his essence. The verse in Malachi refers to particular historical circumstances. During the First Temple period there were conflicts and wars between the Israelites and Edomites. The prophet Amos attributes particular cruelty to Edom: “He pursued his brother with a sword, stifling all compassion, because his anger raged continually and his fury flamed unchecked” (Amos 1:11). Malachi is therefore speaking about a specific historical era, not eternity.

The issue has larger significance because, for the rabbis, Esau/Edom symbolised the Roman Empire, and then (after the conversion of Constantine), Christianity. Ishmael was the Arab world and later, Islam. On the basis of the Vilna Gaon’s comments, Rav Kook wrote this about the relationship between Judaism and these two other faiths:

Noteworthy in this respect is the statement of Rabbi Elijah Gaon on the verse, “But Esau I hated” - “this refers to the peripheral part of Esau, but the essential part of him, his head, was interred with the patriarchs.” It is for this reason that the man of truth and integrity, Jacob, said [on his reunion with Esau], “I have seen you, and it is like seeing the face of G-d” (Gen. 33: 10). His word shall not go down as a vain utterance. The brotherly love of Esau and Jacob, Isaac and Ishmael, will assert itself above all the confusion that the evil brought on by our bodily nature has engendered. It will overcome them and transform them into eternal light and compassion. (Letters, 1, 112) Rav Kook believed that just as in the Torah, Jacob and Esau, Isaac and Ishmael, were eventually reconciled, so will Judaism, Christianity and Islam be in future. They would not cease to be different, but they would learn to respect one another.

The point touches upon a fundamental of Judaism. What does it mean when we call Jews “the chosen people”? Does it mean that in choosing Jacob, G-d rejected Esau? Or that in choosing Abraham, G-d rejected humanity? G-d forbid. In the Torah, G-d appears to several non-Jews, among them Abraham’s contemporary, Malkizedek, described in the Torah as “a priest of G-d most high.” One of the great heroines of the Bible, the woman who saves Moses’ life, was an Egyptian, Pharaoh’s daughter. And so on. We believe as a matter of principle that “the righteous of the nations have a share in the world to come.”

When Jacob was chosen, Esau was not rejected. G-d does not reject. “Though my mother and father might abandon me, the Lord will take me in” (Ps. 27: 10). Chosenness means two things: intimacy and responsibility. G-d holds us close and make special demands on us. Beyond that, G-d is the G-d of all mankind - the Author of all, who cares for all, and is accessible to all. In an age of resurgent religious conflict, these are truths we must never forget.

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<http://www.anshe.org/parsha.htm#parsha> Parsha Page by **Fred Toczek** - A Service of Anshe Emes Synagogue (Los Angeles)

Toldos 5757 & 5762

#### I. Summary

A. Yaakov and Esav are Born. After 20 childless years of marriage, Rivka and Yitzchak were blessed by Hashem with twin sons, Yaakov (the younger, a Torah scholar and Rivka’s favorite) and Esav (the elder, a hunter and Yitzchak’s favorite).

B. Esav Sells His Birthright To Yaakov. Returning hungry and tired from a day of hunting, Esav noticed that Yaakov was cooking some red lentils. (Our Sages explain that Yaakov had prepared the lentils for Yitzchak, because it was the day of Abraham’s funeral.) Esav said to Yaakov “give me quickly some of that red stuff to eat for I am tired.” Yaakov answered “sell me, in turn, your privileges as first born (i.e., until Hashem chose Aaron and his descendants to serve as the priestly family, first-borns served as priests to Hashem; Esav was clearly not worthy of this sanctified work). “Of what use are the rights of the first-born to me?” reasoned Esav, and he swore to Yaakov that he would give him first-born rights, in return for which Yaakov gave Esav some bread and lentils.

C. Yitzchak and Rivka Travel to Gerar. Fleeing a famine, Yitzchak and Rivka temporarily moved to Gerar. Hashem appeared to Yitzchak, promising to uphold His promise to Abraham. Hashem promised that Yitzchak’s descendants would be as numerous as the stars of heaven and would inherit Canaan. Taking the same precautions as Abraham did, Yitzchak told the residents of Gerar that Rivka was his sister. King Avimelech, upon discovering the truth, ordered that anyone harming

Yitzchak or Rivka would be killed. With Hashem’s help, Yitzchak soon became very prosperous. This evoked the envy of local populace, and Avimelech asked Yitzchak to leave the area. While staying in the valley of Gerar, Yaakov dug his father’s old water wells. Yitzchak eventually moved to Be’er Sheva. Before long, he was visited by Avimelech who now recognized that he was a holy person, favored by Hashem, and they agreed to a peace treaty. Meanwhile, Esav brought grief to his parents by marrying tow Hitite women (who were idol worshippers).

D. Yitzchak’s Blessing. Yaakov was old and blind and felt that the time had come for him to bless his eldest son. He, therefore, requested Esav to hunt and prepare the game he captured. After partaking of the meal, Yitzchak would bless him. Rivka, overhearing their conversation, dressed Yaakov in Esav’s clothing and covered his hands and neck with goat skin to make them feel as hairy as Esav’s, and sent him to Yitzchak bearing a tasty dish of young goat’s meat and bread which she made. Yaakov’s voice aroused Yitzchak’s suspicions, but they were allayed when he felt Yaakov’s hairy hands which Yitzchak was sure belonged to Esav. Yitzchak, now ready to bestow the blessings upon his son, called him forward. Yaakov came forward and kissed his father. Yitzchak blessed Yaakov, saying “May Hashem give you from the dew of the sky and the fat of the land, and plenty of grain and wine. Nations shall serve you and kingdoms shall bow down to you. Those who curse you shall be cursed and those who bless you will be blessed.” No sooner had Yaakov left, when Esav returned and discovered what had happened. Yitzchak didn’t revoke his blessing to Yaakov; rather, he blessed Esav as well, and foretold that his descendants would live by the sword and serve Yaakov’s descendants if they behaved properly; however, if they strayed from the path of Torah, Esav’s descendants would be free of this servitude.

E. Yaakov Leaves Home. Esav, angry at Yaakov’s ruse, plotted to kill him as soon as Yitzchak died. To prevent this, Rivka instructed him to go stay with her brother Lovan in Charan. Yitzchak gave him the save advice, and expressed his wish that Yaakov choose a wife from among Lovan’s family. Yitzchak then blessed Yaakov again that the blessings of Abraham be fulfilled through him and his descendants.

## II. Divrei Torah

### A. LilMode Ul’Lamed (**Rabbi Mordechai Katz**)

“Kibbud Av V’aim” (Honoring Your Father and Mother). Although Rivka recognized Yaakov’s superiority to Esav, Yitzchak lacked this insight, for he was misled by Esav’s practice of Kibbud Av, honoring Yitzchak. He assumed Esav was just as scrupulous in observing all mitzvos. This shows the power of Kibbud Av V’aim; it was able to make Yitzchak believe that even one as degenerate as Esav was an honorable person. If Esav, for all his wickedness, still was careful to honor his parents, then how can we claim to be good Jews if we fail to do the same? Many stories are related of how our Sages honored their parents. For example, one day Rabbi Avuhu asked his son, Rabbi Avimi, for some water to drink. Rabbi Avimi brought the water, but his father had fallen asleep. He stood next to his father with the water in his hand the entire time, until he awoke (Kiddushin 31b). A story is told of Rabbi Leib of Kelm. When he was a young, he returned home very late one night from studying. His parents were already sleeping and he didn’t have a key with him. In order not to awaken them, he remained in the street all night despite the extreme cold.

### B. Peninim on the Torah (**Rabbi A.L. Scheinbaum**)

Recognizing the spiritual value. “And Esav despised the birthright.” How can one sink so low as to exchange his prized inheritance for a mere bowl of lentil soup? Did Esav completely lose his sense of spirituality? Horav Yechezkel Levinstein, z”l notes that this is truly a case in which people follow a misguided perspective of life. How often do we measure success by the yardstick of prosperity, position or social standing, while simultaneously belittling success in spiritual endeavors? Perhaps this is the meaning of the words of Rabeinu Yonah “how did I exchange a passing world for one that stands forever?”

### C. Majesty of Man (**Rabbi Hanoach Leibowitz**)

Feeling Esav’s Pain. “And he [Esav] cried an exceedingly great and bitter cry . . .” In truth, what error had Yaakov committed? He didn’t steal the blessing; it was rightfully his for he had legitimately purchased the birthright (including the eventual blessings of the first-born) from Esav. In addition, one can’t fault Yaakov’s motive; he wasn’t driven by greed or a desire for glory, but rather realized that Esav wasn’t worthy of the birthright. Furthermore, Rivka had perceived through prophecy that the blessing belonged to Yaakov and she all but physically forced him to enter Yitzchak’s tent to receive the blessing. Why, then, was Yaakov held responsible for Esav’s suffering? Reb Dovid Leibowitz explained: Yaakov wasn’t punished for the pain he caused Esav but for an infinitesimal shortcoming in not feeling sufficiently anguished that Esav had to suffer. Yaakov should have empathized to a greater degree with Esav’s plight. We see from here the lofty level of “ahavah” (love) for our fellow man that the Torah demands of us. Esav was a deceitful person and a murderer; yet Yaakov was still required to feel his pain over the loss of his birthright.

All people deserve our love and empathy with their pain. In our own way, we must enhance our love for, and sensitivities toward, our fellow man.

**D. Growth Through Torah (Rabbi Zelig Pliskin)**

1. Don't rationalize your faults by blaming others for them. "And Yitzchak was 40 years old when he took Rivka, the daughter of Besuail the Aromite, from Padan Arom, the sister of Lavan the Aromite, for himself for a wife." Rashi notes that the information in this verse is superfluous, since the Torah had already told us of Rivka's family. According to Rashi, it is included to let us know the praise of Rivka. She was the daughter of an evil person, and lived in a community of evil people; nevertheless, she didn't learn from their evil behavior. Many people try to excuse their faults by blaming others as the cause of their behavior. "It's not my fault, I learned it from my parents" and other rationalizations are commonplace. However, we see from Rivka that regardless of the faulty, even evil, behavior of those in your surroundings, you have the ability to be more elevated.

2. Work on internalizing the elevated thoughts that you talk about. "And Yitzchak loved Esav because he was a hunter in his mouth." Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler cited the Ari that it is a mistake to think that Esav was a complete hypocrite and just tried to deceive his father. If Yitzchak made an error, there must have been a good reason. The problem with Esav was that he kept all his spirituality "in his mouth," without swallowing it. He spoke spiritual words but didn't become a spiritual person. The Torah ideals that one talks must be a part of his very being.

**E. Love Thy Neighbor (Rabbi Zelig Pliskin)**

A person should consider it a honor to serve his parents. The Torah describes Esav's garments as "the coveted ones." The Midrash states that these garments were the one he seized from Nimrod. Esav wore these regal garments whenever he served his father. Rabbi Shimon Ben Gamliel said "I served my father my entire life, but I didn't reach even 1% of the honor with which Esav served his father." Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Ilem was once told in a dream "be happy, for you and a butcher named Nanas will be neighbors in the World-to-come." Upon awakening, Rabbi Yehoshua was quite shaken; he traveled from town to town until he found Nanas. Overwhelmed that the famous Sage had come to visit him, Nanas humbly asked him why he had come. Rabbi Yehoshua said that he came to find out about the good deeds which Nanas had performed. Nanas replied that "I have elderly parents who are in need of help. I give them food and drink and wash and dress them daily." Upon hearing this, Rabbi Yehoshua kissed him on the head and said "I am truly fortunate to have you as my neighbor in the World-to-come."

**F. In the Garden of The Torah (the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, z't'l)**

Inwardness: the path to prosperity. The Parsha teaches us that a person can leave a legacy that will live on after his passing. Our Rabbis offer two definitions of "Toldos" ("prodigy"): (a) a person's biological children and spiritual children [i.e., those he has taught]; and (b) the chronicles of one's life and experiences. The Torah chooses Yitzchak to associate with the message of Toldos. Two things reflect the nature of Yitzchak's Divine Service: (a) unlike his father, Abraham, Yitzchak never left Israel; and (b) his efforts were focused on digging wells. Both facts show that his Divine service had an inward focus. Spiritually, "digging" refers to the process of reaching one's G-dly core and tapping it as a source of inner strength. Each of us has a "neshamah" (soul) which is "an actual part of G-d" (Tanya); every entity is maintained by a G-dly spark. Yitzchak's goal was to activate these potentials, bring them to the surface and use them to initiate positive change. This is certainly a worthy path of Divine service, but why is it associated with the name "Toldos" which means prodigy? It seems more appropriate to associate this concept with the Divine service of Abraham, for he actively sought to communicate the awareness of G-d to others. By underscoring this reading of "Toldos," our Rabbis underscore the message that the inwardness of Yitzchak also produces prodigy. His Divine service and the positive influence it generated attracted the attention of others, motivated them to follow his guidance and brought them to a recognition of G-d's active presence in the world. Indeed, the awareness generated by Yitzchak was more permanent than that generated by Abraham, for it came from the people themselves. His internalized bond with Hashem inspired the people around him to perceive Hashem's influence. We all have the opportunity to influence others, to motivate them to seek G-dly knowledge.

**G. Living Each Day (Rabbi Abraham Twerski)**

Contingent vs. Non-contingent love. "Yitzchak loved Esav for he fed him game, but Rivka loves Yaakov." The Parsha describes Yaakov as a sincere person, devoted to scholarship, and Esav as a man of the field interested only in earthly desires. The Torah tells us that Yitzchak favored Esav because he hunted food for him, whereas Rivka loved Yaakov. However, no reason is given for her preference. The Selah notes this omission as well as the fact that Yitzchak's love in the past tense, whereas Rivka's love is in the present tense. What's the difference? The Selah explains with a quote from Pirkei Avos that "love which is dependent on anything disappears when the thing on which it was dependent is gone". Yitzchak loved Esav because he provided him food; such love is transitory and can easily become a thing of the past; hence, the use of the past tense. Rivka's love wasn't contingent, but was love of

Yaakov for what "he was"; this time of love endures, hence the present tense. True love for another and self-love when the other person is merely a means of self-gratification are poles apart. As the Selah notes, the former is likely transitory, while the latter is of lasting duration. In the next Parsha, we learn of Yaakov's love for Rachel; although he had to wait 7 years to marry her, "it seemed to him as but a few days because of his love for her." If one is in love, shouldn't each day of separation seem like an eternity? How does one thus make sense of this verse? The Rabbi of Apt answered that to people who primarily love themselves and crave companionship for their own self-gratification, each day of separation is indeed an eternity. But, Yaakov loved Rachel, rather than herself. He loved and admired her for who she was, rather than what she would provide to him. This was a non-contingent love, a spiritual love. This, the Torah teaches us, is true "love".