

ב"ה
Torah
Tidbits

ISSUE 1540

ה' כסלו תשפ"ד • NOV. 18 2023

פרשת תולדות
PARSHAT TOLDOT

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Probing the Prophets
Rabbi Nachman Winkler
Page 30



Simchat Shmuel
Rabbi Sam Shor
Page 40

ויתן-לך האלקים מטל השמים
ומשמני הארץ ורב דגן ותירש
בראשית כ"ז:כ"ח

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT PARSHAT TOLDOT ZMANIM
CANDLES 4:03 PM • HAVDALA 5:17 PM • RABBEINU TAM 5:56 PM



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THIS WEEK'S COVER IMAGE!

And may G-d give you of the dew of the heavens and of the fatness of the earth and an abundance of grain and wine. This photo is the Switzerland Forest in Tiberias overlooking the Kinneret. Midrashim tell us that the **'fatness of the earth'** promised to Yaakov, was Miriam's well, which is in the Kinneret. Our soldiers are fighting on behalf of us all, to allow us to live in peace and enjoy the **'fatness of the earth'**. We pray for their success and that they should all return home safe and well. **Photographed by Julian Alper of Tiberias.**



HELPFUL REMINDERS



7 Days After Molad: 8 Kislev/ Mon. night Nov. 20

Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana until: 15 Kislev/Mon. night Nov. 27

A SHORT VORT | BY RABBI CHANOCH YERES

Rav, Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

"הקל קול יעקב והידים ידי עשו" (כ"ז:כ"ב)

"The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Eisav" (27:22)

The Vilna Gaon (Rabbi Eliyahu ben Shlomo 1720-1797) asks why the word "Hakol"-"The voice" is spelled lacking the Hebrew letter "Vav" and may be misread as "Ha-kal"- meaning "light" or "faint"?

He answered that this is to teach us that whenever the voice of righteousness, as symbolized by Jacob, becomes faint, then the evil in the world represented by the hands of Eisav becomes strong and prominent. However, when the voice of Jacob is heard loudly and reverberates around the world, then the "kal" can be correctly read as "kol" through the addition of the letter "vav", as the hands of Eisav lose control.

The Midrash Rabbah emphasizes this idea:

א"ר ברכיה בשעה שיעקב מרכין בקולו ידי עשו שולטות

"Rav Brachya said if Jacob's voice is faint, Eisav's hands will rule."

~ Shabbat Shalom

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



	TOLDOT		VAYEITZEI	
	CANDLES	HAVDALA	CANDLES	HAVDALA
Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim	4:03	5:17	4:01	5:15
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	4:21	5:20	4:19	5:18
Beit Shemesh / RBS	4:22	5:18	4:19	5:16
Alon Shvut	4:19	5:18	4:16	5:16
Raanana / Tel Mond / Herzliya / K. Saba	4:19	5:18	4:16	5:16
Modiin / Chashmonaim	4:19	5:18	4:16	5:16
Netanya	4:19	5:18	4:16	5:16
Be'er Sheva	4:21	5:20	4:19	5:18
Rehovot	4:20	5:19	4:17	5:17
Petach Tikva	4:03	5:18	4:01	5:16
Ginot Shomron	4:18	5:17	4:15	5:15
Haifa / Zichron	4:07	5:17	4:05	5:15
Gush Shiloh	4:18	5:17	4:15	5:15
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	4:20	5:19	4:17	5:17
Givat Zeev	4:23	5:17	4:00	5:15
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	4:19	5:18	4:17	5:16
Ashkelon	4:21	5:20	4:19	5:18
Yad Binyamin	4:20	5:19	4:17	5:17
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	4:10	5:14	4:08	5:12
Golan	4:15	5:14	4:12	5:12
Nahariya/Maalot	4:16	5:16	4:13	5:14
Afula	4:17	5:16	4:14	5:14
Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem) - 5:56 PM • Next Week - 5:54 PM				

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities;
40 mins in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat and Haifa)

Daf Yomi: Bava Kama 16

JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wed - Shabbat
November 15 - 25 / 2 - 12 Kislev

Earliest Tallit and Tefilin 5:14 - 5:22
Sunrise 6:07 - 6:16
Sof Zman Kriat Shema 8:45 - 8:50
Magen Avraham 8:07 - 8:12
Sof Zman Tefila 9:38 - 9:42
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)
Chatzot (Halachic Noon) 11:23 - 11:25
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha) 11:53 - 11:55
Plag Mincha 3:33 - 3:31
Sunset (Including Elevation) 4:44 - 4:41



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
Executive Director, OU Israel

Since the war broke out, I've been receiving countless calls from so many friends asking what needs to be done. It is especially heartwarming to hear from so many friends in North America whose hearts are with their brothers and sisters here in Israel. I have noticed a theme where I can almost predict what each person will focus on over the course of the discussion since most people tend to see the war and their ability to help based on the lenses of their own lives.

Since I have had the *zechut* to work with most of these friends on a variety of projects, in the vast majority of conversations I can predict what they think the needs are based on where they are coming from. For example: medical professionals will think about the medical needs here in Israel, mental health professionals focus on the mental health needs, and Holocaust survivors and children of Holocaust survivors are generally thinking about the trauma the refugees are going through. A toy store owner is obviously interested in getting toys to the children who are displaced from their homes. Parents of younger kids focus more on the needs of that age while parents of teens are interested in the teen scene and what resources they need.

It's not that people only want to take care of their own. Rather, our brains automatically take our thoughts to what our lives are focused on. Over and over again, when I share other needs we are identifying here, they understand them and have donated

generously towards them as well. These conversations and the love for our fellow Jews that comes across warms my heart. Many are very practical, during which we find solutions to provide for the many needs the war has brought to the forefront.

Just as my friends relate to the needs based on the lenses of their life experiences, our focus here at OU Israel since the start of the war also corresponds to our areas of expertise during normal, quieter times. As you know, our programs focus on two key demographics in Israeli society – youth/youth at-risk and English-speaking *olim* and visitors. When I take a birds eye view of the many wonderful initiatives the OU has taken upon itself during the war, they relate to expanding our services for these populations.

First, when it comes to our work with youth/youth at-risk, we take pride in our ability to partner with so many communities in our OU Israel network that have unfortunately been evacuated from their homes. In addition to our regular work through our Youth Centers and the Pearl & Harold Jacobs Zula Outreach Center, we have become the resource for our participants, staff and their families now living in refugee hotels in Yerushalayim.

The OU Israel team has strong and meaningful relationships with the mayors, municipal staff, and other community leaders in so many cities up north and down south, mainly due to our ongoing work in these cities for over twenty years. Whether



it's from working on a daily basis with teens at-risk, programming we run for English speakers through NCSY Israel and Yachad Israel, and the thousands of North American teens we bring to their communities with NCSY Summer Programs, they know OU is synonymous with positive teen programming. They have seen first-hand the work we do in their communities and the way we care about their cities. Therefore, when they need assistance they turn to the OU for help and reinforcement for educational, emotional, spiritual and social needs.

The OU is not just there during times of crisis. We have and will continue to be with them on an ongoing basis. Take our Makom Balev Youth Center in Sderot. We are not just there when rockets are falling. Once we enter a city we are there in good times and challenging times. Since we have multi-year relationships with the youth and their families, we have become the address over the years. That's why the municipalities and families in Sderot and other cities trust us and are relying on us to help their refugee families, and especially the youth.

To assess and address the ongoing needs that these displaced families have, we assigned a representative in each refugee hotel. We are running carnivals and story times for the kids who have been without school for over a month. We are running



chizuk concerts for the women, many of whose husbands are called up to reserve duty, to provide them with the strength to continue to be the backbone of their families during this time of chaos. We hired more staff for the Zula to meet the ever growing crowds of an expanding teen population on the streets of Yerushalayim. Our usual Zula teens are relying on us more than ever during these trying times. Unfortunately, many lost friends who were at the music festival and have others friends who have been kidnapped. In addition, so many teens evacuated from their homes are flocking to the night scene and in need of the Zula's warmth and the care of our counselors.

The other area we are naturally focusing on is how can we be here for you, our English-speaking OU Israel family here in Israel. Right away, Rabbi Sam Shor and his team began offering twice daily Zoom *chizuk* classes given by the Rabbis, Rebbetzins and educators you enjoy learning from. These *chizuk* sessions are being recorded, and thousands have watched them at their convenience on our OU Israel YouTube channel.

We are providing virtual programs as well as in-person programs. We are in discussions with the department of homeland security to assess when we can once again open our building for programming since we do not have a *mamad* and the majority

of our security guards have been called to *milluim*. We are pushing to open as soon as possible. This week, we started Tuesday morning in-person *shiurim* at Beit Kneseset Nitzanim where everyone can feel secure learning in the *Beit Midrash* which is also the shul's *mamad*. JCHAT young professionals, Keshet senior singles, and so many other demographics had activities geared towards their needs and interests.

This past Thursday night, Rebbetzin Zemira Ozarowski and Daniella Hellerstein (OU Israel board member) ran an evening of *chizuk* for Anglo mothers of our brave IDF soldiers. These women, like the mothers of all of our *chayalim*, are heroes. They chose to move here knowing that their children may one day be on the battlefield fighting for our Homeland. Despite the immense pride and endless amount of prayers, we know these women need support, and that's what this evening was about. I encourage all mothers of *chayalim* to watch the recordings of the speakers on our YouTube channel as well and share with other women you know who would benefit from such a program.

If you're reading this message, you are connected to OU Israel and the work that we do. Whether you read Torah Tidbits every week or sporadically or whether you join our programs in person, virtually, or send your kids to them – thank you. Knowing how many people are taking advantage of what we offer, especially in difficult times when we all need the extra *chizuk* and sense of community, means a lot to me and our team. Continue volunteering – whether it be with the OU or with other causes that speak to your heart and your

unique life circumstances and skills. Continue *davening*. Continue giving because we rely on your donations in order to run these vital programs. *B'eizrat Hashem*, we will merit *besorot tovat* and the *geulah sheleima* speedily in our days.

Wishing you an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

Rabbi Avi Berman

Executive Director, OU Israel

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Real Life Rescues



"I'm ashamed," said the 80-something elderly woman to Meir Biton and Meni Winfeld, who rescued her from the saferoom in her home in Kfar Aza, after 36 hours during which she had been there with her husband and daughter-in-law (who was murdered), without food and with very little water.

"Ashamed of what I thought and said about the ultra-Orthodox all these years. And here you come, like this with your peyos and beard, like angels to save us."

The woman, a Holocaust survivor, and her husband and daughter-in-law barricaded themselves in their home from 6 A.M. on October 7th. Terrorists entered and shot through the door of the saferoom. The bullet hit the daughter-in-law who immediately fell in a pool of blood, and the couple sat there trembling, waiting for their death, which for some reason was hesitant to arrive. In retrospect, it turned out that one of the bullets broke the door's handle, and the terrorists were unable to open it.

The elderly were left with their daughter-in-law, wallowing in her blood. Wallowing in her blood for hours. Until they were transported to the hospital. By who? Two angels in orange.

Two orange-clad Orthodox men, examining and bandaging, supporting and caring, providing food and water, gently, with love and infinite compassion. "I wish I was younger and spoke differently all these years," said the woman.

And the elderly man, he didn't really say anything. With eyes full of endless trauma, he looked at them and wept. This is one of the thousands of stories our volunteers faced on October 7th and the days following. Upon hearing the story President and Founder of United Hatzalah Eli Beer said, "By standing united, people of all backgrounds in Israel standing together, that is how we will be victorious."





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Jeremiah 32:15



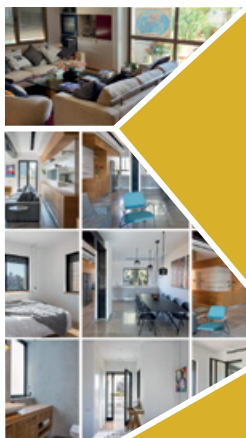
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PARSHAT TOLDOT

This is the parsha of Yitzchak and Rivka's life. Rivka has twins, Esav and Yaakov. Yaakov buys the birthright from Esav. Yitzchak goes to Gerar in a famine, is told not to leave the Land, digs the wells Avraham dug and renews the pact with Avimelech. Yitzchak is elderly, plans to give the blessing to Esav but is deceived by Yaakov. Esav wants to kill Yaakov. Yaakov travels to Padan Aram so as not to marry a woman from Canaan.



1ST ALIYA (25:19-26:6)

Yitzchak is 40 when he marries Rivka. He prays for her, as she is barren. She is troubled by her pregnancy, is told she has 2 nations in her womb and bears them when Yitzchak is 60. Yitzchak loves Esav, Rivka loves Yaakov. Yaakov buys the birthright from Esav for a pot of lentil soup. Yitzchak journeys to Gerar in a famine. G-d tells him not to go to Egypt but to dwell in the Land, as it is promised to him.

This is the parsha of succession. Yitzchak has now taken Avraham's place, Rivka has taken Sara's. And already, the next generation is born. But Rivka is told that she has 2 nations in her womb. This revelation to her is crucial in understanding the later story of Yaakov stealing the blessing meant for Esav.

When we read the stories in the Torah we are at a distinct disadvantage. Because we know how the story turns out. After all, we read the Torah every year and we

know these stories pretty well by now. But it is crucially important that we read the stories as if they are in real time, as if we don't know the end. Rivka knows that her 2 sons are 2 nations. That's all she knows. But what does that mean? Does it mean as we say colloquially: Tel Aviv and Jerusalem are 2 countries. Well, they aren't really; but they are *like* 2 countries. Is that what 2 nations means? She doesn't really have 2 nations in her womb, rather 2 very different types, but both are Jewish. And so, both Esav and Yaakov will be part of the Jewish people, just that they'll be very different sorts. Or does it mean 2 nations literally? One of her sons will be in the Jewish people and one out. And if she had to choose one to be in, well, she loves Yaakov – for she sees in him the heir of Yitzchak. He will be in. Esav out.

And Yaakov, the son she loves – well, she must have told him this secret too. Yaakov, with this information surmises: If I am in and Esav out, then I have a problem. Because Esav is the first born. So, Yaakov remedies that; he buys the birthright from Esav. Working to ensure the Divine plan materializes.



2ND ALIYA (26:7-12)

Yitzchak and Rivka are in Gerar. He says she is his sister. Avimelech realizes she is his wife and challenges Yitzchak. Avimelech instructs all not to touch her. Yitzchak plants that year and the crop yield is 100-fold (meah shearim).

Yitzchak's following in Avraham's footsteps dominates the parsha. Yitzchak

married a woman who traveled to the Land of Israel from Padan Aram, just like Sara had. She is barren, as Sara was. He goes to Gerar in a famine, like Avraham did. He says she is his sister, as Avraham had.

But with crucial differences. Yitzchak plants crops in a famine. And gets a 100-fold yield. Avraham never did that. He is told not to leave the Land of Israel; Avraham left when he went to Egypt in a famine. And Yitzchak gets a double instruction not to leave the Land: Dwell in the Land (*sh'chon b'aretz*), Live in the Land (*gur b'aretz*), something Avraham was never instructed.

Again, we have to put ourselves in real time. Yitzchak scratches his head – why am I not to leave the Land? And what does it mean to get a double command – dwell and live in the Land?

Yitzchak follows in Avraham's footsteps with one twist. *He is taking active steps to build the infrastructure of a state.* He assumes he is to dwell in the Land because the promise of the Jewish people settling this Land is coming true in his time. Well, to build a state you need to begin planting – shepherds are not state builders. Farmers are. He plants. And what would you think if you planted in a famine and got a 100-fold yield? G-d is with me. My state building is being rewarded from above. Time to take more steps to build the state.



3RD ALIYA (26:13-22)

Yitzchak prospers greatly, with many flock. He digs the wells Avraham dug but were filled in by the Philistines. Avimelech tells him to move away. He digs more wells of Avraham. Finally, when he digs wells that are not contested, he declares that he has been fruitful.

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All the wells end well. That's 5 well diggings. On the one hand, he is following in Avraham's footsteps by redigging his wells. But, unlike Avraham, he is digging the wells for agriculture. The shepherd is transitioning to agriculture; for state building demands agriculture. These wells are for the wellbeing of the impending Jewish state. And the people of Gerar are onto him – they smell an adversary, intent on taking their land. Hence, they oppose his wells.



4TH ALIYA (26:23-29)

Yitzchak goes to Be'er Sheva, as Avraham did. G-d tells him not to fear, as He told Avraham not to fear. Avimelech makes a pact with him, as he did with Avraham. These are Avraham stories, repeated now with Yitzchak. Except Avimelech is afraid that Yitzchak will harm him. He senses that Yitzchak is preparing for a state, something Avraham did not do. And this state will be at Avimelech's expense.



5TH ALIYA (26:30-27:27)

Esav marries at 40 taking Canaanite wives, to the consternation of Yitzchak and Rivka. Yitzchak is elderly. He instructs Esav to bring freshly caught venison after which he will bless him. Rivka interferes and instructs Yaakov to imitate Esav. Yitzchak is suspicious but Yaakov's disguise is convincing.

This story of deception raises many questions. What was Yitzchak thinking in choosing to bless Esav? And what was Rivka thinking in this foiling of Yitzchak's intent?

Again, we know the outcome. But let's put ourselves in Yitzchak's place. He is preparing for the impending state building. He is planted. He dug wells for water. He is looking to the future. State building requires

not only economic growth. It requires a military and thoughtful leadership.

Yitzchak figures *both* his sons are going to lead the next generation of the Jewish people. There is no reason to think otherwise; they are twins, both born of the same mother. And they are complementary leaders. Yaakov is the thoughtful leader. But military power is not his thing. It is Esav's. A great pair. Just like Avimelech has Phicol, his general, Yaakov will have Esav as his general.

Yitzchak does not intend to bless just one son, but both. He intends to bless Esav in worldly matters, Esav's strength. To complement Yaakov, not replace him.

Rivka sees it all differently. Because she got that message when she was pregnant – 2 nations, not one. And if the Jewish people is going to be one of these 2 of my children, it isn't going to be Esav.



6TH ALIYA (27:28-28:4)

Yitzchak gives the blessing to Yaakov. Esav arrives soon after. When the deception is discovered, Esav is incensed, intent on killing Yaakov. Rivka urges Yitzchak to send Yaakov to Padan Aram to find a wife – and save his life.

The blessing, intended for Esav, is for agricultural blessing from the heavens. And power. In Yitzchak's mind, the Jewish people will require economic success as well as military prowess. And that is the blessing to Esav – a perfect partner to Yaakov, the thoughtful leader.

However, Yaakov receives the blessing instead. Rivka follows in Sara's footsteps: Sara banished Yishmael and G-d told Avraham to listen to her. Rivka, in her way, banishes Esav. And Yitzchak knows that in the end she is correct; that only one of their children will inherit

the covenant, the other won't.



7TH ALIYA (28:5-9)

Esav sees that the Canaanite women he took are frowned upon.

He marries Yishmael's daughter.

Esav marries at 40, like Yitzchak. He takes a daughter of Yishmael, in other words, his cousin, as Yitzchak married Rivka, his niece. But it's not just the walk – it's also the talk. While trying to walk the walk, he is simply not getting that he needs to talk the talk as well. As such, he will not be the next generation of the Jewish people.

MALACHI 1:1 - 2:7

The relationship between the parsha and this week's *haftorah* relates to the tremendous love Hashem harbors for the children of Yaakov, and the retribution He will ultimately visit upon the children of Esav. The enemies of the nation of Israel will be punished for persecuting their blood brothers.

We find a strong directive offered to the *kohanim*. Namely, that they return to the original covenant that Hashem had made with their ancestor, Aharon the High Priest. "True teaching was in his mouth, and injustice was not found on his lips. In peace and equity he went with Me, and he brought back many from iniquity."

The greatness of the people of Israel is revealed when we as a nation live nobly and fulfill our unique role as servants to Hashem. ■

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THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB
OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, EMERITUS

What Mystery Pervades A Well!

One of the great benefits of visiting communities where I once lived and taught is the opportunity to meet people who were my students long ago. I enjoy reconnecting with them and am occasionally amazed by how much they remember my lectures and sermons.

I recently returned to one of my former communities. I was approached by a participant in a short course that I gave over twenty years ago. It was an introductory course to the Bible. My former student asked if I would meet with him individually, and we arranged a time to do so.

After a few moments of catching up on each other's careers and families, he told me that he frequently reminisced about my course, especially during the time of year when the weekly portions are to be found in the book of *Genesis*.

"You may remember," he said, "that I had trouble accepting your claim that the stories of *Genesis* had sacred import. I felt strongly that the stories were no better than those to be found in children's secular literature. I vividly recall that you tried to dissuade me from my opinion, but unsuccessfully."

I conceded that I remembered very well just how difficult it was for me to convince him of the significance of the stories of the Bible. I

also wondered aloud about whether he had changed his mind over these many years.

His answer took me aback. "I have since carefully studied every narrative in the book of *Genesis*, from the creation of the world to the death of Jacob. I have discovered incredible meaning in every story. But there is one story that continues to confound me. I find no religious significance in it at all."

I asked him which story that was. He responded, "It is the story of those darn wells. Why do we need to know about them, and what possible meaning to those wells have to us?"

My former student was alluding to the brief narrative to be found in this week's Torah portion, *Parshat Toldot* (*Genesis* 25:19-28:9); specifically, the passage which tells of Isaac's encounter with Abimelech, King of the Philistines. Isaac emerges from that encounter with such great wealth that the Philistines envied him.

Then we read: "The Philistines stopped up all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of his father Abraham, filling them with earth... So Isaac departed from there... And Isaac dug anew the wells which had been dug in the days of his father Abraham... And he gave them the same

names that his father had given them...”

The story continues with an account of other wells dug by Isaac’s servants that are contested by the Philistines who claim the wells for themselves. Finally, “he moved from there. And dug yet another well, and they did not quarrel over it; so he called it Rehoboth...” (ibid. 26:12-22).

My former student looked at me with anticipation. “Rabbi,” he said, “we are now both quite a bit older and hopefully at least a little wiser. Can you tell me what all this fuss over a few wells is really about?”

At that moment, I allowed myself a dose of self-congratulation. Here was a distinguished middle-aged man who remained motivated to study the weekly Torah portion despite only a minimal commitment to religious observance. He had continued to ponder questions that were initially stimulated by a course that I gave more than two decades ago.

After thanking him for being such a faithful student, I asked him if he would agree to strike a bargain with me. I would share with him a teaching which sheds light on one piece of this narrative if he would agree to suggest an explanation of his own on some other aspect of it. He readily agreed.

I told him that I found it difficult to understand why the Philistines would stop-up Abraham’s wells and go so far as to fill them with earth so that they could never be used again. These were desert dwellers, and every drop of water was precious to them. Were they not harming themselves by stopping up the wells and filling them with earth? Was this spiteful act not detrimental to their self-interest?

He agreed that this was a good question, and that he had long been asking it himself.



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I then asked him if I had ever mentioned the name Nechama Leibowitz in the course I gave so long ago. He did not think that I had. So I proceeded to tell him a bit about this great lady, whom I never was privileged to meet. I paraphrased her answer to our question: “I once believed that only in antiquity were people capable of being so hateful that they would act against their own self interests. But now in this technologically advanced nuclear age weapons of destruction are still unleashed against an enemy, despite the inevitable horrible consequences for those who launched these weapons. This tendency toward self-destruction is not a Philistine perversion. It is a universal human perversion.”

The point made by this great teacher, who would insist on being called “simple Nechama,” evoked a knowing smile on the face of my former student.

“Thank you for that insight,” he responded. “Let me share with you an idea that I had, struggling with the same text. We read that although Abraham’s wells were stopped up and filled with earth long ago—and presumably forgotten—nevertheless, Isaac did not give them his own name but, rather, “gave them the same names that his father had given them.” To me, this has real relevance. I know that, like me, you were trained as a psychologist. And you know that we psychologists come up with new theories that are not really new but merely rehash the insights of the founding fathers of psychology. But we don’t give them credit. We claim that our theories originate with us and fail to attribute them to Sigmund Freud or Carl Jung or William James. Isaac was careful to credit father Abraham, the original digger of those wells. We have a lesson about modesty to learn here.”

This time, the knowing smile was on my face.

After our meeting came to an end, I found myself pondering an entirely different question, one that teachers often ask themselves: “What is more gratifying to a teacher? To have a student remember a lesson taught long ago, or to discover that a student has learned to think for himself?” Thankfully, that recent visit to a former community of mine helped renew my acquaintance with an old student who remembered some of my lessons, but who also went on to think for himself.

I continued to reflect upon this encounter for several days after leaving my old community. During those days, bits and pieces of a poem by Emily Dickinson floated up from the depths of my memory. This poem

speaks of the mystery of wells, a mystery hinted at in the story of the wells of Abraham and Isaac. Here are the first and last stanzas of that poem:

What mystery pervades a well!
The water lives so far,
Like neighbor from another world
Residing in a jar.

To pity those that know her not
Is helped by the regret
That those who know her, know her less
The nearer her they get.

I telephoned my old student and informed him that, in discussing the “mysteries of the wells,” we were on the “same page” as a great American poetess, who may or may not have been familiar with *Parshat Toldot*. ■



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6th of the 54 sedras; 6th of 12 in Bereshit.
Written on 172.7 lines, ranks 36th.
4 Parshiyot; 2 open, 2 closed.
106 pesukim, ranks 29 (9th in Bereshit).
1432 words, ranks 34 (10th in Bereshit).
5426 letters, ranks 33 (10th in Bereshit).



MITZVOT

None of the 613 mitzvot are in Toldot, however, as we mention often, there are Midot and values and other lessons to be learned. This is one of 17 mitzva-less sedras, 9 of which are in Sefer Bereshit, 3 in Shemot, none in Vayikra, 2 in Bamidbar, and 3 in Devarim.

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Why Did Isaac Love Esau?

Even before they were born, Jacob and Esau struggled in the womb. They were destined, it seems, to be eternal adversaries. Not only were they different in character and appearance. They also held different places in their parents' affections:

The boys grew up, and Esau became a skilful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents. Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebecca loved Jacob. *Gen. 25:27-28*

We know why Rebecca loved Jacob. Before the twins were born, the pains Rebecca felt were so great that "she went to inquire of the Lord." This is what she was told:

"Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger." *Gen. 25:23*

It seemed as if God were saying that the younger would prevail and carry forward the burden of history, so it was the younger, Jacob, whom she loved.

But why, in that case, did Isaac love Esau? Did he not know about Rebecca's

oracle? Had she not told him about it? Besides, did he not know that Esau was wild and impetuous? Can we really take literally the proposition that Isaac loved Esau because "he had a taste for wild game," as if his affections were determined by his stomach, by the fact that his elder son brought him food he loved? Surely not, when the very future of the covenant was at stake.

The classic answer, given by Rashi, listens closely to the literal text. Esau, says the Torah, "knew how to trap [*yode'a tzayid*]." Isaac loved him "because entrapment was in his mouth [*ki tzayid befiv*]." Esau, says Rashi, trapped Isaac by his mouth. Here is Rashi's comment on the phrase "knew how to trap":

He knew how to trap and deceive his father with his mouth. He would ask him, "Father, how should one tithe salt and straw?" Consequently, his father believed him to be strict in observing the commands. *Rashi to 25:27*

Esau knew full well that salt and straw do not require tithes, but he asked so as to give the impression that he was strictly religious. And here is Rashi's comment on

the phrase that Isaac loved him “because entrapment was in his mouth”:

The midrashic explanation is that there was entrapment in the mouth of Esau, who trapped his father and deceived him by his words. *Rashi 25:28*

The Maggid of Dubnow adds a perceptive comment as to why Isaac, but not Rebecca, was deceived. Rebecca grew up with the wily Laban. She knew deception when she saw it. Isaac, by contrast, had grown up with Abraham and Sarah. He only knew total honesty and was thus easily deceived. (Bertrand Russell once commented on the philosopher G. E. Moore, that he only once heard Moore tell a lie, when he asked Moore if he had ever told a lie, and Moore replied, “Yes”).

So the classic answer is that Isaac loved Esau because he simply did not know who or what Esau was. But there is another possible answer: that Isaac loved Esau precisely because he did know what Esau was.

In the early twentieth century someone brought to the great Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook, first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of pre-state Israel, the following dilemma. He had given his son a good Jewish education. He had always kept the commands at home. Now, however, the son had drifted far from Judaism. He no longer kept the commandments. He did not even identify as a Jew. What should the father do? “Did you love him when he was religious?” asked Rav Kook. “Of course,” replied the father. “Well then,” Rav Kook replied, “Now love him even more.”

Sometimes love can do what rebuke cannot. It may be that the Torah is telling us that Isaac was anything but blind as to his elder son's true nature. But if you have two children, one well-behaved, the other liable to



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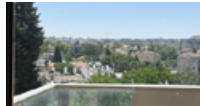
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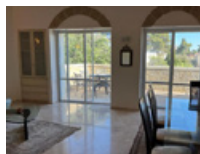
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turn out badly, to whom should you devote greater attention? With whom should you spend more time?

It may be that Isaac loved Esau not blindly but with open eyes, knowing that there would be times when his elder son would give him grief, but knowing too that the moral responsibility of parenthood demands that we do not despair of or disown a wayward son.

Did Isaac's love have an effect on Esau? Yes and no. It is clear that there was a special bond of connection between Esau and Isaac. This was recognised by the Sages:

Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel said: No man ever honoured his father as I honoured my father, but I found that Esau honoured his father even more. *Devarim Rabbah 1:15*

Rabbi Shimon derives this from the fact that usually people serve their parents wearing ordinary clothes while they reserve their best for going out. Esau, however, had kept his best clothes in readiness to serve his father the food he had gone out to hunt. That is why Jacob was able to wear them while Esau was still out hunting (Gen. 27:14).

We find, much later in the Torah, that God forbids the Israelites to wage war against Esau's descendants. He tells Moses:

"Give the people these orders: '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*

And later still Moses commands the Israelites: "Do not abhor an Edomite [i.e. a descendant of Esau], for he is your brother." *Deut. 23:8*

The Sages saw these provisions as an enduring reward to Esau for the way he honoured his father.

So, was Isaac right or wrong to love Esau? Esau reciprocated the love, but remained Esau, the hunter, the man of the field, not the man to carry forward the demanding covenant with the invisible God and the spiritual sacrifices it called for. Not all children follow the path of their parents. If it was Isaac's intent that Esau should do so, he failed.

But there are some failures that are honourable. Loving your children, whatever they become, is one, for surely that is how God loves us. ■

These weekly teachings from **Rabbi Sacks** zt"l are part of his 'Covenant & Conversation' series on the weekly Torah teaching. With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel. Visit www.RabbiSacks.org for more.

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At the very outset of our haftarah – and of Sefer Malachi – the prophet expresses the theme for his first nevu'ah of the book, a theme that connects directly to the opening of the weekly parasha of Toledot: the struggle between Eisav and Ya'akov. We, who have been nurtured by - and educated through – many centuries of rabbinic scholarship, have always understood the struggle of Eisav vs. Ya'akov as one of good vs. evil. Yet, even our great commentators struggled with that simple approach, as they also saw Eisav as a respectful son to his father and as one denied a patriarchal blessing that was promised to him. Given these descriptions, why did tradition settle upon that simple depiction of good vs. evil?

There is little question that Chazal's view of Eisav was based upon Hashem's own words that He shared with His prophet Malachi, words that we read in this week's haftarah. There, G-d reassures Israel that He loves them by stating that, although Eisav was Ya'akov's brother, He still loved Ya'akov, "V'et Eisav saneiti", while He *hated* Eisav! G-d "hated" Eisav and so Chazal understood that there must be more to Eisav than what is found in the Torah text.

Nonetheless, we are still puzzled as to WHY Hashem "hated" Eisav? What, ultimately, was the source of his "wickedness?"

I believe that this ultimate portrayal of Eisav as the archetype of evil was more a result of the actions of his nation than those of the ancestor himself. Consider: Yitzchak

loved Eisav – indeed, he "preferred" his "elder" son over the younger one! He was not bothered by his son's choice to become a hunter and even requested him to trap game for his father in order to receive a blessing. And, truthfully, upon reading the story of the patriarchal blessing, do we not feel a certain compassion and understanding for Eisav's resentment of his brother. And ultimately, did not Eisav make peace with the brother that, he felt, had wronged him? Is he to be considered "evil" because he was a hunter and did his father's bidding while Jacob is to be considered "good" because he "stayed in the tents" even though he misled his father???

Certainly not!

As Malachi continues to explain, "Eisav" referred to Eisav's nation, the nation of Edom. Indeed, the Tanach is replete with descriptions of Edom's attacks against Israel and their undying hatred of Hashem's people. The psalmist well-describes Edom's cheering support of the Babylonian hordes upon their sacking of Yerushalayim (Tehilim 137) while we read in Divrei HaYamim B (28; 17) of Edom's invasion of Judea that included the imprisoning of the Jews. But, perhaps most importantly, is the fact that Edom was not the only nation that was formed from Eisav. There was another, perhaps better known for their malicious and malevolent deeds. The nation of Amalek!!

How powerful does the great Rav S.R. Hirsch describe the very nature of Edom/Amalek:

"The principle of Edom is the worship of force, the laurel of blood is its highest ornament....and all the material, spiritual and moral forces....stand in the service of this ideal...This Eisav-principle stands in complete contrast to the Divine order of the world that fixes justice and right...**and the sanctification of life as the highest...goal.** The 'Eisav-Principle' is what G-d hates; the 'Jacob Principle' is what He loves."

Rav Hirsch closes his essay with the statement: "That is what the downfall of ... the Edom Empire teaches (and) what the survival of Israel teaches"

A world that, for decades, has preached the mantra of complete equality has fallen into the inability of recognizing evil. "Edom does not exist-and perhaps never did; Jacob

is no different." We are rightfully shocked to witness this blindness after the horrors of the Holocaust. "No one was right; no one was wrong." Today we watch as tens of thousands around the globe march in support of beheading babies, murdering the elderly, torturing children and imprisoning the innocent....and actually believing that they stand on the side of morality.

Yes, HaRav Hirsch was indeed correct except, unfortunately....we have yet to see the final downfall of Edom. ■

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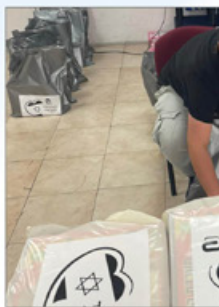
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Esav was (Spiritually) Tired

וַיָּזַד יַעֲקֹב נָזִיד וַיָּבֹא עֲשׂוֹ מִן־הַשָּׂדֶה וְהוּא עֵיף:
וַיֹּאמֶר עֲשׂוֹ אֶל־יַעֲקֹב הֲלִעֲטִינִי נָא מִן־הָאָדָם
הַזֶּה כִּי עֵיף אֲנִכִּי עַל־כֵּן קָרָא שְׁמוֹ אֶדּוֹם. (בראשית
כה:כט-ל).

*Now Jacob cooked a pottage, and Esav came from the field, and he was **tired**. And Esav said to Yaakov, "Pour into [me] some of this red, red [pottage], for I am **tired**"; he was therefore named Edom. (Bereshit 25: 29-30).*

As we have expressed on other occasions, the first time a word appears in the Torah reflects on its true meaning. In Parshat Toldot, we encounter the verb עיף for the first time. For lack of a better translation we will interpret the word עיף, to mean tired, or faint.

Esav returns from a day of hunting, and we are told he is tired. Esav then asks Yaakov to feed him because he is exhausted. In both instances, the Torah utilizes the verb עיף. It is interesting to note that although individuals prior to Esav worked hard, they were never depicted as being tired. Avraham traveled to many places and hosted many guests. Surely his hard work left him tired, yet Avraham is never described as being exhausted from his chores.

Perhaps the term עיף is not to reflect upon a physical reality, but rather on a spiritual attitude. An individual may be physically exhausted after working for hours, but if they are inspired about what

they need to accomplish, they don't consider themselves tired. If one has nothing to accomplish, he can sit in bed until the late hours of the morning. וישכם אברהם. Avraham, we are told arose early to fulfill Hashem's command to sacrifice Yitzhak, no matter how painful such an act must have been.

Esav lived for the present, day by day. He did not appreciate life. He had no long-term goals. He was spiritually faint! What interested Esav was the pleasure of the moment, a tasty bowl of soup.

Rabbi Frand mentioned at a previous siyum Hashas, that setting a daily routine of a daf yomi, mishna yomi, halacha yomi etc, provides an individual with a purpose each day. It ensures that one will never be עיף (spiritually tired).

(ישעיהו מ:לא) וְקוֹי ה' יַחֲלִיפֵנוּ כַחַּ עֵלֵנוּ אֲבָר.
כְּנִשְׁרִים יָרוּצוּ וְלֹא יִגְעוּ יִלְכוּ וְלֹא יִעִפוּ:

But those who put their hope in Hashem shall renew [their] vigor; they shall raise wings as eagles; they shall run and not weary, they shall walk and not tire.

If we engage in the study of Torah, acts of chesed and the fulfillment of mitzvot, we will infuse our lives with purpose and meaning, be invigorated and never experience spiritual tiredness (עיפות). ■



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Torrent of Tears

When Rashi finds a difficulty in the text and offers more than one answer, we understand that he is unsatisfied with either resolution on its own. Moreover, it is highly unusual for Rashi to bring three answers to the same question. We find such a case in our *parashah*, as Rashi sheds light on the cause of Yitzchak Avinu's fading eyesight as he approached the end of his life.

Rashi first presents the explanation of the *Tanchuma*; Yitzchak's blindness was the result of the smoke in the idolatrous services conducted by Eisav's wives. Rashi then brings an alternative explanation offered by the *midrash Bereisheet Rabbah*; when Yitzchak Avinu was bound on the altar of the *Akeidah*, the heavens opened and the angels cried when they saw what was happening. Their tears fell into Yitzchak's eyes causing them to weaken as he aged. Finally, Rashi brings an additional explanation from the *Tanchuma*. Hashem caused Yitzchak's eyes to dim so that he would be unable to differentiate between Yaakov and Eisav and thus Yaakov could receive the appropriate blessings.

Why so many answers? Particularly, let us explore the account of the angels' tears that blinded Yitzchak Avinu.

Rav Weinberger in *Shemen Hatov* explains simply that Rashi is presenting us with a framework of past, present and future events. The *Akeidah* was a past incident, the activities of Eisav's wives occurred in the present and the *brachot* would be given in the future.

Rav Rivlin in *Sefer HaParshiyot* suggests that all three answers reflect different manifestations of Yitzchak Avinu's primary *middah* of *yir'ah* – awe of G-d. Whereas Avraham Avinu would have tried to influence the behavior of such daughters in law, Yitzchak Avinu withdraws further inward, as if blinding himself to the reality surrounding him. Next, the midrash teaches that Yitzchak Avinu spent a few years in Gan Eden after the experience of the *Akeidah*, rendering his vision other-worldly. Similarly, Rav Dessler *zt"l* notes, Yitzchak's quality of *gevurah* was linked to his son Eisav's *gevurah*, thus blinding Yitzchak from seeing Eisav's true essence. As such, it was necessary to employ deception so Yaakov could receive his due blessings. Here Rav Rivlin interprets Rashi's presentation to highlight how Yitzchak Avinu's defining characteristic shaped his entire life.

Interestingly, Rav Schwab notes that the angels' tears had an inverse effect on Yitzchak. In *Maayan Bet Hashoeva* he expounds on the midrash that cites a verse from *Yeshayahu* (33:7), referring to angels that cried as agents of peace. As the angels were moved by mercy to cry, the tears that

fell into Yitzchak's eyes embodied pure mercy, so much so that when he aged, he only saw Eisav with a "good eye" and was unable to see his wickedness.

But why, asks Rav Shmuel Birnbaum, did the angels cry at all? Couldn't they see from the heavenly perspective that all fits into a scheme of goodness? He answers that Hashem, as it were, opened the heavens and allowed the angels to see the *Akeidah* from an earthly vantage point where they could see the struggle, pain and confusion that moved them to tears. As a nation, we have shed so many tears, yet we must remind ourselves that our perspective is a limited, earthly one. May we merit to see things from the higher, heavenly viewpoint where full clarity reigns and there are no more tears. ■

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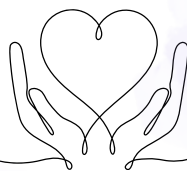
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At a farbrengen, Reb Mendel spoke of an *alter* Lubavitcher chasid named Reb Yeshayah Shapiro, who had a major impact on his own personal development. Reb Yeshayah was known as an *oveid*, a “servant of Hashem”, a serious person whose service of God was exceptionally intense. His weekday Shemoneh Esrei could last more than two hours. Reb Mendel once asked Reb Yeshayah how he was able to *halt kup* and stay focused for such an extended amount of time. Reb Yeshayah answered that many years earlier, as a young man, he struggled with maintaining his *kavanah* during davening, and went to consult with the Rebbe Maharash, zy’a.

When Yeshayah told the Rebbe that he did not know how to keep his mind on the davening, the Rebbe grabbed the young man by the lapels of his jacket, pulled them to the side, pointed at his heart, and said “Oyyy! Shayalah! *Rachmana liba ba’ee!* Hashem,

the Compassionate One, desires the heart!” The Rebbe Maharash began to cry, “Oy! A *Yiddishe heartz*, a Jewish heart! The heart... the heart!” Reb Yeshayah told Reb Mendel, “For more than fifty years, ever since the Rebbe tore open my coat — and my heart — I haven’t stopped davening.”

וַיַּעֲקֹב אִישׁ תָּם יָשֵׁב אֶהְלִים

“Jacob was an innocent man, dwelling in tents.” (25:27)

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov explains the inner significance of Yaakov’s efforts to acquire the *bechora*, ‘blessing of the first-born’. “Firstborn” means seeing things as though for the first time. No matter how many times Yaakov experienced something, it was fresh and alive; he experienced it with newness, wonder and *temimus*. In cultivating *temimus*, Yaakov Avinu maintained a youthful state of innocence, purity and wonder. When our *Yiddishkeit* becomes stale, withered or fossilized, it is because Torah and mitzvos have become distanced from their Source. It is a sign that we have become distanced from *temimus*.

Whenever we experience the simple purity of unrestrained laughter, the natural amazement of a moment of wonder, the



Mazal Tov to



Dr. Harvey & Rivka Woolf and family
on the birth of their **granddaughter, Nili**

gallop of untethered joy, free of self-consciousness, we can attain a state of obliviousness to the cynicism, posturing and competitiveness of the adult world. We are channeling and connecting with our ‘inner child’. No matter how many times we fall away, we can again become the *יָלֵד שְׂעִשְׂעִים* (Yirmiyahu, 31:20), the “delightful child” of the *Ribbono Shel Olam*, for no matter how old and sophisticated a person may be, “the soul of a child still nestles within him.” The power to return and reveal this inner freedom is the power of *temimus*.

Temimus is fully expressed as *tefillah b'kavanah*, says the Maharal of Prague. As such, it is the quality by which prayer is ‘heard’. In many sidurim there are special praises of the King to be recited before the kiddush of *Leil Shabbos*. Included in its list of Divine epithets are *Melech Shomea Tefillah* and *Melech Tamim Darko*, “King who hears prayer, King whose way is *tamim*.” Reb Baruch of Medzibozh comments: these two epithets are juxtaposed because it shows a sequence of events. Hashem desires our *tefillas*, and therefore, when a person davens, Hashem ‘hears’, causing Him delight. This, in turn, ‘urges’ Hashem to act in a ‘*tamim* way’ with the *davener*. Why is the plural, *tamim*, used here instead of the singular, *tam*? It is because Hashem responds twice to the *davener* with simple love: once after a person sins and again in case the person might sin in the future.

Temimus cultivates heartfulness, and awakens our natural, simple expression of tefillah as *avodah shebalev*, the Service of the Heart (*Taanis*, 2a). On our *pasuk*’s description of Yaakov as an *Ish Tam*, Rashi writes: *כלבו, כן בפיו*, “Like his heart, so was his mouth.”

Once a Jew complained to Reb Simcha

Bunim of Peshischa that he was suffering from a headache, and was unable to pray. Wishing him good health, the Rebbe asked, “But what does the head have to do with prayer?!” *U-lavdo b'chol l'avvechem*, “And serve Him with all your heart” (*Devarim*, 11:13).

Every Yid has a ‘faithful heart’, waiting to beat to the rhythm of Ratzon Hashem.

David haMelech’s plea, *לֵב טָהוֹר בְּרָא לִי אֱלֹהִים*, “A pure heart create for me, O God” (*Tehillim*, 51:12), can also be read as a statement: ‘You O God, have created me with a *lev tahor*.’

A chasid was speaking of the great sacrifice and spiritual levels reached by our Avos and Imahos in the presence of Reb Nosson Breslover. Wistfully, he bemoaned his own state, “Ayyy. If only I had a heart like our Zeidy Avraham... strength like Zeidy Yitzchak, and merited to live like Yaakov Avinu....” Reb Nosson admonished him: *Du hust oich dus heartz*, “You have the same heart! The same blood runs through your veins! You can also live with their *midos* and Emunah... You just have to utilize it and make it pump by choosing to live heartfully!”

May we believe in the power of our own *Yiddishe heartz* with the innocence and newness of a child; may we never stop davening and being filled with wonder, openness and *temimus*. ■

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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

Parshat Toldot includes the challenging episode of *Rivka Imeinu*, disguising her son *Yaakov* as his older brother *Eisav*, in order to seemingly deceive an elderly and frail *Yitzchak* to bestow upon *Yaakov* the blessings of the first born. What is the significance of this troubling episode? How could it be that *Yaakov Avinu* would come to receive these blessings in such a way? How could it be that *Rivka* would facilitate this entire episode?

In the subsequent *pesukim*, *Eisav* approaches his father, having prepared his favorite foods, in anticipation that his father will indeed bless him, he is shocked to hear *Yitzchak's* reply:

“*Ba Achicha B'Mirma, vayikach birchat-echa -*” *Your Brother came cunningly, and took your blessing.* “

The *Ateret Yehoshua of Dzhikov, zy'a* offers a fascinating insight- the word *B'mirma* is equal in numerical value to the word *afikoman*.

When *Eisav* approaches his father with this meal, *Yitzchak* answers him that it is *Pesach* night, and I have already eaten a meal which your brother served me, which included the *Afikoman* - I therefore am no longer allowed to eat from your meal, as one is prohibited to eat any additional food on *Pesach* night, once they have consumed the *Afikoman*.

This novel approach of course takes into account the midrashic suggestion that each of the *Avot* fulfilled the entire *Torah* through *ruach hakodesh*, even though they

had not received the *Torah* and were not commanded to do so.

Rabbi Moshe Weinberger, shlita points out that on the Seder night, the matza which is set aside as the *Afikoman*, is one half of the matza which is broken for *Yachatz*, at the beginning of the Seder. **Yachatz**, as explained by Rabbi Weinberger, is an acronym for the words: **Yadav, Chelkat Tzavarav**- his hands and the smooth of his neck- a reference to the parts of *Yaakov's* body, which *Rivka* covered with fur to disguise him as *Eisav*!

So what are we to learn from both this episode of disguise and deception, as well as its connection to the *Afikoman of Layl HaSeder*?

On the Seder night, many have the custom that the *Afikoman* is hidden for the children to find, or to take it and “steal it” in exchange for a finder’s fee or present upon its return. Rabbi Weinberger points out that there is an important message hidden within this custom. *Yaakov Avinu*, the ultimate *Ish Emet*, did not feel it was right for him to receive the blessing, he was not the *bechor* and therefore did not see himself as deserving to be blessed accordingly.

So too, many of us may feel that we are unworthy or not deserving to learn

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the depths of *Torah*, to delve into *penimiut hatorah*- the inner secrets of *Torah*. Rabbi Weinberger suggests that on the *Layl HaSeder*, we too must step out of our comfort zone like *Yaakov Avinu* and hide or steal the *Afikoman*, to realize that yes we too, are worthy to learn the secrets of *Torah*, and experience the *Layl HaSeder*, the night of redemption, in the deepest way, to feel that redemption within us, and believe that we are worthy to be redeemed.

Reb Tzadok HaKohein MiLublin zy'a, in a powerful teaching in *Tzidkat HaTzadik* taught:

כשם שצריך אדם להאמין בהש"י כך צריך אחר"כ להאמין בעצמו.

Just as a person is required to believe in Hashem, so too is he afterwards required to believe in himself

Yehi Ratzon, during these very challenging times, may we be blessed to feel in our hearts that we are indeed worthy to experience salvation, may we have the capacity to put our full faith and trust in *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, and may we also be blessed to believe that indeed each one of us can contribute in our own unique way to bringing those *yeshuot* to fruition. ■

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GEULAS YISRAEL

BY RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN

Ram, Yeshivat Har Etzion

How is the War Reshaping Jewish Identity?

The month of Marcheshvan has concluded. True to its name, it was one of the most bitter months in recent Jewish history. Despite the horrific tragedy we suffered, there are some very promising ripple effects which are redesigning Jewish identity, connection, spirit, and solidarity. These transformations are long-term and very difficult to chart or to predict. Yet, as the war in Israel enters its second month there are some encouraging signs that dramatic changes may be reshaping the Jewish world on many levels.

A RELIGIOUS RENAISSANCE?

One of the most iconic images of the past month has been of Jews, across the globe, tying tzitzit for Israeli soldiers. Presumably, most of these tzitzit are earmarked for chayalim who don't typically wear them. Evidently, even soldiers who don't maintain a classic halachic lifestyle feel better protected in battle with both a bullet proof vest and a mitzvah vest.

There is an old adage that there is no such thing as an atheist in a foxhole, and unquestionably, any war, anywhere, elicits religious sensibilities. When faced with extreme danger or life-threatening experiences, people are always more likely to turn to faith or to belief in a higher power.

Hopefully though, the desire for tzitzit reflects a deeper process coursing through the general secular Israeli population, as it returns to traditionalism and to general religious values.

TZITZIT AND MOSHIACH

The surge in popularity of tzitzit during this war is extremely symbolic. The Chofetz Chaim sensed that the seismic shifts of the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries signaled entry into the "Ikvasa d'mashicha" or the preliminary stages of redemption. He remarked that this era will witness a resurgence of tzitzit interest. Interestingly, wearing tzitzit and living in Israel are two *holistic* mitzvot which aren't limited to a particular action or ma'aseh mitzvah. Merely living in the Land or dressing with tzitzit while conducting a normal routine fulfills the mitzvah. Israeli soldiers wearing tzitzit while defending our Land feels powerfully Messianic.

There is an additional ironic twist to the revival of tzitzit interest. In perek 8, Zecharya describes a Messianic era during which the nations of the world recognize Hashem and acknowledge our people as divine emissaries. Looking to encounter Hashem, they cling to the corners of our clothing, imploring us to carry them to Yerushalayim.

כזה-אָמור, ה' צִבְקוֹת, בַּיָּמִים הָהֵמָּה, אֲשֶׁר יִחְזִיקוּ
עֲשָׂרָה אָנָשִׁים מְכַל לְשׁוֹנוֹת הַגּוֹיִם; וְהָיָה יִחְזִיקוּ בְכֹנֶף אִישׁ
יְהוּדִי לְאֹמֹר, נִלְכָּה עִמָּכֶם--כִּי שָׁמַעְנָה אֱלֹקִים עִמָּכֶם

Effectively, tzitzit serves as a universal lifeline for humanity, connecting them to Hashem.

Sadly, this prophecy has yet to surface as much of the world is still hostile to us and violently opposes our divine rights to Yerushalayim. But, like every prophecy, this vision will one day materialize. In the meantime, proudly wearing tzitzit during this battle between good and evil announces our abiding faith in our Jewish mission to save humanity from its own demons.

RENEWED JEWISH IDENTITY

Unfortunately, crisis and tragedy are corrosive to faith and to Jewish identity. For example, after the horrors of the Holocaust many Jews abandoned their faith and many disappeared into the larger society, either afraid or disillusioned.

It appears that, at least initially, this tragedy is strengthening Jewish identity. In the USA there is a palpable and heightened increase in Jewish pride, solidarity, and connection to Israel. Furthermore, Jews who previously were only marginally engaged in religious practice are beginning to light Shabbat candles, recite Shema or Tehillim, attend shul, and even purchase tefillin and mezuzot. There is a worldwide shortage of tefillin due to increased demand.

Why and how is this happening? It could be that Jews are so revulsed by the blood-thirstiness and moral degeneracy of our enemies that they are attracted to the light of our religion. Those who weren't able to *inherently* appreciate the dignity and nobility of being Jewish are finally appreciating Judaism by witnessing the moral depravity

of a godless life or the immorality of religions which paint G-d as angry and blood thirsty.

My Rebbe, Harav Amital, remarked that, during the Holocaust he and his fellow prisoners constantly reflected that, even if given the opportunity, they would never trade places with their Nazi murderers. The prospect of sinking to such revolting behavior was a worse fate than being victimized. Amidst the darkness which descended upon humanity last month, many are now better appreciating Judaism as the religion of life.

Alternatively, this revival of Jewish identity may reflect a larger metaphysical phenomenon. Hashem planted a primordial sense of belonging within each Jewish heart. For the past two centuries, religious upheaval, moral chaos, financial pressures, and cultural influences all muffled this inner voice but the echo of this voice was never extinguished. Now that our people are being spotlighted and attacked, this quiet murmur is being amplified.

Will the strengthening of Jewish identity last? Will this renewed Jewish identity serve as a springboard for broader religious revival and renewed faith and religious commitment? Is this one of the seismic events we are promised will occur to turn hearts back to Hashem? We certainly hope so.

SOME SHOUT VENOM, SOME EXTEND KINDNESS

We are appalled to witness the horrible ogre of antisemitism raising its ugly head. Jew-haters always wait silently in the wings, ready to join any and every antisemitic movement and to adopt whatever false antisemitic canard or trope weaponizes their genocidal hatred. It is sad to see brainwashed automatons foolishly and

ignorantly attending pro-rape and pro-torture rallies in support of sub-human barbarians. What is our response to half a million frenzied Jew haters screaming for blood in the streets of London?

One crucial response is to counter-rally and clearly present the voice of reason and the voice of moral sensibility, whether or not a deaf world cares to listen. Additionally, many Jews are heroically doing battle in the arena of public opinion, from the capitals of Europe to the hate filled accounts of social media.

However, most of our people, when not protesting, are quietly lending a hand to one another. The gemara in Yevamot identifies chesed as one of the primary ethnic markers of the Jewish people, and the swell of chesed over the past month certifies this assessment. The amount of kindness and volunteerism over the past month has once again proven why Hashem selected us. Obviously, this level of chesed will not last forever, but it has certainly made its impact felt on this earth and in heaven.

Some hate, some love. Some murder the life G-d delivers, and some reinforce it. Baruch Hashem we are on the right side of this equation.

CONNECTING WITH ISRAEL

Within the Jewish Orthodox world there have been two very different responses to the establishment of the State of Israel. Some read Messianic and redemptive meaning into the resurgence of Jewish sovereignty and to the ensuing success of the State of Israel. To them the state is a divinely delivered gift, which heralds the early stages of our redemption.

Others are more suspect about the

notion that a secular government and a secular citizenry are divine historical interventions. Redemption must be authored entirely by Hashem, and it must be packaged in classic religious wrapping.

Over the past 125 years, these two groups have remained divided over the ideological meaning of Israel. Over the past month, however, it appears that common ground is starting to emerge.

We all possess an instinctive connection to our people and to our Land which runs much deeper than ideology. Within every Jew, even those who don't view the state as redemptive, the war has elicited a visceral concern for our people who have gathered in their ancient homeland, after two thousand years of wandering and suffering. Regardless of ideological perspective there is a common sense that our people have returned to rewrite Jewish history.

This bridging of the Orthodox world around a common consensus is gradually unfolding, but will take many generations to fully evolve. It can't be measured solely in how many Charedim enlist but must be gauged in the cultural shifts occurring within the broader Orthodox world. The war has awakened a deep and soulful connection to our land and our people, a connection which loud ideological pronouncements cannot capture.

This tragedy is transforming us. We don't know why Hashem allowed this disaster to occur. We do know that He has a purpose and a reason. We hope that we continue to respond with faith, solidarity, and heroism.

■ כי אנו עמך ואתה אלוהינו

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HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

BY REBBETZIN DR. ADINA
SHMIDMAN



Zeal & Ideal

HAFTORAH: MALACHI 1:1-2:7

Malachi, the last of the prophets, lived during the second Temple era. He describes how during that time period the Jews were lackluster in their bringing of Kabanot. The sacrifices were deficient, the animals were blemished and the people were disinterested in putting time and energy into their relationship with Hashem. The problem was exacerbated by the poor performance of the Kohanim. Their lack of passion and dedication impacted the people and their service.

How could this be, considering that people had only rebuilt the Beit Hamikdash shortly before - how could their religious stamina and enthusiasm have waned? While the second Beit Hamikdash did not measure up to the first Beit Hamikdash in miracles and stature, the expectation for wholehearted worship was the same. So how does a nation find religious zeal in a time of spiritual exhaustion? This is a question we may be asking ourselves as the war continues. How do we hold on to the energy, passion and unity that we have discovered in these last weeks?

Malachi provides insight and inspiration to confront this challenge. He approaches the Kohanim as the leaders who were both responsible for the Temple service and who

set the religious tone for the people. Highlighting values of peace, consistency, honesty and commitment, he empowers them as leaders. Just as he encourages the leadership of his time to strengthen themselves and the people will follow, we too must recognize our capacity as leaders of ourselves, our families and communities to energize and connect to the Torah and Mesorah. The remarkable activation of our people on multiple fronts during these last weeks should give us faith for our nation's future. ■



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TOWARDS MEANINGFUL SHABBOS

BY REBBETZIN ZEMIRA OZAROWSKI
Director of OU Israel L'Ayla Women's Initiative



Kabbalat Shabbat

Though interrupted frequently in the last few months between summer break, Chagim, and then the war, we will hopefully now get back on track to a more consistent column, in which we will continue to focus on our Shabbat experience and how to make it more meaningful. May our efforts to improve our connection with Shabbat be a zchut to bring home the hundreds of men, women, and children who were tragically taken hostage on Shabbat. In addition, thousands of our dedicated Chayalim have been unable to celebrate Shabbat properly over the past few weeks (though many have managed to hold beautiful makeshift pre-Kabbalat Shabbat services in Gaza)– May our increased connection to Shabbat be a merit for them as well.

In my last article, we discussed a specific experience I had davening Kabbalat Shabbat a few weeks ago in the wake of the war, but in truth, the Tefilla of Kabbalat Shabbat is always very special. There is a unique quality to this Tefilla, different than the rest of the Tefillot, which seems to pull at our Neshamot. The Kabbalists explain that this is because we receive a special Neshama as we enter into the Shabbos. The **Ari** says that sparks of additional Kedusha enter into the world from the moment that mincha is recited. This time period is a time which is an עת רצון, an

auspicious time for תיקון, for improvement of ourselves and the world around us.

Kabbalat Shabbat is the Tefilla in which we go out to greet the Shabbat. We are so excited that Shabbat is coming that we go the extra step and go out to meet Shabbat and escort her in. This concept is already mentioned in the Gemara (Shabbat 119a), which explains that Rabbi Chanina would wrap himself in a garment and say בואו ונצא לקראת שבת המלכה - let's go out and greet the Shabbat Queen. Rabbi Yannai would put on his Shabbat clothing and say בואי כלה בואי כלה - Enter Bride, enter Bride.

The **Piskei Teshuvot** explains that in the 16th century, the students of the Arizal in Tzfat took this concept found in the Gemara and expanded on it by going out to the fields and singing a set formula that they had created to be recited at the onset of Shabbat. This formula, which has spread almost universally among the various communities across the world, includes reciting six specific chapters of Tehillim followed by “Lecha Dodi”, and then concluding with two more chapters of Tehillim.

The **Ishei Yisrael** says that the first six chapters of Tehillim that we recite correspond to the six days of creation, which end with the onset of Shabbat symbolized by Lecha Dodi. These chapters describe what it will be like when

Mazal Tov to

Rabbi Yaakov & Sheila Iskowitz and family
on the birth of a **granddaughter**

there is universal recognition of Hashem's kingdom in this world. This is the ultimate goal that we are looking forward to when we reach the שבת שכולו, the day which is an Eternal Shabbat, the coming of the Mashiach. Throughout the six days of the week and throughout the years preceding the ultimate Geula, we work towards achieving this goal. Every Shabbat, we experience a taste of this vision. If we tap into it, we can experience a watered-down version of Hashem's clear rulership over the world. But this is just a glimpse of what is to come, a time when everyone in the entire world will recognize Hashem's complete sovereignty with total clarity.

Let's look briefly at these first six chapters of Tehillim:

Mizmor 95 - לכו נרננה לה -

We begin by calling out to Am Yisrael to join together to praise Hashem for all aspects of creation – ויבשת ים, והוא עשה, יצור – He created everything including the entire land and sea. We are in awe of the fact that we have the zchut to be His nation (אנחנו) (אם as long as we follow His will עם מרעיתו) (בכולו תשמעו). We remind ourselves at the end of this mizmor that we messed this up for ourselves at one point in history – אשר נשבעתי – Hashem swore that He would not let us enter into Eretz Yisrael after we committed the sin of the Meraglim. In theory, this is a very sad statement and it always bothered me that we sing in such an upbeat way but I think the point is that this was only temporary. We messed up big time but yet eventually Hashem took us back and brought us into Eretz Yisrael once we were deserving again. The point being that this relationship is in our hands – if we want to be Hashem's nation, we can be, as long as we

make the right choices.

שירו לה' שיר חדש. שירו לה' כל הארץ - Mizmor 96

We now call on the entire world to recognize Hashem's greatness – הרבו לה' משפחות עמים, we are waiting for that time when Hashem's sovereignty will be accepted universally.

ה' מלך תגל הארץ - Mizmor 97

Once it becomes crystal clear that Hashem runs the world, the Tzadikim will be rewarded for their faith (שמחו צדיקים) (ברה') and the Reshaim will be so embarrassed that they ever denied His existence. (יבושו כל עבדי פסל).

מזמור שירו לה' שיר חדש - Mizmor 98

This chapter is parallel to Mizmor 96 with many of the same words and phrases. The difference is that here we see a world in which we can simultaneously have the world recognizing Hashem (לעניי הגוים גלה צדקות) but at the same time, see clearly that Bnei Yisrael is in a different realm and we are His chosen people (זכר חסדו ואמונתו לבית ישראל).

ה' מלך ירגזו עמים - Mizmor 99

Here we talk about the ability for us to connect and interact with Hashem once we recognize Him in his entirety. והוא יענם, קוראים אל ה', והוא יענם.

מזמור לדוד הבו לה' בני אלים - Mizmor 29

Once we've recognized Hashem both as the Jewish nation and as the world as a whole and we are able to connect to Him, we now see Hashem in every aspect of nature. Everything is suddenly viewed through the prism of the voice of Hashem. קול ה' על המים... קול ה' שובר ארזים... קול ה' חוצב להבות אש.... קול ה' יחיל מדבר -

Hashem's voice is found in the water, the trees, in fire, in the desert. Every force of nature joins together, כולו אומר כבוד - they all proclaim His glory and יושב ה' מלך - Hashem is crowned King forever. לעולם

To conclude, as Rabbi Eliyahu Munk writes beautifully in his Sefer **Olam HaTefilot** - *With this prophetic and uplifting look into the future, we now prepare to usher in the Shabbat with joy. These six chapters of Tehillim should serve, at the threshold of Shabbat, to inspire us with the exaltation and imbue us with the serenity and peace of mind that our Rabbis refer to as the Neshama Yeteira.* ■

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Yoni thanks Hashem for having the opportunity of having Tziporah in his life, to learn of her caring, patience and happiness, to overcome her challenges. May Tziporah's Neshama be a light onto the world, in a time of darkness, and may her Neshama shine to Gan Eden. Yoni misses Tziporah with tears in his eyes, as Hashem gave him a gift, a crown jewel, now he returns her to Hashem.

With thanks and Toda. Love, Yoni

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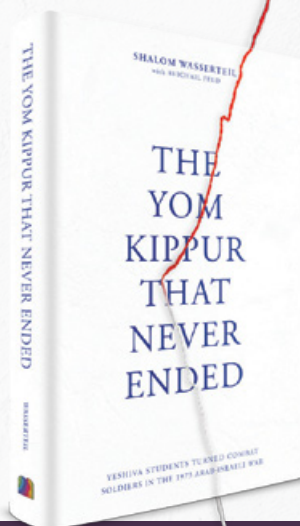
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Of Traps and Trappings

As the story of Yitzchak's twin sons begins to unfold, the Torah portrays Yitzchak's particular affection for his older son Esav (Genesis 25:28). Rashi cites the Midrash which suggests that this preferential love was misguided, based as it was on a lie. Esav deceived his father and led him to believe that he was righteous and observed God's commandments with utmost meticulousness. The same way Esav trapped game with his hands, he entrapped Yitzchak with his words.¹

Numerous exegetes, however, have not adopted this classic approach, and Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook develops a unique perspective in his *Midbar Shur*.²

Rav Kook examines the essence of Esav and Yaakov as reflected in their names. Esav comes from the verb *asah*, "he made"; Esav was "ready-made" at birth, full of vim and vigor. He therefore represents raw power and dominion on earth. Yaakov derives from the noun *akev*, "heel," the lowest part of the body on which we step. He is a symbol of humility and meekness. Accordingly, Esav

is a "man of the field," while Yaakov is a "dweller in tents" (Genesis 25:27).

Contrary to Rashi, Rav Kook contends that Yitzchak was never fooled by Esav and knew full well Esav's true character and conduct. Why, then, did he prefer that Esav receive the coveted blessing?



In order to answer this, we must enter Yitzchak's frame of mind. He is cognizant of the fact that he is not only father to two young men, but patriarch of a nation. He is acutely aware of his role as the pro-

genitor of a people who will someday be as numerous as the stars, a people who will need Esav's brand of forcefulness to conquer and defend their God-given land. The Jewish people will inevitably make enemies and need "men of the field" of battle to ensure their physical survival. Does not Esav's aggressiveness and use of force have a place in the overall makeup of the Jew?

On the face of it, Yitzchak's analysis is sound. But there is one caveat. Rav Kook posits that force is a last resort; aggression cannot be at the foundation or at the core of the Jewish personality. They are never to be embedded in the Jewish soul. The Children of Israel are compassionate, sensitive,

1. Rashi on Genesis 25:28.

2. *Midbar Shur*, derush 29.

and kind.³ If and when these rougher traits are adopted, they must remain ancillary and only on the surface. Never can we allow aggression to seep in and corrupt the pure inner soul of the Jewish people.

When Yaakov enters the tent to receive the blessing Yitzchak intended for Esav, he conceals his skin with hair to mimic hirsute Esav. Rav Kook emphasizes that Yaakov is merely wearing these on his arms and neck for outward appearances. They are the trappings of Esav. The Jewish adoption of Esav's traits goes only second-skin-deep, and they are to be used by the Jew only when circumstances demand it.

This principle is so integral to Jewish life that Halachah actually codifies this notion. Strikingly, in the section of Rabbi Yosef Caro's monumental halachic code *Shulchan Aruch* that deals with determining Jewish lineage, it states that we may question the veracity of an individual's Jewish lineage if that person does not exhibit the traits of compassion and kindness.⁴

Rav Kook believed in the goodness of mankind. He was convinced that we strive to be good because we are good. His unique perspective on this fateful episode involving Yitzchak and Esav reminds us that compassion and gentleness define us, and that in every aspect of our lives we should feel and exhibit kindness, sympathy and sensitivity. ■

3. Yevamot 79b.

4. *Shulchan Aruch, Even ha-Ezer, 2:2.*

Rabbi Goldscheider is the author of the newly published book 'Torah United' (OU Press), featuring divrei Torah on the weekly parasha from Rav Kook, Rabbi Solovetichik, and the Chassidic Masters.

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Switching the Location of a *Mezuza*

לעילוי נשמת
יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

Question: I noticed that a storage room jointly owned by several residents of our apartment building in Jerusalem does not have a *mezuza*. I bought a *mezuza* myself, and because it is nicer than some of those in my home, I thought of taking the new one for myself and moving one of my apartment's *mezuzot* to the storage room. Is there any problem doing that?

Answer: *Yasher koach* for taking care of the *mezuza*. The responsibilities of multiple people can often be neglected (see Bava Batra 24b). Since you bought the *mezuza* yourself, unless you had in mind to formally acquire it on behalf the group, you do not need permission from anyone from a monetary perspective.

The issue has to do with the nature of the obligation to have a *mezuza* in a storage room. In this column (Toldot 5783), we presented a *machloket Rishonim* whether a storage room that is not part of a home's daily activity requires a *mezuza*. Although the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 286:2) rules it is required, we accepted the opinions of several *poskim* (see Yalkut Yosef, YD 285:28) that there is enough doubt to recommend not reciting a *beracha* when attaching a *mezuza* to a storage room. The

fact that it is jointly owned does not raise additional doubt (Chulin 135b; Shulchan Aruch, YD 286:1), unless there are non-Jewish partners (Rama ad loc.) – of course, we do not know your neighbors.

Moving a *mezuza* from a location where it is definitely part of a *mitzva* to one in which the obligation/*mitzva* is doubtful could potentially violate the rule of *ma'alin bako-desh v'lo moridin* (=mbkvlm; one is forbidden to lower the status of a sacred object). This concept is derived from *p'sukim* (Menachot 99a) in the context of increasing and not decreasing the honor of holy objects in the *mikdash*, and there are varied opinions on whether this is an authentic Torah law or a Rabbinic *asmachta* (see Be'ur Halacha to Orach Chayim 42:1). Additional Talmudic applications of *mbkvlm* vary greatly (including: a temporary *kohen gadol* not returning to serve as a simple *kohen* (Yoma 73a); increasing the number of candles as Chanuka progresses (Shabbat 21b); not using something from *tefillin shel rosh* for a *shel yad* (Menachot 34b)). It is likely that some applications represent the heart of the *halacha* and others are only related concepts (unpublished shiur by Rav Asher Weiss).

The following, cited by the Mishna Berura (15:1), is the closest case to ours that is discussed by classical *Acharonim*. The Shulchan Aruch (OC 15:1) permits moving

The Orthodox Union - via its website - fields questions of all types in areas of kashrut, Jewish law and values. Some of them are answered by Eretz Hemdah, the Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, headed by Rav Yosef Carmel and Rav Moshe Ehrenreich, founded by HaRav Shaul Yisraeli zt"l, to prepare rabbanim and dayanim to serve the National Religious community in Israel and abroad. Ask the Rabbi is a joint venture of the OU, Yerushalayim Network, Eretz Hemdah... and OU Israel's Torah Tidbits.



tzitzit from one garment to another. The Pri Megadim (EA 15:2) is unsure whether it is permitted to move them from a garment with a Torah-level obligation to one with only a Rabbinic one. The Artzot Hachayim (15:5) permits it, whereas he forbids taking them from the garment of an adult to that of a child. (Their short pieces mention the possibility of *bizuy* (disgrace) to the *tzitzit*, not the concept of *mbkvlm*).

It is unclear whether we can extrapolate from these sources to our *mezuzah* question. There is a *machloket* whether *mbkvlm* applies only to matters related to *kedusha* or even non-*kedusha*-related *mitzva* objects (see Beit Yosef, YD 259). *Mezuzah* is in the *kedusha* category, whereas *tzitzit* are not (Megilla 26b). We also have to consider to what extent the change in the *mezuzah*'s location impacts on its sanctity, as one can argue that wherever a *mezuzah* is, it itself has the same *kedusha* irrespective of the *mezuzah*-obligation status of the doorway (see discussion in Kvi'at Mezuzah K'hilchata 14:5).

In any case, (among?) the first to write

about taking a *mezuzah* from a doorway that fully requires a *mezuzah* to one in which it is only a *safek* are contemporary *poskim*. The very influential Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Minchat Shlomo II, 97.24) reasons that it is forbidden because of *mbkvlm*, as does Teshuvot V'hanagot (I:649). In the absence of anyone of such prominence disagreeing with them, it is difficult to allow the move. On the other hand, it is **reasonable to argue** that one should be able to rely on the majority opinion that a storage room's *mezuzah* obligation is definite. ■

Having a dispute?

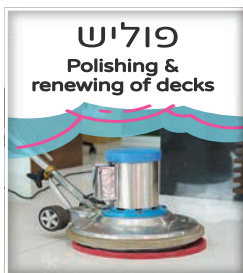


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HOLY SITES IN ISRAEL

SHOSHANA JUDELMAN



Even the Dirt in Eretz Yisrael is Holy

Last Sunday I went with a group of other volunteers to work on a farm near Beit Shemesh. This farmer and hundreds of others are short-handed due to the flight of thousands of foreign workers since the massacres of October 7 and the resulting war. The bulk of our produce comes from these farms and the farmers are in dire need of help.

We were assigned the task of weeding Kalaniyot and, truthfully, it was hard work. We spent long hours bent low over the plants, digging deep with increasingly tender fingers to uproot weeds and free the Kalaniyot from their stranglehold. By the end of the day, our legs, hands, backs, and heads were aching from the labor.

But we were also energized by it, feeling a resurgence of love for the Land that is only acquired through suffering and hard work. It also reminded me of how I fell in love with Eretz Yisrael in the first place.

When I was 17, I spent two months on Kibbutz Maaleh Gilboa working in the fields, the carrot packing plant, and the date groves. I remember coming back to my room each afternoon aching, exhausted and transformed. It was then that the seeds of aliyah were planted in me, not to be acted upon for 23 years.

What is it about working in the fields of Eretz Yisrael that causes this response in Am Yisrael?

The Midrash tells us that Hashem said, “I will bring Yisrael, who are beloved to Me, into a Land that is beloved to Me.” This then is the paradigm. We are drawn to Eretz Yisrael because it is in our spiritual DNA. As Chazal tell us, Hashem’s presence rests in greater measure in Eretz Yisrael (Moed Katan 25a and Rashi), our Torah study is deeper here (VaYikra Rabbah 13), all blessings are drawn down through the Land of Israel (VaYikra Rabbah 24), and mitzvos can be fulfilled to their greatest extent here (Ramban, Vayikra 18:25).

And further, as Rav Kook teaches, the soul of Am Yisrael receives life force through being connected to Eretz Yisrael and the kedusha of Eretz Yisrael is drawn out through Am Yisrael’s presence, a kind of symbiotic relationship.

Quite simply, the more contact we have with the Land, the more we affect this metaphysical sequence.

It is said that R’ Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld would take circuitous paths when he walked from one place to another. When he was asked why he didn’t just take the

shortest route, he responded that the Arvei Nachal teaches that every spot in Eretz Yisrael corresponds to a different part of Torah. Through his walking, R' Sonnenfeld was forging a connection to these different parts of Torah.

So, in looking for holy sites in which we can open our hearts, let us look no further than every single inch of our Holy Land. In Eretz Yisrael even the dirt is holy and recognizing that enables us to activate a deeper connection to the Land, to Hashem, to Am Yisrael and, of course, to ourselves. ■

Shoshana teaches Chassidus for the Shirat David Community in Efrat as well as in Jerusalem for Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya and Shiviti Women's Institute. She is a guide in Poland with JRoots and co-leads inspirational trips to Ukraine and around Eretz Yisroel. Shoshana has also been a guide at Yad Vashem since 2014.

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I DISCOVERED I HAD A WHOLE PILE OF LENTILS IN
THE CUPBOARD. SO MUCH SO, THAT WHEN I
POURED THEM INTO THE POT, THERE WAS A
MOUNTAIN OF THEM...



"MOUNTAIN OF LENTILS"...

FOUNDED IN 1913, ORIGINALLY
UNDER THE NAME OF "TEL ADASH" IN THE
GALILEE, JUST NORTH OF AFULA...

I'M
SORRY?

THE OTTOMANS WICKEDLY DEPORTED MOST
OF THE RESIDENTS, AND ONLY ONE MAN
VALIANTLY STAYED BEHIND TO GUARD THE
LAND FROM ARAB TAKEOVER...



ERM...
I BEG
YOUR...?

REINSTATED IN 1923, ITS SHUL
IS ONE OF THE OLDEST IN EMEK
YIZRA'EL.
IT HAS OVER 350 FAMILIES,
SOME 70 FARMS,
AND IS FAMOUSLY THE
BIRTHPLACE OF THE GREAT
"RAFUL"
(11TH CHIEF OF STAFF
OF THE I.D.F.)



AND JUST LIKE TODAY'S DIFFICULT EVENTS -
FOR DECADES, IT WAS UNDER
CONTINUOUS BRUTAL ATTACKS FROM
HOSTILE ARAB NEIGHBOURS, PARTICULARLY
DURING THE TERRIBLE ARAB UPRISING
OF 1936...

BUT...?

AND LIKE TODAY - THE ISRAELI DEFENDERS
HELD OUT WITH FIGHTING SPIRIT, COURAGE
AND DETERMINATION, DESPITE THEIR LACK
OF WEAPONRY...



SO LET THAT BE A MESSAGE TO ALL
YOU DESPICABLE ENEMIES WHO
CRAVE OUR DESTRUCTION!
NEVER WILL YOU BE ABLE TO DEFEAT
THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL'S SPIRIT!
WE FIGHT - IN THE WORDS OF BOB
DYLAN - "WITH GOD ON OUR SIDE!"

WE'LL WIN, YOU COWARDLY
MURDERERS, AND YOU'LL ALL GET
WIPED OFF THE FACE OF HISTORY,
LIKE ALL THE EVIL NATIONS WHO
TRIED MESSING WITH US IN THE PAST
4000 YEARS! SO THERE!



YEHUDA'LE
CODSHOW!
WHAT WAS
THAT?!

SORRY... THAT EMPLOYEE
I MENTIONED... HIS SHOW
THIS WEEK WAS ABOUT
"TEL ADASHIM"...

IT WAS ACTUALLY A
GOOD SHOW, AND I... I'M
AS SURPRISED AS YOU ARE
THAT I COULD QUOTE
IT WORD FOR WORD
LIKE THAT...



WELL, MAYBE HE'S NOT
SO BAD AFTER ALL...
I... I SHOULDN'T HAVE
OVERREACTIONED...
I'M GLAD I DIDN'T FIRE HIM...

I'M GLAD. SO YOU
ENJOYED THE LENTIL SOUP,
DID YOU?



MY DEAR, AS THE AFOREMENTIONED
EMPLOYEE WOULD PROBABLY SAY -
I WOULD SELL MY
FIRST-BORN-NESS FOR IT!
YOUR SOUP HAS WORKED WONDERS!
ONE MIGHT EVEN SAY THAT
YOU, MY DEAR, ARE A
"SOUPER-WOMAN!"

OY VEY. MAYBE YOU SHOULD FIRE HIM...



TORAH 4 TEENS

BY TEENS

NCSY ISRAEL



Aaron Seitler
Gush Etzion Madrich

The Divergence of the Twain: Explaining the Contrast of Eisav & Yaakov

Sitting around the Shabbat table, a family member once opined “the Rabbis have a childish agenda against Eisav.” He referred to Eisav’s neutral characterization as an איש אֶרֶץ, a man of the field (Bereishit 25:27) which is interpreted rather uncharitably by חז”ל.

For starters, Rashi identifies an אדם בטל, a layabout. What’s more, the Gemara in Bava Basra records that on the day of the infamous sale, Eisav committed five severe transgressions, including heresy and murder (16a).

Whilst Yaakov’s descriptor is equally ‘pareve,’ איש תם יושב אוהלים, a man of simplicity and tent-dwelling, he is immediately credited as a scholar.

To be sure, I don’t wish to rehabilitate

Eisav. Successive events indicate that the man remained on the wrong side of history. Nonetheless, it’s important to consider why he receives such a short shrift. I would like to build on an idea from a sefer I read during my basic training called ‘והאיר עינינו,’ by Rav David Gottlieb. Citing an approach by the late Rav Shimshon PinCUS of Ofakim, he muses: what became of this ‘man of the field’? Ostensibly, he’s the perfect choice to continue the Abrahamic mission! (Hirsch). At least in Yitzchak’s eyes, he’s worldly, rugged and courageous. Yet without a compass of values, the man of the field degenerated into a man of idleness. His worldly pursuit became endless days of directionless amusement. This phenomenon is the ‘root of all evil,’ explaining Eisav’s entanglement in sin.

Yaakov by contrast, shows a great deal of promise. He is a simple youth (Rashi) but pursues self-improvement through his studies. He commits to learning new ideas and forging stronger values. Whilst



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initially leading a sheltered existence, Yaakov ultimately develops into a far greater man than rudderless Eisav could ever be.

My abiding lesson of years in hadracha has been that ‘bad behavior’ is a misleading term. More often, the so-called ‘bad behavior’ is simply a front to express frustrations that need to be anchored and channeled appropriately. Whilst Yaakov had the wisdom to set up his foundation, Eisav never bothered.

As the war rumbles on and we seek to maintain a high spirit of Jewish unity, the enduring message of Yaakov-over-Eisav suggests that whilst we don’t hide from the world and its grim realities, we take them on with a values-based approach that will ultimately instill courage in ourselves and those around us.



Aliyah Derfler
12th Grade, Efrat

A Stolen Blessing

How could the bracha Yitzchak gave Yaakov take effect if it was meant for Eisav? Why did Yaakov have to steal the blessing?

The blessing Yitzchak meant to give Eisav was really for wealth and political power (Bereshit 27:28). Politics are characterized by war. The prophecy “no nation will lift up sword against (another) nation...” expresses a major difference from the usual. Deception is often essential for victory in war. The Jewish people would not be exempt from this.

Eisav was the obvious choice to receive the blessing of political power. Yitzchak considered Yaakov too “wholesome” to be successful in politics. He was more fit

for the spiritual priestly role. Eisav did not connect politics, war with holiness; he could not live an integrated Jewish life.

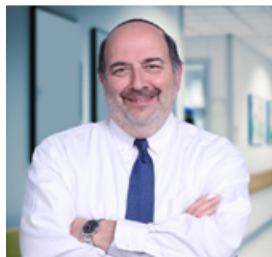
Yitzchak understood that Yaakov lacked the skill to be the political leader. Eisav had the skill, but didn’t have the right perspective on life. It would have been more sensible to change Eisav’s perspective than to try and develop Yaakov’s talent in political ruling.

Yaakov’s deception of Yitzchak proved Yitzchak wrong, showing that Yaakov did in fact have the ability to be a leader both spiritually and politically. “The voice is the voice of Yaakov but the hands are the hands of Eisav”(Bereshit 27:22). Yitzchak was unsure who was serving him, but he knew that this son was the right one to receive the blessing, thus explaining how the blessing could take effect on Yaakov.

Yaakov’s success in deceiving Yitzchak showed him to be qualified to compete in the deceitful world of politics. Deception must be used in the service of truth and goodness. “Distance yourself from a false matter” (Shmot 23:7). Normally we should be truthful, but sometimes this can have bad consequences. “There is a time for everything” (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

This dvar Torah is summarized from an excellent book called “Harmony Over Peace.” ■

Arthur Samuels, DPM



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May HaKadosh Baruch Hu watch over and protect our chayalim, all those in harm's way, and all of Am Yisrael.

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