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## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON TOLDOS - 5774

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From: [ravfrand-owner@torah.org](mailto:ravfrand-owner@torah.org) on behalf of **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** [[ryfrand@torah.org](mailto:ryfrand@torah.org)] Sent: Thursday, December 01, 2005  
To: [ravfrand@torah.org](mailto:ravfrand@torah.org) Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Toldos  
"RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Toldos -

Prayer and Domestic Tranquility Are The Secrets To Raising Good Children

In Parshas Toldos we begin the life story of the second of our Patriarchs. The pasuk at the beginning of the parsha says, "Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite his wife, because she was barren." [Bereshis 25:21]

In this Parsha, we begin to notice a disturbing trend. Avraham our Patriarch was married to a woman who was barren. Now we find that his son Yitzchak was also married to a barren woman. Rashi points out that Yitzchak himself was also sterile. Next week we will move on to the life of Yaakov and see that the phenomenon of sterility plagued his household as well. His chosen wife, Rachel, could not conceive.

It is not a coincidence that Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel, and Yitzchak were all sterile. In each generation, a miracle was required allow these individuals to have children and to allow the Jewish nation to come into existence.

The Gemara [Yevamos 64a] comments on this: Why were our patriarchs and matriarchs barren? Because the L-rd strongly desires (mis-aveh) the prayers of the righteous. At first blush the Gemarah makes the Almighty sound somewhat sadistic. He desires the prayers of the righteous, so He puts them in terrible situations, forcing them to pour their hearts out to Him – all because He strongly desires hearing those prayers. This cannot be true. Hashem is Good and a Doer of Good. Sadism plays no role in how He conducts the world!

What then is the meaning of the Gemarah that says "Hashem strongly desires the prayers of the righteous?" I once heard a very moving address from Rav Pam on this statement of Chazal. Rav Pam's point was that we really have no comprehension of the prayer of the righteous. When a real tzadik prays, he undergoes a transformation that is almost beyond our understanding. He enters a different world. Kabbalistic works refers to

this as "hispashtus ha-guf". It is as though the davening becomes such a transcendental experience that the person has a type of "out of body experience" whereby his soul clings to the Almighty.

We who complete the entire morning service in 30-35 minutes, and who can do it in 15 minutes or even less on a busy day, cannot easily relate to the concept of "hispashtus ha-guf" and "souls clinging to the Almighty".

We do not really understand what these terms mean. We have never experienced such davening. But this is implied by the term "prayers of the righteous."

Such prayers allow the Tzadik to escape the mundane bonds of this earth, reaching a level of spirituality that transcends mortal existence and flies him into another world. That is why the Gemara mentions [Brachos 32b] that the pious men of earlier generations (Chasidim Rishonim) spent 3 hours completing a single prayer. They prepared for an hour before davening, davened for an hour, and then spent a third hour after davening.

We can understand why it would be appropriate to spend an hour on davening. We can even relate to the fact that it would be appropriate to spend an hour of preparation time before davening. But we don't begin to understand what these pious individuals did during the hour after davening.

The best way to explain this is to think of the hour after davening as a decompression state. If one dives under water for some time, depending on how deep one goes, he cannot come up to the surface suddenly. If he tries to do so, he will suffer from a condition known as the "bends." Divers must enter a decompression chamber upon resurfacing too quickly, because they cannot transition from the underwater world into our world without an adjustment. They have been in a different world.

The "hour after prayer" is the decompression that the pious of earlier generations needed in order to get back to this world after being literally in another world. Once one has been in Heaven, he cannot run to carpool in an instant. The "Chasidim Rishonim" achieved such a lofty level of spirituality that it literally took them an hour to descend back onto this earth.

This, Rav Pam said, is why the Almighty wanted the Patriarchs and Matriarchs to pray as they did to achieve children. The Ribono shel Olam was not interested in merely producing offspring. These Patriarchs gave birth to other Patriarchs. In order to have a child that is worthy of being a Yitzchak or worthy of being a Yaakov or worthy of being one of the Tribes of G-d, those children need to be conceived in an atmosphere of tremendous kedusha [sanctity].

One cannot merely occupy himself in the physical realm of this world and conceive a child, and expect that child become a Yaakov Avinu. We can relate to the fact that when children are conceived, if the parents are physically healthy, the children have a much better chance of being physically healthy. We know that if a woman is on alcohol or on crack or otherwise drug dependent, it will definitely have a negative effect on her child when she conceives.

So too in a spiritual sense, parents who want to produce a Yitzchak or a Yaakov or a founder of a Tribe of G-d must themselves be in a realm of utmost spirituality. The way to achieve that realm of utmost spirituality is to have them daven. Hashem does not seek the prayers of the righteous in any sadistic sense, Heaven forbid. He does not need their prayers.

However, the Ribono shel Olam does need to ensure that Yitzchak, Rivka, Sarah and Rachel will be on a level where they can conceive children who will be righteous. The surest way of doing that is by making these parents daven intensely so that they may ascend into the world of the spiritual and, under those circumstances, conceive and give birth to children.

These are very lofty ideas. Perhaps the concepts are beyond most of us.

But there is a practical implication to these ideas that is relevant to us. The lesson that the atmosphere, the climate in which children are conceived makes a difference is readily transferable to the lesson that the

atmosphere and climate in which children are raised also has a profound effect on how they ultimately turn out.

Not everything is achieved at conception. There is nature. But there is nurture as well. A child who is raised in an atmosphere of holiness and purity is a different child than a child who is raised on the streets, a fact we can readily attest to from merely looking around. How does one achieve an atmosphere of kedusha? We try so hard to provide a physically safe environment for our children. What can we do to provide a spiritual haven in which children can grow up and prosper?

Rav Pam quoted the words of the Steipler Rav, zt"l. The Steipler Rav said that raising good children depends on two factors. Fifty percent of the success in raising a good child is prayer. If there is one thing worth davening for and worth pouring out one's heart for, it is that one should merit having good children. The other fifty percent, the Steipler Rav said, is Shalom Bayis [domestic tranquility]. When children see parents living together with love, cooperation, and respect for one another in a serene environment, it profoundly affects the type of person they will become. Conversely, raising children in a house where there is fighting and back-biting and all the unfortunate things that sometimes go on among parents has an extremely detrimental effect.

Rav Pam quoted the famous Gemara [Gittin 90b] that when two people divorce, even the mizbayach [Altar in the Temple] sheds tears. All the commentaries try to explain the analogy. What does it mean "the mizbayach sheds tears when a person divorces his first wife?" Rav Pam explained that a mizbayach sees sacrifices every day. However there is one sacrifice that even the mizbayach cannot accept — the sacrifice of children. Children are the sacrifices of a household that is fraught with dissension.

The lesson of "And Yitzchak prayed opposite his wife" is that the spiritual level of the parents and the domestic tranquility that exists among the parents has a profound effect on the offspring that we hope to produce.

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This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Toldos Sarah are provided below:  
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Parshas Toldos

29 Cheshvan 5768

November 10, 2007

Daf Yomi: Kesuvos 70

Guest Rabbi:

**Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman**

Young Israel of Midwood

These last few weeks the *parshiyos* have been very busy with matchmaking. Last week we read about the match between יצחק and רבקה; next week, we will read of the marriages of יעקב and לאה. And this week, also, although we talk about it less, there is also a *shiduch* in the *parshah* – between עשיו and the daughter of ישמעאל. A very צוגעפאסטע שידוך; its surprising the *shadchanim* didn't think of it

sooner. On the one side, רוצה the עשיו, on the other side, the ישמעאל. The mind boggles.

So today, as we read of the union between עשיו and ישמעאל, it might be appropriate to consider the character of these two in-laws.

You all know the Midrash that when הקב"ה was about to give the Torah to us, he first offered it to the children of עשיו and ישמעאל.

Says the מדרש:

ה' מסני בא וזרח משעיר למו הופיע מהר פארן וגוי מלמד שהחזיר הקב"ה את התורה על אומות העולם, ולא קבלוה, עד שבא אצל ישראל וקבלוה, שנאמר וזרח משעיר למו, אלו בני עשו, שהן בני שעיר, הופיע מהר פארן, אלו בני ישמעאל... שנאמר וישב במדבר פארן

Why did עשיו and ישמעאל refuse the Torah? Says the מדרש in

ילקוט שמעוני:

בתחלה הלך לבני עשו ואמר להם מקבלין אתם את התורה אמרו לו מה כתיב בה אמר להם לא תרצח, אמרו לו כל עצמן של אותן האנשים אביהם רוצח הוא שנאמר והידיים ידי עשו... הלך ומצא את בני ישמעאל אמר להם מקבלין אתם את התורה, אמרו לו מה כתיב בה לא תגנוב, א"ל כל עצמן של אביהם לסטים היה שנאמר והוא... יהיה פרא אדם

So עשיו refused the Torah – because לא תרצח is the antithesis of what he represents, and ישמעאל refused the Torah, because לא תגזל is the antithesis of what he represents.

עשיו, of course, accepted the Torah. And what words did they use when they accepted it?

נעשה ונשמע.

There is a fascinating Vilna Gaon, who connects the refusal of עשיו and ישמעאל, and our acceptance with the words נעשה ונשמע, in the following way:

The root of נעשה is עשה, which is also the root of עשיו's name; and the root of נשמע is שמע, which is also the root of ישמעאל's name. These two words: נעשה ונשמע, says the Gaon, corresponded to עשיו and ישמעאל; in opposition to עשיו, we said נעשה, while in opposition to ישמעאל, we said נשמע.

What does this mean?

There are two dark impulses that man harbors in his heart – the urge to unbridled pleasure and gratification, and the urge to violence. From the very beginning of history these two impulses have accompanied man – fell when he could not refuse himself the gratification of the ראוני; and קין fell prey to the impulse to do violence. The ראוני – who was intimately familiar with all the dark places in human nature, gave them names from Greek mythology: Thanatos – the personification of death – and Eros, the personification of desire.

עשיו, the איש ציד, the hunter, epitomized the urge to do violence. And therefore the Torah – which gave the world the imperative of לא תרצח – could not be given to ישמעאל. עשיו – whom שרה sent away because she saw him מצחק, literally, fooling around – epitomized the urge to unbridled pleasure, which expresses itself in robbery – the license to take whatever I want, even if it doesn't belong to me, because my pleasure and my desire overrides everything else – and so the Torah – which contains the imperative of לא תגנוב – could not be given to ישמעאל.

However, it is axiomatic that everything that הקב"ה created has a purpose. And if הקב"ה created within us these urges – the כעסני and the ראוני – Thanatos and Eros – then they have a purpose too. Because if properly channeled and harnessed, they can become positive forces.

The Gemara tells how אנשי כנסת הגדולה wanted to eradicate the יצר הרע of עריות, to bottle up Eros. And they saw that the chickens stopped laying eggs, people stopped having children – even דשמעתא, the joy of learning, disappeared – and so they had to release the יצר הרע. Eros, the urge to pleasure, to sensual experience, to self-gratification, is tied up with the capacity for joy; a person who is so desiccated that that he can't experience pleasure, cannot experience joy, even spiritual joy, even the joy of דשמעתא. אנשי כנסת הגדולה discovered that if you stop up the wellspring in the psyche that feeds Eros, you stop up the capacity for joy. The spring has to be channeled in the right direction,

not stopped up at the source. (This was an insight that was rediscovered by חסידות .)

And just as Eros has two aspects – a negative aspect and a positive aspect – so too Thanatos. The יצר הכעסני , the urge to violence, is the desire to impose my will on the world around me. It is the urge to conquer, to destroy whatever stands in my way. It is the urge that drives men to war, and to the most terrible acts. And yet, it, too, has a positive aspect. The same wellspring in the human psyche that urges men to violent conquest, feeds the urge to change the world for the better, to impose our vision and the world, to build and invent and create. It is drive, and ambition, and energy, and action. It should not surprise us that many great conquerors were also great lawgivers – Charlemagne, for example, and Napoleon.

And here we come back to נעשה ונשמע . נעשה , we will do the מצוות of the Torah, and נשמע , we will listen to its music, and study its precepts. The Vilna Gaon, you remember, connects נעשה – עשיו , it is the counterweight to נשמע ; and נשמע – ישמעאל , it is the counterweight to עשיו . And I would suggest that at least part of what he means is this. עשיו could not receive the Torah because he epitomized that will to violence that cannot be bound by לא תרצח . כלל ישראל were able to take that same impulse and discover in it the positive force of action, and courage, and energy, and will, to implement הקב"ה's מצוות in the world. They took that drive and channeled it into the first מצוה of the world. They took that drive and channeled it into the first מצוה of מצוה , שולחן ערוך – יתגבר כארי לעבודת הבורא , to rise like a lion to serve רבש"ע .

עשיו could not accept the Torah because he epitomized that desire for pleasure that could not be bound by לא תגנב . כלל ישראל were able to take that desire for pleasure and discover in it the positive force of חדותא דשמעתתא , the pleasure – the unparalleled spiritual pleasure – of deep Torah study – of משפטי ה' ישרים משמח לב .

And so our response, our answer to עשיו is נעשה ; and our answer to נשמע is ישמעאל .

עשיו are, of course, not only people out of history. Each of them fathered great peoples: עשיו was the father of אדום , and ultimately, according to חז"ל , of Rome and, hence, of Europe, which is the heir of Rome. And in the blood-soaked earth of Europe we see the footprints of עשיו , whose whole being opposed the idea of לא תרצח .

עשיו was the father of the people whose whole energy is devoted to robbing us of what is rightly ours. And in their words and actions today we hear the echo of בני ישמעאל's refusal to accept the מצוה of לא תגנב .

Historically, Europe and Araby – ישמעאל and עשיו – were enemies, contending for centuries with each other. Yet the רמב"ם , in אגרת תימן , writes that before the advent of עשיו and משיח , ישמעאל will unite against us. And the Vilna Gaon explains that this union is foreshadowed in the marriage of עשיו to the daughter of ישמעאל .

And indeed one of the most important developments of contemporary history is the great merging of Europe and Araby – demographically, culturally and politically – all annealed with the glue of anti-Semitism. And anyone who is at all sensitive to these things cannot fail, witnessing this, to hear the words of the Gaon echoing in his ear.

And so today, as we read in the פרשה of the wedding of עשיו and ישמעאל , and as we read in our daily papers of the increasing union between their descendants, let us strengthen ourselves in that great resolve which is our answer to them – נעשה ונשמע , to devote ourselves as much as we are able to the study of Torah and to the pursuit of מצוות , individually and as community.

עשיו , we will overcome נעשה ונשמע , until that when: עשיו and his father-in-law ישמעאל , וחותנו , both נעשה ונשמע , מושיעים מהר ציון לשפט את הר עשיו והיתה לה' המל שabbat Shalom.

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Truce For Truth

**Rabbi Benjamin Yudin** (The TorahWeb Foundation)

There are no "Bible stories" in the Bible. Every narrative is there to teach an eternal lesson. Thus, at the beginning of parshas Toldos when Rivka experienced unusual pain and agitation in her pregnancy we are told that in addition to her visit to the gynecologist, she goes to seek the word of Hashem. The prophet (Shem ben Noach) informs her that indeed she was carrying two fetuses who were the progenitors of two nations that would hate and fight with one another, and that they were already engaged in the quarrel at the very beginning of their formation in the womb. This was a portent of what would ultimately transpire between them after their establishment as nations.

It is fascinating to note the usage of the kri and ksiv that is found within this prophecy. The Hebrew word for nations is goyim, yet the word is spelled in the Torah without the letter vav, but with two yuds, thereby yielding the word gayim which means not nations but great princely individuals. In other words, aside from foretelling two great conflicting cultures of Israel and Rome, which is the literal understanding of the verse, the Torah is alluding to two great descendants, one from Yaakov and one from Eisav

Had I been asked to suggest a royal descendant of Yaakov that perhaps the Torah might be referring to, I would have nominated King David or King Solomon. The Talmud (Avodah Zarah 10B) however tells us that the verse or the passuk is referring specifically to Rabbi - Rabbi Yehuda HaNassi, and Antonius a Roman Caesar descended from Eisav. Rashi in his commentary cites this Talmudic teaching. Why might the Torah in the midst of this prophecy allude to the special unique relationship of warmth and friendship that existed between these two leaders?

Rabbi Simcha Ziskind Brody zt"l, Rosh Yeshiva in Yeshiva Chevron in Yerushalayim, in his work entitled Som Derech suggests a remarkable solution to the above question. On the passuk in Koheles (1:5) "and the sun rises and the sun sets" the Medrash Koheles explains this to mean that before the sun of one tzaddik sets, the sun of another tzaddik rises to replace them. Thus, the Torah informs us in Bereishis (22:23) of the birth of Rivka, prior to the passing of Sarah in (23:1). Similarly, the Medrash teaches that on the day that Rebbe Akiva died Rabbi was born. Rebbe Akiva was tortured to death by the Romans (as taught at the end of Brachos 61B). Rabbi was thus born into a most difficult and dangerous time. Tosfos (Avoda Zarah 10B) informs us the Romans forbade the Jews to perform circumcision. Rabbi's parents circumcised their son, and the governor ordered them to appear before the Caesar which meant certain death for the parents and baby. Antonius's mother took a liking to and had pity on Rabbi's mother and saved Rabbi's life by giving her uncircumcised baby to be brought by Rabbi's mother to the Caesar. Rabbi's mother nursed Antonius, and perhaps this was the factor that led to the warm friendly relationship between these two great leaders of Rome and Israel.

The incredible significance of this relationship enabled Rabbi to have the peace of mind to redact and edit the Shisha Sidrei Mishnah, the foundation and core of the Oral law, Torah shel ba'al peh. Rav Brody z"l in his commentary on the Ramban, notes that after the prophet informs Rivka of the prophecy he tells her that now they (the fetuses) would rest from their agitation, and she would find peace and tranquility for her soul. Why does the Ramban need to inform us that the rest of her pregnancy was quiet and uneventful? Perhaps the answer is that to create this truce between the adversaries which is diametrically against their nature, it was necessary to have a long period of quietude.

What an incredible lesson the Torah is alluding to by use of the kri and ksiv. We are being comforted that even in our darkest hours of

persecution Hashem is intervening and guiding history assuring both the physical and spiritual survival and flourishing of the Jewish nation. This is similar to the exciting understanding of the Meshech Chochmah in his commentary in Parshas Eikev (8:10) in his analysis of Birkas HaMazon. The first paragraph of thanking Hashem for our sustenance is most understandable. Why, however, do we include the Land of Israel in the second blessing, the Royal House of David and the Temple in the third blessing and the dead of Beitar in the fourth? He answers that the recitation of Grace After Meals is not only thanking Hashem for His nourishment, but acknowledging His additional kindnesses and Providence throughout our history. We thank Hashem for bringing us to the Land of Israel for giving us Monarchy and residing in our midst while we were blessed with the Holy Temple. Lest one believe that in the period of galus- diaspora, Hashem has removed Himself from our midst we recount the miracle that the many thousands of corpses of Beitar did not decompose over a two and a half year period that the Jewish community could not bury them. The lesson is clear that Hashem watches over us at all times, thereby assuring us of the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy to Rivka that in the end the older one will serve the younger one.

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subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

**In My Opinion :: Rabbi Berel Wein**

***Rabbi Ovadyah Yosef***

I was not in Israel when Rav Ovadyah Yosef passed on to his eternal reward. However, even in Brazil where I was at the time it was front-page news and pictures of the enormous funeral procession accompanied the obituary article.

Rarely has one person had such an imposing effect upon the lives of millions of others as did Rav Yosef. His greatness in Torah knowledge was unquestioned, even by those who may have disagreed with some of his policies and halachic rulings. Possessed of a photographic memory coupled with an encyclopedic knowledge of thousands of rabbinic works and writings that have spanned the ages, his own volumes of halachic rulings and Torah insights became a staple in every yeshiva and rabbinic library the world over.

But as impressive and noble as this scholarly achievement was, it pales, in my humble opinion, in comparison to his achievement in raising an entire section of the Jewish people from intellectual poverty and a despised social status. His motto regarding Sephardic Jewry was "To restore the crown of glory to its original luster" and to a great extent he accomplished this seemingly impossible task in his life's work.

One of the more sordid chapters in Israel's history was the treatment of Sephardic Jews by the leaders – both religious and secular – of Israel's government and society. The Sephardim were discriminated against in all walks of Israeli life and education, and were treated with contempt and derision by the Ashkenazic intellectual, religious and educational elite.

The Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel – the Rishon L'Tziyon - always seemed to be subservient to his Ashkenazic counterpart. All of this began to change when Rav Ovadyah Yosef became the Sephardic Chief Rabbi. His agenda was to revitalize Sephardic Jewry and give it its due. And he succeeded in so doing.

He was the driving force and spiritual leader behind the Sephardic political party, Shas. He, in effect, controlled the levers of its leadership and policies. Because of this he was seen as a kingmaker in Israeli

political life and profoundly influenced the policies and directions of Israeli governments. He was a very outspoken person and oftentimes his comments and words caused controversy and brought criticism upon him. But he never shied away from the struggle and always had his public say on the issues of the day.

The public power and influence of the Chief Rabbis of the past few decades dimmed in comparison to his influence, political power and halachic rulings. Though he no longer bore any official public title aside from being the head of the high council of Sephardic rabbis, he dominated the religious world of Israel and achieved the respect, begrudging as it may have sometimes been, of vast sectors of Israeli society.

Rav Ovadyah created a vast Torah school system that has raised a generation of observant, traditional and vitally successful Sephardic citizens of an increasingly traditional Jewish state. There are many more Sephardic yeshivot present today in Israel than ever before and the continuing push towards Torah greatness and community leadership in the Sephardic community is Rabbi Ovadyah Yosef's lasting legacy to the Jewish people in Israel and the world over.

His influence was felt not only in Israel but wherever communities of Sephardic Jews resided in the world. Even though it would be an error to view Sephardic Jewry as a monolithic whole, Rabbi Ovadyah Yosef served as a magnetic core that bridged communities, differing customs and varied historical and social experiences and events.

It is very hard to categorize his views except regarding Torah learning and observance and the restoration of Sephardic pride and relevance in the broader Jewish world. He was neither tolerant nor intolerant, temperate or intemperate, forceful or gentle. He was all of the above and yet none of the above. I think that this was part of his talent of influence over so many people and events.

He was truly a special person who single-mindedly and almost singlehandedly shaped a new Sephardic and Jewish world. The hundreds of thousands who attended his funeral testified to his uniqueness and to his contributions towards the strengthening of Torah, the State of Israel and the Jewish people. He was not an orator of note but everyone paid attention to what he had to say.

Great people are almost always complicated people as well. I do not know what his inner persona was like but his message and goal in life was simple: "To restore the glory of Torah and of Sephardic Jewry to its original luster." He was eminently successful in achieving that lofty goal. Shabat shalom

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subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

**Weekly Parsha :: Rabbi Berel Wein**

***Toldot***

The troubling question that has persisted throughout the ages of biblical commentary on this week's parsha is: What is Yitzchak thinking in regard to giving the blessings and heritage of Avraham to Eisav?

Basically the comments and explanations fall into two categories. One of them is that Yitzchak is fooled by Eisav and is really unaware of his true nature and wanton behavior.

Rashi, quoting Midrash, interprets that Eisav "hunted" his father with his pious speech and cunning conversation. Yitzchak is fooled by Eisav and believes that Eisav, the man of the world and the physically powerful figure is better suited to carry on Avraham's vision than is Yaakov, the more studious and apparently more simple of the brothers.

The other opinion, more popular among the later commentators to the Torah, is that Yitzchak is aware of the shortcomings of behavior and attitude of his elder son. His desire to give the blessings to Eisav is due to his wish to redeem and save his son, and to enable Eisav to turn his

life around and become a worthy heir to the traditions of his father and grandfather. He thinks that by somehow giving the blessings to Eisav, Yaakov will not really suffer any disadvantage in his life's work, while Eisav will find his way back to holiness through the blessings that he has now received.

These two divergent attitudes towards the wayward child in Jewish families is one that is enacted daily in Jewish family life. Later Yitzchaks either willfully allow themselves to be deluded regarding the behavior and lifestyle of children or they are aware of the problem and attempt to solve it with a giving nature and a plethora of blessings.

Rivkah, Eisav's mother, is not fooled by her son's apparently soothing words nor does she believe that granting him blessings will somehow accomplish any major shift in his chosen lifestyle. To a great measure she adopts a policy of triage, saving Yaakov and blessing him while thus abandoning Eisav to his own chosen wanton ways.

The Torah does not record for us the "what if" scenario – what if Eisav had received the blessings would he then have been different in behavior and attitude, belief and mission. However, from the words of the later prophets of Israel, especially those of Ovadiah, it appears to be clear that God somehow concurred with Rivkah's policy and holds Eisav to be redeemable only in the very long run of history and human events.

The verdict seems to be that one must be clear eyed and realistic about the painful waywardness and misbehavior of enemies of Yaakov, be they from within or without our immediate family and milieu. There are many painful choices that need to be made within one's lifetime and especially in family relations.

There are few pat answers to varying and difficult situations. Perhaps that is why the Torah itself does not delve too deeply into the motives of Yitzchak and Rivkah but is content merely to reflect the different emotional relationships each had with their two very different sons. The Torah emphasizes the role that human emotions play in our lives and does not consign all matters to rational thought and decision-making. Shabat shalom

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from: Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com>  
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subject: Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

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

*Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite his wife, because she was barren. Hashem allowed Himself to be entreated by him. (25:21)*

What is the significance of the fact that the Torah describes Hashem's response to Yitzchak Avinu using the same word which it attributes to the Patriarch's prayer? Atirah means to entreat. Yitzchak entreated Hashem. The Almighty did not entreat Yitzchak. Therefore, we translate the pasuk, "Hashem allowed Himself to be entreated by him." Could it not have used another word for "answered" or "listened"? It is almost as if Hashem responded to Yitzchak in the same manner in which Yitzchak prayed to Him.

The Nesivos Shalom presents the scenario of Yitzchak and Rivkah Imeinu praying side by side, putting it into perspective. They were up against a stone wall. Their prayers were seemingly ineffective, because the decree against their having a child was firm and unyielding. Al pi derech ha'teva, according to the laws of "nature," our Matriarch, Rivkah, was not going to be able to have a child. Our Patriarch, Yitzchak, was acutely aware of this. He realized that all of their hishtadlus, endeavoring, had been spent; the path to offspring was spiritually impeded. The situation appeared hopeless.

A Jew, however, never loses hope. Yitzchak was aware of one last, albeit difficult, approach. The Midrash reads the word va'yeetar Yitzchak as va'yachator Yitzchak, "And Yitzchak dug/penetrated." They compare this form of supplication to a king who wants to avail his son of a large treasure. The problem is that the monarch is in a sealed room, behind locked doors that are impenetrable. How is the prince to reach his father? There is one way: Digging beneath the ground, creating a channel whereby the prince can come up beneath the floor of the room.

The prince begins to dig his tunnel. To make things more feasible, the king begins to break the floor in his sealed room and also dig beneath the ground. The prince is

digging toward his father; the king is digging toward his son. Soon they will meet and the gold treasure will be transferred.

Yitzchak was aware of this type of last ditch effort that works under even the most adverse conditions. The storm clouds are dark; the future appears bleak; hope does not seem to be on the horizon. What is a person to do - if he must receive a positive response from Hashem? What does one do if "no" is not an option? He begins to "dig," seeking an opening, making a last attempt to penetrate the Heavens, to break through the sealed gates.

Many of us have needs: physical; spiritual; emotional. Some are suffering in emotional and physical pain - with no letup in sight. There are two possible approaches: One is the tried and proven way, consisting of teshuvah, tefillah, tzedakah; prayer, repentance, charity, which usually invoke Hashem's merciful response. What, however, if nothing has yet worked? Do we throw up our hands and give up? Do we say, "I have tried it all: every segulah, every tefillah, every brachah?" This might all be true. When all else fails, begin to dig! This is what Yitzchak Avinu taught us. It worked for him. Perhaps it will work for us.

*And she (Rivkah) said, "If so, why is it that I am?" (25:22)*

Rashi explains Rivkah Imeinu's question to be: Why am I desiring and praying for pregnancy? Ibn Ezra explains that Rivkah questioned other women who had given birth to determine whether this experience that she was undergoing was usual. They replied that it was certainly out of the ordinary. Rivkah now wondered, "Why is my pregnancy so strange?" Ramban does not agree with Rashi or Ibn Ezra. He posits that Rivkah was saying, "If this is the way it will be for me, why am I in this world? I would rather not be alive. What purpose is there in such a life?" Ramban does not agree that the word anochi, "I," is a reference to the pregnancy. He views it as a reference to Rivkah's being alive: "What is life if I cannot fulfill my G-d-given purpose?"

Horav Nissan Alpert, zl, suggests a deeper understanding of our Matriarch's statement, especially in light of a parent's inner-conflict when he or she witnesses his or her child's anxiety. The Torah is teaching us that the agitation, anxiety, ambiguity and inner-torment which we notice in our children have a much deeper source in ourselves. A child that appears torn between two worlds is often reflecting a problem that his or her parents have manifested.

Perhaps the parents are themselves conflicted, torn between two value systems. The parents want to be like the Joneses, but they are unable to cope with the reality that they are not the Joneses. This is obvious to their child who plays out this conflict in his or her own life. After all, the child muses, "What is good for Mom and Dad must be good for me."

This might be what Rivkah Imeinu felt during her strange pregnancy. She sensed conflict. Her first thoughts might have been, "Why am I thus? Is there something about my life that is conflicted? Is there something about my soul that is out of balance? What is the discord that is taking place in my womb telling me? Is there something about the anochi, I/me, that must be corrected, reexamined, reconciled and resolved, so that I can be a better servant to Hashem?"

*Eisav became one who knows hunting, a man of the field; but Yaakov was a wholesome man, abiding in tents. (25:27)*

Pathology is a word which often conjures up images of fear and the macabre.

Actually, it means to search for the source, the origin, the root of something, so that one can define its nature and eventual course of growth. Thus, if it is a disease, the choice of treatment will depend on its origin. A speech pathologist is able to discern among various speech impediments. Thus, she is able to determine the proper course of therapy. A "sin pathologist" studies the source of one's aberrant behavior in search of a course of therapy to assist the subject in returning to Hashem. Thus, when we describe a person - and we do so with seichel, common sense, with an astute perception of his character - we use terms that reach into his origin, the source of his sinful behavior.

Yaakov Avinu and Eisav ha'rasha were twins, born from the same parents, carried together in the same womb - but this is where their likeness ended. One was a tzaddik, righteous and virtuous, who became the third Patriarch, while the other was his archenemy, whose descendants hounded our People, becoming successful heirs to his legacy of hate. We know all of this, but wherein lies the source of their variance? What about Eisav's pathology, his basic nature, distinguishes him from Yaakov?

Horav Chaim Friedlander, zl, addresses this question and posits that the many differences which manifested themselves in the lives and behaviors of Yaakov and Eisav all revert back to the major discrepancies in their lives: Their individual attitudes towards enlightenment and their willingness to be educated further. Eisav maintained an attitude of, "I know it all, I need no further enlightenment; I am there already." Yaakov, however, was never able to garner enough learning. Let us see

how this divergence characterized the lives of these two seminal figures: one representing good and all that is positive; and the other representing the complete contrast.

Vayikreu shemo Eisav - Vayikra shemo Yaakov, "They named him Eisav" - "He called his name Yaakov." From their births, the twins were different. Eisav was born red, entirely like a hairy mantle, while Yaakov was born grasping on to the heel of Eisav. Eisav was not simply "red," he was covered with a red mantle. Thus, upon seeing such a completely formed, mature child, everyone called him Eisav. His name came to the mind of everyone at once, because it was most fitting, given that he appeared to be a mature, fully-developed "adult - in appearance." Eisav means asui, completely finished. The name given to the infant, Eisav, defined his essence. He was complete - finished - done. He had no need to learn from anyone, having entered into this world as a consummate person. Does this name really define Eisav? The man was a moral degenerate; an individual whose base desires could not be satiated. His name should also have addressed his profligate behavior. Apparently, the name Eisav, implying complete, finished, says it all. This was his pathological source of evil. He was a finished person, who could learn from no one and had no reason to learn. Not so his twin brother, Yaakov, who emerged into this world grasping onto the heel of Eisav. Indeed, it was Hashem Who gave him his name, because only the Almighty, in His infinite wisdom, was able to see the future Yaakov, the man who would hold onto Eisav's heel and eventually take him down. Yaakov was not complete; he was patient, "hanging in there" until the opportune moment in which he would take over and reign supreme over Eisav and his minions. Eisav was a hunter, a man of the field. The commentators explain that he felt no sense of responsibility. He was a complete wastrel who had no desire to do anything other than to take it easy. Yaakov, however, went from tent of Torah to tent of Torah. He would first study with Yitzchak Avinu and then supplement his studies at the yeshivah of Shem and Eivar. It was never enough for him. The more he could grab, the more he would grab. As Targum Yonasan ben Uziel writes, Yaakov tova ulpenah, "he demanded and sought learning, constantly seeking to further and further his growth and self-development." Yaakov was an ish tam, a wholesome man, but there is never an end to wholesomeness. One can always strive to achieve greater sheleimus, perfection. Eisav was also aroused to achieve holiness. After all, why not? However, he was, tzayid b'fiv, his hunt was in his mouth. As Horav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, zl, writes, "Whatever inspiration for sanctity that Eisav had - remained in his mouth." It went no further. He talked about it, but he was never serious about pursuing kedushah, holiness.

Yaakov was wholesome; his mouth and his heart were on the same page. What he sought, he worked for with every fibre of his body. The parsha concerning Yaakov and Eisav teaches us an important principle of education. Animals are considered full-term at birth. This means that a baby calf is already considered in the eyes of Halachah to be a fully grown ox. Animals achieve completion with birth, because their potential is realized at birth. A baby animal can walk, sprint, eat, drink on its own. It requires no assistance. Not so a human being, who, without the help of its mother, cannot function. A human being develops throughout a lifetime, growing steadily, achieving more with each ensuing day.

Does it have to be this way? Should not the human being, the crown of Creation, be complete at birth? Why should we be born in the infant stage, which requires growth and development? Why could we not have been created like Adam HaRishon, Primordial Man, complete and finished, fully-developed and ready to take on the world? Horav Simcha Zissel Broide, zl, the Alter m'Kelm, explains that the manner of man's birth and his lifetime of development are in consonance with his essence, his manner of education, and ultimate purpose in life.

The purpose of man's presence in this world is ruchniyos, spirituality. He must strive to become closer to the Source of all spirituality - Hashem. In order for one to have a desire for positive growth, it is necessary for him to be created in an incomplete manner. Otherwise, what would he be missing? Why would he bother to seek more when he already has it all? Thus, by looking around and observing the image of an adam ha'shaleim, he seeks to improve and follow the same course. Indeed, a child achieves more growth in his early years than throughout any other period in life.

We now understand the progression of Eisav's life, as he became the evil incarnate that he ultimately represented. Eisav was born complete, with no need for continued learning. He had no desire to learn. Yaakov was born an unfinished infant, with a desire to develop into adulthood. He, therefore, seized every opportunity for growth.

A ben Torah is one who is constantly striving to achieve greater and loftier heights in Torah knowledge. The Chazon Ish was prepared to give up his precious time and

strength to respond to any question concerning bnei Torah. He would spend hours searching for ways to help a yeshivah student advance in his studies. In his eyes, the entire world revolved around yeshivos and bnei Torah. This was the focus of Creation: the true ben Torah and helping that ben Torah develop.

The centrality of the yeshivah was uppermost in the mind of the Chazon Ish. Prior to taking a trip to the diaspora, Horav Shlomo Lorincz asked the Chazon Ish if he could do anything for him. The Chazon Ish replied that a certain yeshivah was in the midst of putting up its building and was short five tons of cement. Apparently, the country was rationing cement, and the shortage was hurting the yeshivah. The building could not be delayed any longer.

Rav Lorincz looked at the Chazon Ish and asked if the matter was really one of such high importance. There are priorities; it was a small yeshivah which did not occupy a critical position in the Torah world.

The Chazon Ish replied, "Know that this yeshivah stands b'rumo shel olam, at the apex of the world. Everything outside of the yeshivah is subsidiary. This does not refer only to a large yeshivah with a multitude of students; it applies to every yeshivah - regardless of its size - even if it just recently opened its doors and no one has ever heard of it. Even that yeshivah stands at the pinnacle of the world, and it is worthy that you should devote yourself to seeing to it that they can complete their building and begin learning in earnest."

The ben Torah was the center of the Chazon Ish's world. He personally guided hundreds of yeshivah students in their spiritual growth. He was the spiritual leader of the entire Torah world, whose days and nights, when he was not personally studying or writing novella, were devoted to the critical issues facing the Jewish People. Yet, he always found time to help a young teenager who was stymied in his learning. No student was ever turned away, and each one felt that he was the only student about whom the Chazon Ish was concerned.

Spiritual growth was paramount to the Chazon Ish. He understood that status quo represented Eisav's perspective on life. He could not offer enough encouragement to individuals to continue their upward growth in learning. To paraphrase the Chazon Ish in his Igros (1:14), "A young man who steep himself in Torah heartens me and captivates my soul. The memory of him fills my entire world, and my soul is bound to him with unbreakable bonds of love."

***But he (Yitzchak) said, "Your brother came with cleverness and took your blessing." (27:35)***

That Yaakov Avinu received the blessings from Yitzchak Avinu under what seems to have been a surreptitious method has been a major point of contention presented to challenge those who adhere to the Patriarch's way of life. Veritably, the question is glaring: Why did Hashem cause the blessings that apparently belonged to Eisav to go instead to Yaakov? One who studies the gist of the blessings notes that they are physical in nature, promising material bounty. Is this really what Yaakov wanted? The Patriarch was devoted to his spiritual development: Why would he want a blessing that guaranteed him abundant physical bounty? Imagine a contemporary ben Torah blessing his son: Would he bless him with materialistic success, or would he pray that the boy grow spiritually into a great Torah scholar who would illuminate the hearts and minds of our People?

In order to explain this anomaly, Horav Arye Leib Heyman, zl, first focuses on the variant images of Yaakov and Eisav. Yaakov was an ish tam yosheiv ohalim, "wholesome man abiding in tents." These tents are a metaphor for the tents of Torah, various yeshivos in which Yaakov imbibed Torah values. There was nothing else of importance to Yaakov. The world at large was not his concern. As long as he had his Gemorah, he was fine. His world was one that was pristine, pure of any vestiges of materialism and mundane issues which occupy the minds of lesser men. His brother, Eisav, was an ish sadeh, man of the field. His desires revolved around olam hazeh, this world, with its materialism and physicality. His very essence bespoke taavah, passion and base desire. Even as an infant in his mother's womb, Eisav would attempt to free himself of the encumbrances of his "prison," so that he could emerge and have his fun.

One thing is certain: When two individuals are so vastly disparate, no partnership can be established between them. They each have their own individual proclivities, with no room for compromise. When the Torah writes that Yitzchak Avinu's eyes dimmed with age, Rashi comments that this was actually Providential, so that Yaakov would be able to appropriate the blessings. This is a reference to the specific blessings which Yitzchak had planned to bestow on Eisav. The materialistic blessings which seemingly are endemic to Eisav were to be "channeled" instead to Yaakov. Why? What would he do with them? Imagine giving a mansion with all of the accoutrements to one of our gedolei hador. It would be ludicrous.

Yitzchak was well aware of the disparate personalities of his twins. He knew that Yaakov had no use with gashmius, physicality. Materialism which is used purely

for mundane purposes will ultimately defeat one's spiritual goal in life. The idea is to sanctify the physical by utilizing it to sustain the spiritual. Yitzchak sought to develop a sort of Yissachar/Zevulun partnership, in which Yaakov would devote himself to Torah, and Eisav would commit to material pursuits. Eisav would, of course, support his brother, and Yaakov's merits from his incessant Torah study would protect Eisav. It did not work out in the way that Yitzchak had planned. In order for a partnership to work, each partner must appreciate what the other one is doing. One places greater emphasis on Torah, while the other one underscores the material. It cannot work, however, when each one absolutely shuns the other's contribution. Yaakov had no interest whatsoever in the materialism. Eisav absolutely rejected a

nothing spiritual. Such a relationship would not have achieved a positive outcome. Furthermore, if Yaakov were to have been blessed with material abundance, would he even have appreciated it? Would he know what to do with it?

Thus, the Master of all that occurs created a situation in which Yaakov, at the behest of his mother, Rivkah Imeinu, presented himself to Yitzchak in the guise of Eisav in order to receive the blessings. Thus, the blessings of material abundance were given to Yaakov, so that he could elevate the physical dimension of this world.

Veritably, had Leah Imeinu not been switched with Rochel Imeinu, she would have ended up marrying Eisav - which would have appropriated the materialistic blessings for her. So Yaakov, who married Leah, received the blessings in a more indirect manner. Yehudah, who was Leah's son, became the monarch of the tribes and was able to make constructive use of these blessings. A king must rule over both the physical and spiritual dimensions. As a result of his maternal and paternal lineage, Yehudah had access to both.

Let us go back further in time, to the birth of Rivkah into the family of Besuel and Lavan, men who exemplified the "art" of ramaus, cheating and swindling. The Midrash in Shir HaShirim compares the Matriarch to a shoshanah bein ha'chochim, rose among thorns. Had she been raised in a more suitable family, however, she might not have seen through the guile of Eisav or had the temerity to induce Yaakov to appropriate the blessings. Everything in life happens for a reason. Initially, it often does not make sense. As we continue down the road of life, the many questions which had troubled us earlier on all seem to resolve themselves. We must trust in Hashem and rely on Him. He knows what is best and how to bring it forth - all at its proper time and place.

#### *V'Shinantam levanecha.*

#### *Teach them thoroughly to your children.*

In the Talmud Kiddushin 30a, Chazal interprets v'shinantam as being derived from shinun, sharp. They teach that the words of the Torah are to be sharply expressed by your mouth. The idea is that Torah should be rendered in a sharp, precise, clear and concise manner, so that the student will be able to grasp the material more quickly and retain it longer. Chazal quote a pasuk from Mishlei 7:4, emor lachochmah achosi at, "Say to wisdom, you are my sister." This demonstrates the close relationship one must develop with Torah wisdom. He should be as comfortable with it - as he is with family. Horav Yehudah Leib Fine, zl, Rav of Slonim, questions the use of a "sister" to describe the filial relationship, rather than a "brother."

He offers the following explanation. In the Talmud Bava Basra 139b, Chazal state the following law of inheritance. If the deceased was poor and left over a few material possessions, his daughters are supported from whatever is left over by the father, while the sons are relegated to live off the dole or to go begging from door to door. The bottom line is that the daughters are provided for, while the sons must provide for themselves.

Let us apply this halachah to contemporary society, during which the economic toll has weighed heavily on many of us. One might think, "I do not have the time to pursue Torah studies. I devote every available minute to eking out a living. I surely do not have anything extra with which to support others." To him we reply, "Shlomo Hamelech has already established that the wisdom of Torah is compared to one's sister. Thus, the Torah is to be sustained by the material possessions that one has. The Torah is not to be sent begging from door to door." We make time for Torah study; and we provide for Torah scholars. They are first and foremost. In honor of Jeff and Jane Belkin on their milestone wedding anniversary

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Covenant & Conversation  
Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from  
Lord Jonathan Sacks  
Orthodox Union / [www.ou.org](http://www.ou.org)

#### **Britain's Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**

#### *The Price of Silence*

In an earlier Covenant and Conversation I quoted the Netziv (Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin, 1816-1893, dean of the yeshiva in Volozhin), who made the sharp observation that Isaac and Rebecca seem not to have communicated closely. Rebecca's "relationship with Isaac was not the same as that between Sarah and Abraham or Rachel and Jacob. When they had a problem they were not afraid to speak about it. Not so with Rebecca" (Commentary to Gen. 24: 65).

The Netziv senses this distance from the very first moment when Rebecca saw Isaac "meditating in the field" at which point she "covered herself with a veil." He comments, "She covered herself out of awe and a sense of inadequacy as if she felt she was unworthy to be his wife, and from then on this trepidation was fixed in her mind."

Their relationship, suggests Netziv, was never casual, intimate. The result was, at a series of critical moments, a failure of communication. It seems likely that Rebecca never informed Isaac of the oracle she had before the twins, Esau and Jacob, were born, in which God told her "the elder will serve the younger." That apparently is one reason she loved Jacob rather than Esau, knowing that he was the one chosen by God. If Isaac knew this, why did he favour Esau? Therefore he probably did not know, because Rebecca had not told him.

That is why, many years later, when she heard that Isaac was about to bless Esau she was forced into a plan of deception: she told Jacob to pretend he was Esau. Why did she not simply tell Isaac that it was Jacob who was to be blessed? Because that would have forced her to admit that she had kept her husband in ignorance about the prophecy all the years the children were growing up.

Had she spoken to Isaac on the day of the blessing, Isaac might have said something that would have changed the entire course of their, and their children's, lives. I imagine Isaac saying this: 'Of course I know that it will be Jacob not Esau who will continue the covenant. But I have two quite different blessings in mind, one for each of our sons. I will give Esau a blessing of wealth and power: "May God give you the dew of heaven and the richness of the earth ... May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you" (Gen. 27: 28-29). I will give Jacob the blessing God gave Abraham and me, the blessing of children and the promised land: "May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples. May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now reside as a foreigner, the land God gave to Abraham" (Gen. 28: 3-4)'

Isaac never did intend to give the blessing of the covenant to Esau. He intended to give each child the blessing that suited them. The entire deceit planned by Rebecca and carried out by Jacob was never necessary in the first place. Why did Rebecca not understand this? Because she and her husband did not communicate.

Now let us count the consequences. Isaac, old and blind, felt betrayed by Jacob. He "trembled violently" when he realised what had happened, and said to Esau, "Your brother came deceitfully." Esau likewise felt betrayed and felt such violent hatred toward Jacob that he vowed to kill him. Rebecca was forced to send Jacob into exile, thus depriving herself for more than two decades of the company of the son she loved. As for Jacob, the consequences of the deceit lasted a lifetime, resulting in strife between his wives, and between his children. "Few and evil have been the days of my life," he said as an old man to Pharaoh. Four lives scarred by one act which was not even necessary in the first place since Isaac did in fact give Jacob "the blessing of Abraham" without any deception, knowing him to be Jacob not Esau.

Such is us the human price we pay for a failure to communicate. The Torah is exceptionally candid about such matters, which is what makes it so powerful a guide to life: real life, among real people with real problems. Communication matters. In the beginning God created the

natural world with words: "And God said: Let there be." We create the social world with words. The Targum translated the phrase in Genesis 2, "And man became a living soul" as "and man became a speaking soul." For us, speech is life. Life is relationship. And human relationships only exist because we can speak. We can tell other people our hopes, our fears, our feelings and thoughts.

That is why any leader – from a parent to a CEO – must set as his or her task good, strong, honest, open communication. That is what makes families, teams and corporate cultures healthy. Everyone must know what their overall aims are as a team, what their specific role is, what responsibilities they carry, and what values and behaviours they are expected to exemplify. There must be praise for those who do well, as well as constructive criticism when people do badly – criticism of the act not the person, who must feel respected whatever his or her failures. This last is one of the fundamental differences between a "guilt morality" of which Judaism is the supreme example, and a "shame morality" like that of ancient Greece (guilt makes a clear distinction between the act and the person, which shame does not).

There are times when much depends on clear communication. It is not to much to say that there was a moment at which the fate of the world depended on it. It happened during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 when the United States and the Soviet Union were on the brink of nuclear war. At the height of the crisis, as described by Robert McNamara in his film, *The Fog of War*, John F. Kennedy received two messages from the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev. One was conciliatory, the other far more hawkish. Most of Kennedy's advisers believed that the second represented Khrushchev's real views and should be taken seriously.

However one man, Llewellyn Thompson Jr., had been American ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1957 to 1962 and had come to know the Russian president well. He had even spent a period of time living with Khrushchev and his wife. He told Kennedy that the conciliatory message sounded like Khrushchev's own personal view while the hawkish letter, which did not sound like him, had probably been written to appease the Russian generals. Kennedy listened to Thompson, gave Khrushchev a way of backing down without losing face, and the result was that war was averted. It is fearful to imagine what might have happened had Thompson not been there to establish which was and which wasn't the real act of communication.

Parents and leaders must establish a culture in which honest, open, respectful communication takes place, and that involves not just speaking but also listening. Without it, tragedy is waiting in the wings. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks is a global religious leader, philosopher, the author of more than 25 books, and moral voice for our time. Until 1st September 2013 he served as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, having held the position for 22 years. To read more from Rabbi Sacks or to subscribe to his mailing list, please visit [www.rabbisacks.org](http://www.rabbisacks.org).

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Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

**Drasha Parshas Toldos**

**Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky**

*The Search for Blessings*

This week's parsha begins the saga of the long, almost endless struggle between Yaakov and Esav. Yaakov buys the birthright from a hungry Esav and then, coached by his mother, Rivka, he dresses like Esav and receives blessings from his father Isaac.

I have received numerous letters throughout the years pondering those actions. Indeed, Yaakov himself is wary of acting in a seemingly devious manner and is reassured by his righteous mother who accepts full responsibility for his actions. When Esav arrives for the blessings, his father tells him that his younger brother cleverly took all the blessings, but Esav, despondent as he may be declares to his father, "He (Jacob) took away my birthright and see, now he took away my

blessing!" He adds, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me? Isaac answered, and said to Esau, "Behold, a lord have I made him over you, and all his kin have I given him as servants; with grain and wine have I supported him, and for you, where -- what can I do, my son?". And Esau said to his father, "Have you but one blessing, Father? Bless me too, Father!" And Esau raised his voice and wept. (Genesis 27:36-38).

I often wondered about the lesson of this repartee. Esav, clearly angered by Yaakov's cunning, still has clarity of mind to ask for a blessing. Yitzhak seems to demur, inferring that there is nothing left. But Esav prevails by pleading, even crying for a blessing. And only then does his father acquiesce and bless him as well.

Was there a blessing left or not? Can pleading with the saintly patriarch produce a previously non-existent blessing? Maybe Esav's tears taught a lesson even for the children of Yaakov?

This past summer 30,000 Boy Scouts joined together in Virginia for a national Boy Scout Jamboree. Among the myriad groups of scouts who attend this event that occurs every four years are many Jewish Scouts as well. Mike Paretsky, a Vice Chairman of the GNYC Jewish Committee on scouting, was the kosher food liaison to the jamboree. Special food was ordered from O'Fishel caterers of Baltimore, so that the Jewish scouts would be able to nourish their bodies as well. One of the scoutmasters, a Jewish man caught a glimpse of the kosher offerings. He had never eaten a kosher meal in his life, yet when he saw the special meals, something stirred. He and his troops were being served pork-this and bacon-that for breakfast, lunch and supper, and all of a sudden this man decided he was sick of the monotonous treif stuff. He wanted to eat kosher. Scoutmaster Paretsky gladly let him partake in a meal, but that was not enough for the fellow. The man decided to keep kosher during the entire jamboree!

Mr. Paretsky agreed to accommodate the neophyte kosherphile, but a skeptic approached him. "Mike," he said, "why are you wasting your kosher food on this fellow? He is not going to eat kosher after this is over, and he observes absolutely nothing! Why waste the food on him?"

Mike answered with an amazing story of the Chofetz Chaim. When Russian soldiers entered the town of Radin, Jewish townfolk prepared kosher meals for the Jewish soldiers in the Czar's army. Soon their acts of charity seemed to fly in their face as they saw the soldiers devour the food and then stand on line to receive the forbidden Russian rations.

When they complained to the Chofetz Chaim and threatened to stop preparing kosher food, he reflected with an insight that must be passed on to generations.

"Every mitzvah that a Jew does, every good deed and every bit of kosher that he eats is not a fleeting act. It is an eternity. No matter what precedes or ensues, we must cherish each proper action of a Jew."

The wayward son, Esav is at first told by his father that there are no blessings. But he cries bitterly and cannot fathom that fact. "Is there nothing left?" He asks. It cannot be. And he was right. There is always some blessing left to be found. No matter how far one has strayed, no matter how bleak a situation looks. There is always blessing. We must pursue it, even cry for it, and when we receive the tiniest blessing it may seem trivial, even fleeting, but it is with us for eternity.

L'zecher Nishmat Our Zeda Avraham Yehoshua Heschel ben Yehuda HaCohen by his

Granchildren Miriam, Josh, Tamar and Shlomo Hauser Efrat, Israel

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**Parshat Toldot: 'I was wrong!'**

**By Shmuel Rabinowitz**

**October 31, 2013 Thursday 27 Heshvan 5774**

*In this week's Torah portion, Parshat Toldot, we will hear about a famous pair of twins – Ya'acov and Esau.*

In this week's Torah portion, Parshat Toldot, we will hear about a famous pair of twins – Ya'acov and Esau. At the center of this story stands the relationship between Esau and Ya'acov and their parents – Yitzhak and Rivka.

The strongest expression of this complex relationship is the story of their father Yitzhak's blessings. The Torah tells us the story like this: "And Isaac loved Esau

because [his] game was in his mouth, but Rivka loved Jacob.” (Genesis 25, 28)  
“And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old... he called Esau his elder son, and said to him: ‘My son’; and he said to him: ‘Here am I.’ And he said: ‘Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death. Now therefore... go out to the field, and take me venison; and make me tasty food, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless you before I die.’ “And Rivka heard... And Rivka spoke to Jacob her son, saying: ‘... hear my voice according to that which I command you. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from there two good kids of the goats; and I will make them tasty food for your father, such as he loves; and you shall bring it to your father, that he may eat, so that he may bless you before his death.’” (Genesis 27, 1-10) These verses describe a rather unpleasant story. Yitzhak and Rivka had two sons. The father loved the older one and the mother loved the younger one. The father wanted to bless the older son, and the mother makes sure that her younger, beloved son gets the blessings deceitfully instead of his big brother. And indeed, the Torah tells us that Ya’acov put on Esau’s clothes and tricked his father, Yitzhak, thus receiving the blessings instead of Esau. This story raises many questions. Where is morality, honesty and fairness? Is it right to steal the blessings from a father whose sight is weakened and who is incapable of recognizing his sons? Is it right to steal the blessings meant for Esau? Our sages teach us that Yitzhak’s love of Esau and his preference of him over Ya’acov was a mistake, the result of Esau’s pretense: What is “game was in his mouth”? – (Esau) would hunt the righteous Yitzhak with his mouth! (Midrash Tanchuma) If so, we understand that Rivka’s intentions were good, knowing full well that Esau was not worthy of receiving his father’s blessings. But Rivka’s actions are still unclear.

Where was her wisdom? In another hour, or two, Esau would return from the field and the deceit would be revealed to all. What would Rivka gain and what fate would befall Ya’acov after Yitzhak discovers that he had been set up? And how did Yitzhak react when he discovered Ya’acov’s deceit? He said, “Your brother came with cunning and took your blessing... so for you then, what shall I do, my son?” (Genesis 27, 35-37) We would expect a completely different reaction from Yitzhak; regret for the blessings he gave Ya’acov, maybe a sense of insult over the deceit. But Yitzhak does not react this way. He accepts the fact that Ya’acov was blessed by him, and even accepts quite calmly the manner in which these blessings were attained.

Apparently Rivka, knowing Yitzhak, her husband and the father of her children, understood that arguing would not change his perception of Esau. Yitzhak had a different outlook regarding Esau. To change it required a more dramatic step, something that would persuade Yitzhak that Esau had been deceiving him for years, and that his attitude toward him was incorrect. How could Rivka do this? She had to prove to Yitzhak that he was easily deceived. But also that the Holy One, Blessed be He, turns blessings around so that they are bestowed differently than he planned. Only then would Yitzhak understand that she was right and that Ya’acov was the one worthy of receiving his blessings. Yitzhak’s reaction teaches us that he internalized the moral of Ya’acov’s deceit. Yitzhak understood that Ya’acov would not have succeeded in receiving the blessings from him had it not been a divine message transmitted to him in this way, and that the message he received from the Holy One, Blessed be He, was that Esau “hunted him with his mouth” and pretended to be worthy of continuing the respected dynasty of Avraham and Yitzhak, but this was not the real picture. Yitzhak understands that Rivka was right, and he courageously accepts the deceit of Esau when he sees the way things developed and how blessings were given throughout the years.

Each and every one of us can learn from Yitzhak Avinu. Many times we take a stand, if it’s in a family matter, business or any other sphere, and after some time we discover that, unfortunately, we were wrong. Now we face a test. Will we gather the courage, be brave and admit our mistake, change our perspective about the path we had taken and, therefore, ultimately gain the admiration of those around us who appreciate honest people? Or, will we respond with weakness, repression, and try to hide the truth and sweep it under the carpet? Here, in this parsha, we see Yitzhak Avinu acting courageously, teaching us to admit our mistakes and say: I was wrong. The choice I made was incorrect at this time.

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### Is Seeing Red Kosher?

#### By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Eisav is often associated with the color red, which provides an opportunity for the following halacha question: Is a red food color that is manufactured from animal material kosher? Indeed, the master artisans building the Mishkan used a dye, tola’as shani, which is often assumed to be the “blood” of an insect, in the manufacture of the Kohen Gadol’s vestments. Was this color kosher? This color was also used to dye the curtains and coverings of the Mishkan. In addition, processing the ashes of the parah adumah (Bamidbar 19:6), purifying a metzora and decontaminating a house that became tamei all use tola’as shani (Vayikra 14:4, 49). As we will discover, correctly identifying the tola’as shani not only affects these halachos and those of the Beis Hamikdash, but also concerns a wide assortment of foods and beverages that we eat and drink.

Color is an important part of any food, and, in many cases, is one of the main considerations of consumers when choosing food. Companies increase sales by tinkering with the color of foods. For this reason, food technologists consider a number of factors when deciding how to color a particular food.

#### SEEING RED

As is evident from the verse, if your sins will be like shanim, they will become as white as snow; though they be red as the tola, they will become white, like wool (Yeshayah 1:18), tola’as shani is a red color. Upon this basis, some authorities identify tola’as shani as kermes, a shade of scarlet derived from scale insects (see Radak to Divrei Hayamim II 2:6). The ancients derived a red dye from the dried bodies of a species called Kermes ilices, which served as one of the most important pigments for thousands of years. As a matter of fact, the English word crimson derives from this ancient dye.

Are tola’as shani and kermes indeed identical? We should note that the Hebrew word tola’as, which is usually translated worm, may include insects and other small invertebrates. Thus, it may indeed be that the tola’as of the verse is a scale insect that produces a red dye. One can rally support for this approach from the verse in Divrei Hayamim (II 3:14), which describes the paroches curtain as woven from techeiles, argaman, karmil, and butz (linen), whereas the Torah describes the paroches as made of techeiles, argaman, tola’as shani, and shaish (linen) (Shemos 26:31). Obviously, karmil, which is fairly close to the word kermes, is another way of describing tola’as shani. Similarly, when describing the artisans sent by King Hiram of Tyre to help Shelomoh Hamelech build the Beis Hamikdash, Divrei Hayamim (II 2:13) mentions karmil as one of the materials used in construction of the Mishkan, and omits tola’as shani. Thus, karmil, a word cognate to kermes, is the same as tola’as shani, which the Radak assumes originates from the worm itself (Radak to Divrei Hayamim II 2:6). Similarly, the Rambam explains tola’as shani to mean “wool dyed with an insect” (Hilchos Klei Hamikdash 8:13).

However, Rabbeinu Bachyei (Shemos 25:3) takes issue with this approach, insisting that only kosher species may be used for manufacturing the Mishkan and the garments of the kohanim. He bases this position on the Gemara’s statement that “only items that one is permitted to eat may be used for the work of heaven,” which teaches that one may use only kosher items in the manufacture of tefillin (Shabbos 28a). Rabbeinu Bachyei assumes that the Mishkan, itself, whose entire purpose is to serve Hashem, certainly requires all its materials to be kosher.

Which presents us with the question: How does this fit with the description of tola’as shani as a worm derivative?

Rabbeinu Bachyei, himself, explains that the dye called tola'as shani does not originate from the insect itself, but from a fruit or berry that contains an insect. Both Rambam (Hilchos Parah Adumah 3:2) and Rashi (to Yeshayah 1:18) also seem to explain tola'as shani this way. Thus, we might be able to modify our explanation of the Rambam's words "wool dyed with a worm" to mean "wool dyed with a fruit that contains a worm." (However, see the contemporary work Be'ikvus Tola'as Hashani, who explains Rashi and the Rambam differently.) Thus, Rabbeinu Bachyei, and possibly the Rambam and Rashi, identify the tola'as shani as a fruit that has a worm in it, whereas the Radak understands tola'as shani to be the derivative of the kermes insect itself. How does the Radak resolve the issue raised by Rabbeinu Bachyei that only kosher items may be used to fulfill mitzvos?

I know of several ways to resolve this concern:

(1) Some maintain that only the basic substance used to fulfill the mitzvah must be kosher, but not a dye that merely coats the surface (cf. Shu't Noda Bi'yehudah II Orach Chayim #3). Therefore, tola'as shani may indeed be of a non-kosher source, since it is not the material used for the mitzvah, but only colors the materials used.

(2) Others contend that the prohibition to use non-kosher items for mitzvos applies only to tefillin, mezuzos and other mitzvos requiring use of Hashem's name or of verses of Tanach, but that one may use non-kosher items for other mitzvos or for items used in the Beis Hamikdash (see Ran, Rosh Hashanah 26b s.v. umihu af al gav; Shu't Noda Bi'yehudah II, Orach Chayim # 3). According to this analysis, tola'as shani is acceptable for the Beis Hamikdash, even if it is considered non-kosher.

(3) A third approach asserts that kermes dye is kosher, since its original source can no longer be identified. This approach is based on early poskim, who held that a prohibited food becomes kosher when it transforms completely into a new substance. The Rosh (Berachos 6:35; Shu't 24:6) cites Rabbeinu Yonah, who permitted using musk, a fragrance derived from the gland of several different animals, many of them non-kosher, as a food flavoring, because it had already been transformed into a new substance no longer identifiable with its source. Similarly, the Rambam identifies musk as one of the ingredients in the incense burned in the Beis Hamikdash. Based on these authorities, one can theorize that although the source of the kermes is non-kosher, the dye itself is kosher. In an article I wrote once titled *Some Kitniyos Curiosities*,<sup>1</sup> I noted that there is much dispute about this chiddush, and that virtually no late halachic authorities permit use of an originally non-kosher item that has become transformed, at least in regard to Torah prohibitions.

(4) Others contend that the kermes coloring is kosher, since the creatures are first dried -- and powder derived from an insect dried for twelve months (or the equivalent) is considered to be innocuous and, therefore, kosher (see Pischei Teshuvah, Yoreh Deah 87:20 and Darkei Teshuvah ad loc. and 102:30 -- the latter anthology contains a lengthy discussion on this topic; Shu't Minchas Yitzchak 3:96:2).

Thus, we have several different ways of explaining how the tola'as shani may indeed have been identical with the Egyptian kermes and yet still be an acceptable dye for mitzvah objects, such as the garments of the kohanim and the curtains and coverings of the Mishkan. Analyzing the different opinions about tola'as shani leads into a practical discussion as to whether kermes is a kosher food coloring.

#### THE FOOD COLORING INDUSTRY

Whether we like it or not, many of our foods are colored with a host of coloring agents. Some are derived from food items, such as beets, berries, sugar (caramel coloring), turmeric and annatto, whereas others are derived from inedible materials, such as coal, petroleum and other sources most consumers would prefer to ignore. Although the processing of colorants can involve use of non-kosher ingredients or processing methods that compromise the kashrus of the finished product, only a few

food colors are themselves obtained from non-kosher materials. Among those that originate from non-kosher substances is carmine red, also called cochineal, which is often used to color canned fruits, yogurts, juice drinks, maraschino cherries, etc.

#### THE ORIGIN OF CARMINE

When the Spaniards colonized the New World, they discovered a scale insect, called the cochineal bug, which yields a red color eight times brighter than kermes. The Spaniards valued this insect, developing and marketing its carmine red pigment. The word carmine, used specifically for this color, is derived from the similarity of cochineal to kermes, which it eventually replaced as the most common color. One of the common uses of this dye is in bright red punch, which, for this reason, became commonly called in camps "bug juice."

#### KOSHER CARMINE?

Are kermes and carmine kosher for food coloring?

Whether kermes and carmine pigments are kosher or not depends on why some contend that kermes could be used to dye the garments of the kohanim. Let us review the four answers that I quoted above and see how each one impacts our shaylah.

Approach (1) above permitted dyeing a mitzvah item using non-kosher material, since the latter is not the primary item, but only a coloring. This approach would prohibit use of color from a non-kosher source in a product that one intends to eat.

Approach (2) ruled that mitzvah items that do not contain Hashem's name or a holy verse may be produced from non-kosher substances. This reason would also forbid use of kermes or carmine colors for food. Nevertheless, both the third and fourth approaches mentioned would permit using cochineal coloring in a kosher product.

Approach (3) held that the color is now transformed into a completely different substance and has therefore lost its non-kosher status.

Approach (4) maintained that the kermes scales are dried out to the point where they are no longer non-kosher. Indeed, for this reason, some authorities maintain that carmine is kosher (Pischei Teshuvah, Yoreh Deah 87:20; see Minchas Yitzchak 3:96:2). Many years ago, I remember seeing carmine color certified kosher by responsible talmidei chachamim. However, today, every respected kashrus agency I know treats carmine color as non-kosher.

Although approach #3 held that the color is now transformed and has therefore lost its non-kosher status, the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 114:2) and other authorities (see Rema, Orach Chayim 467:8 and Magen Avraham 216:3) rule as the Rishonim, who prohibited a transformed food item whose original source was prohibited min hatorah. Many authorities permit a transformed food item whose source is prohibited because of rabbinic injunction (Pri Megadim, Mishbetzos Zahav 216:2; Shu't Chasam Sofer, Yoreh Deah #117; Shu't Imrei Yosher 2:140; Mishnah Berurah 216:7).

The relationship we have with food is not limited to taste and smell. We learn this from the laws requiring lighting candles for Shabbos, which enables one to see what he eats and thus leads to greater enjoyment of the Shabbos repast. Similarly, the Gemara teaches that a blind person is never satiated by what he eats (Yoma 74b). Much of the skill involved in the food service business is unrelated to cuisine, but intimately connected to the appearance and presentation of the food, in which the choice of colors figures prominently. As we see from the above article, we should keep in mind the kashrus ramifications of the color of the food we eat.