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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON **TOLDOS** - 5776

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by **Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum - Parshas Toldos**

And Hashem said to her: Two nations are in your womb; two regimes from your insides shall be separated. (25:23)

Rashi explains that the two nations which would descend from the twins within Rivkah's womb would have two great leaders who were friends. Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, known as Rebbi, was the redactor of the Mishnah. His contemporary was the Roman emperor, Antoninus, a descendant of Eisav. The Chasam Sofer explains that Rivkah was informed that the twins, Yaakov and Eisav, had the potential to complement one another's service to Hashem, much like Yissacher who studied Torah supported by his brother, Zevulun. We find that Antoninus was subservient to Rebbi to the point that he enabled him to redact the Mishnah. In the End of Days, the "good aspect" of the gentile nations will serve the Jewish People and help them to serve Hashem.

What was the origin of the relationship between Antoninus and Rebbi? After all, it is not as if they went to the same schools or lived in the same neighborhood. Horav Pinchas Friedman, Shlita, quotes Tosfos in Meseches Avodah Zarah 10b, which is embellished by Menoras HaMaor 53. Apparently, the Roman government decreed that the Jews were not permitted to circumcise their sons. When Rebbi was born, his father, Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel, conjectured, "Hashem enjoined us to circumcise our sons. The Roman government prohibited us from doing this. To whom should I listen - Hashem or the Romans?" Rabbi Shimon circumcised his child. The Roman mayor questioned Rabbi Shimon concerning his insubordination against the Roman government. When Rabbi Shimon gave his rationale, the mayor insisted that Rabbi Shimon travel to the emperor and explain himself.

It was a day's travel to Rome. On the way, they stopped at an inn where the innkeeper's wife had just given birth to a son, Antoninus. When Rabbi Shimon's wife explained their predicament, Antoninus's mother took pity and suggested that they switch babies. One can imagine the rest of the story: The mayor accused Rabbi Shimon of circumcising his son. When they removed

the blanket, they discovered that the infant was uncircumcised. The mayor was relieved of his position, as well as of his life, and everybody lived happily ever after. When they returned home, Rabbi Shimon's wife remarked to her new friend, the mother of Antoninus, "Since Hashem performed a miracle through your son, my son and yours will be friends for life." Chazal add that, because Antoninus nursed from Rebbi's mother, he merited learning Torah, supporting Rebbi, and eventually becoming a ger, converting to Judaism.

In his commentary to Sefer Devarim, Parashas Va'eschanan, the Megaleh Amukos teaches that Rebbi was a gilgul, transmigrative soul, of Yaakov Avinu, and Antoninus possessed the "good" nitzutz, spark, of Eisav. In other words, the twins - who were biologically formed from one seed which, in turn, created twins - set the stage for the relationship between Rebbi and Antoninus, to whom we are responsible for the Torah She' Baal Peh, redaction of the Oral Law. This is how Rivkah was assuaged concerning her troubled pregnancy. Although one of her twins "ran" toward the idols, he would produce a progeny that would support his brother's descendant in illuminating the hearts and minds of the Jewish People. All of this was the result of Antoninus nursing from Rivkah! After all, he was a descendant, a nitzutz of Eisav, who had nursed from Rivkah Imeinu. That act of nursing preserved and eventually brought out whatever good spark was embedded deep within Eisav, so that it would emerge through Antoninus.

Chazal (Pesikta Rabbasi 44:4) teach that when Sarah Imeinu gave birth to Yitzchak, some pagan skeptics claimed that Yitzchak was actually the son of the maidservant. Avraham Avinu said, "This is not a time for modesty." Sarah was instructed to nurse any child that was brought to her. The children of those who were sincere, and brought their children to be nursed out of a sense of respect for Sarah, eventually converted. The children of those who came out of a sense of skepticism became great and important leaders. In any event, every ger, convert, is somehow the descendant of a child nursed by Sarah Imeinu.

The Arizal writes that, embedded within Eisav's head (his mouth, for he was tzayid b'fiv, game was in his mouth; it was the part of his body which relegated some form of good, based upon the halachic queries he rendered with his mouth) were holy sparks which produced Shamyah and Avtalyon, Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Akiva. Thus, Eisav's head was buried in the Meoras HaMachpeilah, where it belonged. Rav Friedman suggests that Eisav merited this as a result of nursing from Rivkah. Imbibing the milk of the righteous Rivkah imbued Eisav with a quality in his mouth that allowed his mouth to become the medium for harboring the holy sparks which produced these great Taanaim.

We now understand how Antoninus's life was changed because he nursed from the wife of Rabbi Shimon. What about the holy Rebbi, however? Why should his holy mouth have nursed from Antoninus's mother? Turning to the Chasam Sofer, Rav Friedman derives a principle upon which he builds a compelling explanation for the need for Rebbi to nurse from the gentile woman. The Torah relates that, prior to presenting himself to Yitzchak, Rivkah had Yaakov don Eisav's garments. Simply, this would give more validity to the ruse that Yaakov was Eisav. The Chasam Sofer explains that this move was necessary. The clothes of a person have an influence upon him. The clothes worn by a righteous person retain an element of kedushah, holiness. Likewise, the garments of a rasha, evil person, maintain an element of his impure essence.

Yaakov, as a paradigm of emes, truth, found it almost impossible to participate in the necessary ruse to save the blessings. It went against everything that he was. Thus, Rivkah determined that if Yaakov were to wear the clothes of the evil, lying Eisav, he might be sufficiently influenced to believe that the bending of the truth was necessary and should not bother him. Because Yaakov wore the clothes of Eisav, he was able to act for Heaven's sake in order to save the blessings in what might be viewed by some as an inappropriate manner.

Likewise, Rebbi redacted the Oral Law, despite the rule that what is oral may

not be written. Rebbi figured that the situation warranted an immediate revolutionary response. Illiteracy was rampant. The Torah was being forgotten as people moved away from it, and the persecutors of the Roman government were becoming a greater deterrent to study Torah. In response, he decided to redact the Oral Law onto paper, in order that it become available to everyone. Was it right? It was necessary to save Torah, so it became right.

Rebbi had a spark of Yaakov within him, thus making it difficult to act in a manner not totally coincident with the truth. An aveirah lishmah, sin committed for the sake of Heaven, still maintains some vestige of sin. By imbibing milk from a gentile, to a certain extent, Rebbi became desensitized, thereby encouraging him to record the Oral Law in written form.

Once again, we realize how little we know and how much more we have to learn.

And Eisav raised his voice and wept. (27:38)

Yaakov Avinu received the blessings from his father, Yitzchak Avinu. He had barely left the room before Eisav returned with his father's meal. Eisav had been sent to prepare a special meal for his father, so that his father would bless him. Following his mother, Rivkah Imeinu's instructions, Yaakov entered the room first, giving the impression that he was Eisav, and preventing the blessings from falling into the hands of the evil Eisav. Understandably, Eisav did not react kindly to this scenario. Feeling that he was the victim of fraud, having been outsmarted by his brother, he let out a cry. (According to one Midrash, he emitted two tears; another source says it was three tears.) Eisav was quite upset at the loss of the blessings. He conveniently forgot that he had sold the right to the blessings to Yaakov, but that is to be expected of a rasha, evil person.

Eisav asked his father if he had any blessings left for him. Yitzchak intimated that his brother, Yaakov, had taken them all. When Eisav began to weep, Yitzchak suddenly began to bless him with the "fat of the land and dew of the heavens." He "gave" him Yaakov and his descendants if they were to wane from their relationship with the Torah (if they slacken in their mitzvah observance). What happened from one minute to another? At first, Yitzchak indicated that he had no remaining blessings, and suddenly he blessed Eisav.

The Chezkuni explains that originally Yitzchak had told Eisav, "All of the blessings that I received from my father, Avraham Avinu, I transferred to your brother, Yaakov. However, once you began to weep, I saw b'Ruach Ha'Kodesh, through Divine Inspiration, that Hashem had created for you (sort of) a new world of blessing in which you will be endowed with material wealth and reign over Yaakov if his descendants falter in their spiritual dimension."

It was all about Eisav's tears. We see how a sincere expression of emotion overturned a negative decree and engendered blessing - even after it had been sealed against him. We also cry. Indeed, throughout the millennia, the Jewish People have wept away an ocean of tears, but have we cried for the same reason that Eisav cried? Have we wept because we did not receive more of Hashem's blessing, or was it because we were in pain, in need? When was the last time we wept as a result of not understanding a blatt Gemorah? Have we ever cried because we are bothered that kavod Shomayim, the honor of Heaven, is being impugned? Do we weep when Orthodoxy is disparaged by those who are either secular in practice or in theory? No - we only cry when we are in need. Eisav has one over us; he cried for spirituality. Sadly, we do not.

Horav Yaakov David, zl, of Slutzk was famous for his fiery talks. He had an uncanny ability to melt the hearts of his listeners and bring the most hardened heart to tears. He was once invited to speak in a community which was not well-known for its passionate observance of mitzvos. The people were observant, but barely and, at best, dispassionate. The Rav ascended to the lectern and spoke incredibly well. His eloquence was only surpassed by his content. There should not have been a dry eye from the assembled.

Regrettably, the stone-cold hearts of the members of this community proved him wrong. They listened - respectfully, but were unmoved. Afterwards, he was asked how it was possible for such a derashah, speech, to fail to penetrate their hearts. He replied, "Let me explain. My goal is to locate the faucet and open it up. I release the pressure and the water/tears flow freely. If the well is empty, however, no water will flow. That is not my fault."

Some people do not express themselves emotionally - for whatever reason. Others, however, are oisgevent, "cried out." They have wept so much that they literally have become numb, hopeless, spent. The water in the "well" seems to have dried up. Both are to be pitied. The ability to weep is a gift. The ability to express oneself emotionally, to release pent up emotions, is a necessary function of the human psyche. One who keeps it in, one who has lost his ability to express himself, has lost part of his humanness.

There is no dearth of stories which underscore the tremendous effect of tears. I came across a simple, but compelling, story in "A Touch of Warmth," by Rabbi Yechiel Spero. I have chosen this story because of the lessons to be derived from it. Incidentally, I have derived lessons which do not necessarily coincide with those intended by the author. Every incident touches different people in various ways. Much of this is based upon their focus and what they want to learn from the incident.

The story takes place concerning the venerable Chozeh, zl, m'Lublin. One point of consideration: Chassidic stories often have different versions, based upon the source of the tale. Also, Chassidic stories, over time, have taken on a life all of their own. A story is meant to be a lesson, to convey a message. It may not always stand the test of scientific scrutiny. If one acknowledges and believes in the saintliness and Heavenly - endowed miraculous powers of these holy people, the story is then true. For the skeptic who looks for an opportunity to scoff and degrade, he will always take issue.

The story begins with the Chozeh being a passenger on a horse-drawn carriage that was supposed to take him and its other passengers to a nearby town for Shabbos. Apparently, the horses had a mind of their own, and, galloping at great speed, they passed their intended destination. The weather outside was foul, with a strong wind blowing. The travelers who were accompanying their holy Rebbe were clueless concerning their destination. The Chozeh, however, recognized the town where the horses halted as the village where he grew up as a youth. The Rebbe did not know why he was here, but he did not ask questions. If Hashem wanted him to arrive in this town shortly before Shabbos, He had a good reason. In due time, he would discover the reason.

Not clothed in his Rebbishe garb, the Rebbe appeared to be a Jewish traveler who happened to be in this village for Shabbos. Therefore, as was the custom in all Jewish communities, when davening was concluded, various members of the community would approach the guests and invite them for Shabbos dinner. The Rebbe remained in the background, waiting for Hashem's plan to unfold. He still did not know why he had ended up in the city of his youth.

The davening in the shul was quick and simple, quite unlike the davening in Lublin. The Rebbe was hosted by an elderly gentleman, a fine, sweet man, for whom talking was not his greatest strength. The meal went by quickly, in silence. When the Rebbe inquired as to the man's vocation, the response that he received was woodcutter and then shoemaker, neither position demanding great cognitive acumen. Still not knowing why he was here, the Chozeh began to suspect that perhaps his host was one of the lamed vov tzaddikim, thirty-six righteous individuals, in whose merit Hashem maintains the world. All the while, the man was silent. Perhaps he was hiding something. Finally, after Maariv Motzei Shabbos, the man broke down in bitter weeping. It took some time, but the elderly Jew finally calmed down, and he shared the reason for his emotional breakdown. When the Rebbe heard the man's story, he understood why Hashem had brought him to this home. The man began his tale. He had been an accomplished melamed, effectively teaching youngsters for years. He enjoyed an enviable reputation until, one day; he had decided to give it all up. This was due to one student whom he had wrongly

punished.

He had a student who was always coming to class late. It was not as if he did not have a good excuse, but how many excuses can a rebbe tolerate? The rebbe insisted that the boy come to school in a timely fashion, just like everybody else. The boy said that he would try. The next day, the boy once again came late. When asked by the rebbe for a reason, the boy replied that he had overslept. Truthfully, the reason for all of his lateness issues was not a lack of caring or disrespect (which is often the case). He was late because his mother had been seriously ill for some time. He helped her, often staying up until the wee hours of the morning. This was why he had overslept. Regrettably, the rebbe did not wait for another round of excuses, whose validity he questioned anyway, and, fed up with the boy's tardiness, he slapped him across the face!

The rebbe had lost it. He was not one to slap a child and certainly not out of anger. Although corporeal punishment was not uncommon in those days, this rebbe had never before resorted to it. He did, however, and now, years later, the elderly man whose life and career were ruined because of this error looked the Chozeh in the eyes and said, "Nary a day goes by that I do not wish that I could see that boy once more and beg him mechilah, forgiveness, for the terrible wrong that I committed. I would do anything to know what became of him. I want to be absolutely certain that I was not the cause of his leaving Yiddishkeit."

When the Chozeh heard the story, he immediately asked the man for the name of the child. "His name was Yankel," the man said. Hearing this, the Rebbe gave a big smile. He put his arm around the elderly rebbe and assured him that he had nothing about which to worry. He knew Yankel quite well. Indeed, he was a devout Jew, a yarei Shomayim.

"Are you sure that he is a fine upstanding Jew?" the man asked. "I am certain," the Chozeh, Horav Yaakov "Yankel" Yitzchak, replied. Hearing this wonderful news brought a large smile across the man's face, as he now felt a heavy stone being lifted off his heart. He cried again, only this time the tears were tears of joy. The Rebbe now understood why he was "brought" here for Shabbos.

Now, for the lessons: A: One never strikes a child. It could have grave ramifications, causing the child ultimately to turn his back on Yiddishkeit. B: One who suspects that, by his actions, he has adversely affected a child should do everything in his power to beg that child's forgiveness. He should leave no stone unturned until he locates that child. Regardless of the humiliation, he must seek his forgiveness. This rebbe went through life bitter, broken, and sick because he had hurt a child, and he now no longer knew how to locate him. C: We see the bond of love that exists between rebbe and talmid. The mere thought that he had caused him irreparable damage devastated this man for years. D: We see that if a person cares enough, Hashem will somehow manipulate events so that the two can come together and make peace.

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Rabbi Herschel Schachter

The Chazir is Not Kosher

The Torah tells us that a kosher animal is one which has split hooves and chews its cud; pigs have split hooves, but because they do not chew their cud, are not kosher. The Rabbis of the Medrash tell a parable of a pig stretching out a leap in order to display its split hooves, and attempt to fool everyone into believing that it is kosher.

Esav, Yaakov's twin, claimed to follow the same tradition as Yaakov. When Yaakov left to Padan Aram to marry a girl from the family, Esav followed suit and also married a girl "from the family," but did not divorce his non-

Jewish wives. This act of marrying a "girl from the family" was solely in order to appear as though he was following in the footsteps of Jewish tradition. The so-called "Judeo-Christian" tradition is merely a facade. Despite the fact that the two brothers were twins, and had a lot in common biologically, they had very little in common in terms of lifestyle. There is an often-quoted medrash which states, "Why is the pig called a 'chazir'? Because some day in the future God will give it back ('lebachziro') to the Jewish people." The Rishonim ask how this can be. The Rambam postulates, as one of the thirteen principles of our faith, that the laws of the Torah will never change. Can it be that some day it will be permissible for us to eat Pork?

Some of the Rishonim explained that "the return of the pig does not refer to eating pork, but rather to the restoration of the Jewish government in place of the Christian one." The "pig" is the faker who makes believe that he is kosher by showing his split hooves, just as Christians claim that theirs is a twin-religion with ours, and just as Esav was a twin brother of Yaakov. The prophet Malachi points out in the haftarah that the fact that they were twins has nothing other than biological significance: "I love Yaakov, while I have rejected Esav, and I disdain him." Throughout the generations the Jewish people have adopted a dual position vis-a-vis the Christians and mankind. Namely, the position of Avraham Avinu (in the beginning of Chayei Sara): we exist as both strangers and citizens with respect to the rest of mankind. Regarding fighting crime, terror, disease, poverty, improving the economy, and delving into the science of nature, we are equal partners, and all work together. But, with respect to the purpose of our lives, and lifestyle - the Jewish people feel "as strangers", and share nothing in common with anyone else. We are "the nation that lives alone" (parshas Balak), and will always remain so. The Jews live alone, die alone, and are buried alone.

When Ruth converted and joined the Jewish people, she said to her mother-in-law Naomi, "Where you go I will go; where you stay, I will stay; the way you will die, I will die; and there too will I be buried."

After living for many years in peace and harmony in Eretz Canaan, after the passing of Sara, Avraham Avinu insists on buying her a separate burial plot. The Jew lives differently, dies differently, and is even buried differently to emphasize this point. We share biological similarities with others, and work together with others on many different projects for the purpose of improving man's position here; but we do not share their weltanschauung. "Asher bochar banu mikol haamim."

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subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha Blog:: Rabbi Berel Wein

Toldot

This week's Torah reading continually raises for us the unbelievable fact that two such divergent personalities and worldviews could have been raised in the house of Yitzhak and Rivkah. We can understand how a person such as Yaakov could have come from their home. After all, he is studious, serious and obedient to the wishes of his parents, especially to those of his mother. He is not an outdoorsman and prefers the study hall to that of the sports field and the hunt. Later on in life he will acquire the traits of a warrior, an entrepreneur, and a strong leader who will endure much but remain steadfast in his beliefs and way of life.

However, it is very difficult for us to fathom how a murderer, rapist, idolater and feared hunter and tyrant could grow up and be raised in this very same household and by the very same parents that raised Yaakov. All of the commentators to the Torah have questioned this and every generation of scholars have attempted to address it and give it relevant meaning.

Yet, as is often the case regarding the human condition, the questions and problems involved defy logical answers and human understanding. The entire field of psychiatry and psychology is devoted to attempting to unravel behavior patterns and the mysteries of the human personality.

In my experience, psychology can, in the main, help identify the problem. But in most cases the true cause that triggers aberrant behavior remains hidden even from the most knowledgeable of us. Human beings are very complicated, have ultimate freedom of choice and behavior and only God in heaven can read the secrets of one's soul and personality.

And yet, we are all held responsible for our behavior and actions. Whatever it was that made Eisav the person he became, is solely his responsibility.....his deeds in life and the havoc that he created. Generally speaking, Judaism does not allow for excuses. Unforeseen circumstances can acquit someone in specific instances from performing a mitzvah. But Judaism never grants carte blanche excuses and forgiveness because of natural dysfunction and problems of life, especially of family life.

In our current society there are many who believe that parents and home atmosphere are responsible for wayward children. This may be true in particular instances, but it is certainly not the case in every instance or even in most instances.

From the moment we are born, we are granted the power to do what we wish to do. Those are our choices. We are taught that the rebellion of David's children against him came from the lack of discipline that David enforced upon them in their youth. Nevertheless, the blame and punishment visited upon those children was of their own doing and a result of their choices and behavior in life.

Eisav will weep at his father's feet and beg for his eternal blessing. He will be given a blessing but not the one that he wishes for. That other blessing had to be earned through his behavior and the choices he made. Ultimately that was up to Eisav alone. And that perhaps is the main message that we can glean from this otherwise mysterious person and situation.

Shabat shalom

Weekly Blog :: Rabbi Berel Wein

Disappointments

Disappointments are almost always based on the failure of people, technological gadgets or public policies to live up to expectations. Therefore, the higher the expectations are, the greater the disappointments. Because we invest so much confidence and hope in our political leaders, we are invariably doomed to disappointment and frustration when they turn out to be merely fallible human beings.

We are always looking for that great leader, with the ability to justify our outsized expectations and hopes. The greater the electoral victory, the harder it will be for that victor to somehow justify one's electoral success. So the best solution to ameliorate our frustrations and disappointments is not to set our expectations too high.

The fact that the companies that manufacture and market all of our new electrical and communication wonder devices advertise them in terms of perfection and ease of operation, only serves to disappoint us when those exaggerated claims do not match up with the reality of the product itself.

So we are constantly searching for the next iPhone that will achieve the required perfection that we expect....resembling the racing greyhound dog chasing the mechanical rabbit around the track. I have found in my years of rabbinic experience that unrealistic and exaggerated expectations of one another often lie at the root of family and domestic dysfunction.

Never believe the sales pitch of the well-meaning shadchan. Except for certain rabbis, no perfect people exist. Realizing and accepting this as a necessary reality of life will go a long way in reducing the unnecessary disappointments that we often bring upon ourselves.

In the recently concluded season, the great cities of New York and Chicago suffered only minor disappointment when their respective baseball teams did not win the ultimate championship in the World Series. I happened to be in both cities when their respective teams finally lost the playoff rounds for the championship. The mood in both cities was less of disappointment and more of pride – even wonderment – that their teams had unexpectedly achieved so much and made it so far in their quest for the championship.

At the beginning of the baseball season, few in either of these two cities had any expectations that these teams would somehow be able to contend for the championship. Since the expectations were low, the disappointment at the failure of either of these teams to win the championship was muted and more easily taken in stride.

In the broader and more important areas of life, it is clear that people should not expect that marriage, a new job, or a new face in politics and government will somehow solve all problems and bring us to paradise on earth. We must have a proportionate and realistic view of people and events and not give in to wishful thinking, boastful hopes and completely unrealistic scenarios.

The creation of the State of Israel was and is a great historical and spiritual event. However those that thought that somehow it would end all of the problems in the Jewish world, raised expectations that could not be fulfilled. Hence, so many utopians today express disappointment in this wonderful state and its unbelievable achievements.

We had very high expectations after the Six-Day War...and therefore we had enormous disappointment after the Yom Kippur War. We repeated this cycle of euphoric expectation and later depressing disappointment regarding the twenty-year-old "peace process" that began with the Oslo agreements and continues until today.

By giving in to our hopes and wishes and not looking at the reality of our adversaries face-to-face realistically, we are always surprised by the recurring waves of terror that have accompanied all efforts at peace and mutual understanding and respect. I think that by now almost all of us have lowered our expectations regarding this issue of peace with the Palestinians.

Therefore the level of disappointment has also been tempered and most Israelis, if not most Jews the world over, have adjusted to the tenseness and difficulties and situation here in the Land of Israel. We wish things were different but we realize what the reality is, and we simply have to make the best of a very difficult and dangerous situation.

We should not expect any magic bullets or great political initiatives that some will solve our problems in one fell swoop. Instead it will require a gradual change of mindset and an acceptance of reality by all concerned in order to move forward in attempting to build a more stable and peaceful relationship. I have no doubt that this will eventually occur.

Shabbat shalom

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Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Toldot

For the week ending 14 November 2015 / 2 Kislev 5776

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

Insights

A Myrtle or a Thorn?

"The boys grew up and Esav became one who knows hunting, a man of the field; but Yaakov was a wholesome man abiding in tents." (25-27)

Rabbi Levi said, "The boys can be compared to a myrtle bush and a thorn bush intertwined; once they have reached maturity and flowered, one gives forth its aroma and the other its thorns. For thirteen years together Esav and Yaakov both went to school, and together they both returned. After thirteen years, one went to batei midrashot, the houses of learning, and the other to places of idol worship and debauchery."

There are no guarantees when it comes to bringing up our children. All that parents can do is to take good advice; to be examples of what they would like their child to be. ("Don't do as I do, do as I tell you" rarely, if ever, succeeds); to follow the 3F's: Firm, Friendly and Fair; and to pray very hard. Rabbi Eliezer said, "A man needs to nurture his son until 13 years old, then he says, "Baruch she'patrani..." — "Blessed is He Who has exempted me from the punishment of this one (the son)." Until the age of thirteen the sins of the son can be visited upon the father. Thus, the father blesses G-d that he has delivered him from the punishment due to his son, and that henceforth the son will be liable for his actions.

There is dispute whether this blessing should be said with "Shem u'Malchut", meaning whether we mention G-d's Name and Kingship in the blessing. In the Shulchan Aruch Code of Jewish Law, Rabbi Moshe Iserles, the Rema, adjudicates that one should omit G-d's name when saying the blessing, and this is the accepted ruling.

It once happened that a certain boy was brought by his father to the Rabbi of Jerusalem, Rabbi Zvi Pesach Frank (1873–1960) on the day of his bar mitzvah. Rabbi Frank said to the father, "Even though the halacha is that one should say "Baruch she'patrani" without "Shem u'Malchut", in the case of this boy you could certainly say it!"

The boy looked quizzically at the Rabbi.

Many years later, it happened that on the boy's wedding day, Rabbi Zvi Pesach Frank was amongst the guests. In the meantime this young fellow had matured into a distinguished scholar. The groom made his way over to the Rabbi and introduced himself, reminding him of their meeting at his bar mitzvah. He said to Rabbi Frank, "Could I please ask the Rabbi what he meant by saying that in my case my father could certainly say Baruch she'patrani with Shem u'Malchut?"

Rabbi Frank replied, “The Mishna Berura’s gloss on the Rema says the reason for the blessing is that until thirteen the father is punished when the son sins because he has failed to educate his son properly in the ways of the Torah. Once the son becomes thirteen it’s up to the son to strengthen himself in the commandments of G-d. However, the Mishna Berura continues that even though the father ceases to have a mitzvah to educate, he is still obliged to rebuke his son for his actions if necessary. In many cases, the responsibility of a father for his son’s spiritual life extends way beyond bar mitzvah.

“In your case, I knew that you would be capable of being responsible for yourself, and that your father was truly acquitted of his responsibility for you.

“Thus I told him he could make the blessing using G-d’s name.”

Sources: Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, 225, Mishna Berura footnote 7; Rabbi Noach Orloweck; Story heard from Rabbi Dovid Cohen, Rosh Yeshivat Chevron

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Rabbi Weinreb’s Parsha Column

Toldot - “Strength, Patience, and Hope”

When I was a young boy, I had two distinct images of a strong man. One was of Charles Atlas. Do you remember him? If you do, you are no longer a youngster. Pictures of Charles Atlas appeared on the rear cover of the comic books that I voraciously read as a child. His muscular body was presented as the model of strength, and all of us “97 pound weaklings” were urged to correspond with Mr. Atlas, who, through his “dynamic tension” technique, could make similarly muscular men out of all of us.

The other image was of a man I knew who attended the small synagogue that my father, of blessed memory, frequented every Monday and Thursday, when the Torah was read. I don’t think that anyone in the shul knew the man’s real name. Everyone referred to him as “the Shtarker,” the Strong Man. I was then no more than eight years old, so to my eyes, he was at least seven feet tall. He was certainly head and shoulders above everyone else in that tiny synagogue. His physical prowess was demonstrated when he lifted the Torah after the Torah reading concluded. He lifted it high and extended his arms so that ten or twelve of the Torah columns were exposed. My memory may deceive me, but I think that no one else in the shul was ever given the honor of lifting the Torah. No one else could compete with the Shtarker’s feat.

Over the years, I have come to reflect upon the many “shtarkers” in the Bible. Samson is one obvious candidate for the title. But even kindly Abraham was a warrior, and a victorious one. Jacob was proud of his triumphant use of “my sword and my bow.” Moses was able to slay the Egyptian who tormented his Jewish victim. Joshua, Saul, and David were all “shtarkers” who led their people in battle.

One biblical figure stands out as a “non-shtarker,” a gentle soul, perhaps even a pacifist. I refer, of course, to Isaac, the hero of the Torah portion we read this week, Parashat Toldot (Genesis 25:19-28:9). Isaac commits no aggressive acts, however legitimate they might be, and never even asserts himself verbally.

I have long been conscious of the contrast between Isaac and the other major characters of the Bible. But only recently was I made aware of a fascinating problem. It was brought to my attention by Rabbi Yehuda Shaviv in his excellent book on the weekly Torah portions, entitled *MiSinai Ba* (He Came From Sinai). Rabbi Shaviv concurs with my view of Isaac as a decidedly non-militant personality. But he is troubled by the fact that in the Jewish mystical tradition, the trait of *gevurah*, strength, is assigned to Isaac and not to the other Patriarchs. Thus, in Kabbalistic terminology, Abraham

represents *chesed*, compassion, and Jacob stands for *tiferet*, harmony. It is gentle Isaac who carries the banner of *gevurah*. How are we to understand this perplexing attribution of strength to that patriarch who seems to least exemplify it?

Rabbi Shaviv answers this dilemma with the following provocative sentence: “Forgoing the military option is itself a show of strength.” I can accept his formulation, but I choose to modify it slightly. The way I see it, there are two types of strength. One way is to exert power. Abraham chose that way when he waged war against the four kings in the story we read just a few short weeks ago. Similarly, Joshua and David found that way necessary in their struggles.

But Isaac knew the secret of another way of demonstrating strength. He faced challenges that he could have met aggressively. More than once, he faced hostility. In our parasha, we read of the enmity he confronted at the hands of the Philistines, who stopped up the wells he needed to water his flock. In verses 13-22 of chapter 26, we read “...The Philistines envied him...They stopped up all the wells his father had dug...” What was Isaac’s response? Not war! Rather, “Isaac departed...” He left the scene, he dug new wells, but again he faced violent opposition. “The herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with him...” They continued to stop his wells. In response, he dug another well and dug yet another well. He persisted, swallowing his pride and suppressing every impulse of striking back violently. Ultimately, he prevailed. Finally, he dug a well which was uncontested.

Some find his patience in the face of his enemies frustrating. But Midrash Tanchuma finds it admirable and remarks: “Behold! See what strength Isaac possessed!” The Midrash validates Rabbi Shaviv’s contention that sometimes, “forgoing the military option is itself a show of strength.”

There is a verse in the biblical Book of Proverbs which is particularly apt here. It reads, “Better to be forbearing than mighty; to have self-control than to conquer a city.” (Proverbs 16:32).

Isaac’s method of achieving goals persistently but patiently is again demonstrated in a very different context in this week’s Torah portion. We are told that he was forty years old when he married Rebecca, whereas his children were not born until he was sixty. He suffered twenty years of disappointing childlessness. It would have been perfectly appropriate for him to take another wife, or a concubine, during those twenty years. After all, his father Abraham had done just that, marrying Hagar when Sarah could not bear him a child. Could Isaac not have assumed that Rebecca would have given her consent to such a move, as did his mother Sarah?

Isaac rejected that option. Instead, again patiently and persistently, he chose to pray. He prayed fervently, year after year. The great medieval commentator Rabbi David Kimchi, or Radak, remarks: “He prayed consistently and for a long period of time because he loved Rebecca exceedingly. He did not wish to offend her by taking another wife. Therefore, he persisted in prayer until the Lord answered him.”

There are many texts in our tradition that give support to Isaac’s way of demonstrating strength. One that particularly intrigues me is this Talmudic statement: “Who is the strongest of the strong? He who transforms his enemy into a friend.” This was Isaac’s way. He asks us to strive to convert our enemy into a friend.

Another text illustrates that strength is more about patient self-control than physical might. It is found in the Talmudic tractate *Kiddushin* 40a, where the tale is told about a certain Rabbi Zadok, who resists the attempts of a particularly powerful noblewoman to lead him astray. He exerts moral strength, and to him the Talmud applies the following biblical verse: “Bless the Lord, O His angels, mighty creatures who do His bidding, ever obedient to His bidding. Bless the Lord, all His hosts, His servants who do His will.” (Psalms 103:20-21)

Isaac’s way recognizes the necessity for great patience and forbearance. If we adopt Isaac’s way, we must be prepared for a lengthy process before our challenges are resolved. In the words of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, words

which have been memorialized in a popular song, “An eternal people does not fear the long and arduous path.”

Patience is necessary for those who follow Isaac’s way. But a wise woman taught us that patience is but another name for hope. That woman was Jane Austen, who put these words into the mouth of one of the characters in her great novel, *Sense and Sensibility*: “Know your own happiness. You want nothing but patience—or give it a more fascinating name: call it hope.”

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Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

A Father's Love

“The boys grew up. Esau became a skilful hunter, a man of the outdoors; but Jacob was a mild man who stayed at home among the tents. Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob” (Gen. 25:27-28).

We have no difficulty understanding why Rebekah loved Jacob. She had received an oracle from God in which 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).

Jacob was the younger. Rebekah seems to have inferred, correctly as it turned out, that it would be he who would continue the covenant, who would stay true to Abraham’s heritage, and who would teach it to his children, carrying the story forward into the future.

The real question is why did Isaac love Esau? Could he not see that he was a man of the outdoors, a hunter, not a contemplative or a man of God? Is it conceivable that he loved Esau merely because he had a taste for wild game? Did his appetite rule his mind and heart? Did Isaac not know how Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of soup, and how he subsequently “despised” the birthright itself (Gen. 25:29-34). Was this someone with whom to entrust the spiritual patrimony of Abraham?

Isaac surely knew that his elder son was a man of mercurial temperament who lived in the emotions of the moment. Even if this did not trouble him, the next episode involving Esau clearly did: “When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and also Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. They were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah” (Gen. 26:34-35). Esau had made himself at home among the Hittites. He had married two of their women. This was not a man to carry forward the Abrahamic covenant which involved a measure of distance from the Hittites and Canaanites and all they represented in terms of religion, culture and morality.

Yet Isaac clearly did love Esau. Not only does the verse with which we began say so. It remained so. Genesis 27, with its morally challenging story of how Jacob dressed up as Esau and took the blessing that had been meant for him, is remarkable for the picture it paints of the genuine deep affection between Isaac and Esau. We sense this at the beginning when Isaac asks Esau: “Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die.” This is not Isaac’s physical appetite speaking. It is his wish to be filled with the smell and taste he associates with his elder son, so that he can bless him in a mood of focused love.

It is the end of the story, though, that really conveys the depth of feeling between them. Esau enters with the food he has prepared. Slowly Isaac, and then Esau, realise the nature of the deception that has been practiced against them. Isaac “trembled violently.” Esau “burst out with a loud and bitter cry.” It is hard in English to convey the power of these descriptions. The Torah generally says little about people’s emotions. During the whole of the trial of the binding of Isaac we are given not the slightest indication of what Abraham or Isaac felt in one of the most fraught episodes in Genesis. The

text is, as Erich Auerbach said, “fraught with background,” meaning, more is left unsaid than said. The depth of feeling the Torah describes in speaking of Isaac and Esau at that moment is thus rare and almost overwhelming. Father and son share their sense of betrayal, Esau passionately seeking some blessing from his father, and Isaac rousing himself to do so. The bond of love between them is intense. So the question returns with undiminished force: why did Isaac love Esau, despite everything, his wildness, his mutability and his outmarriages?

The sages gave an explanation. They interpreted the phrase “skilful hunter” as meaning that Esau trapped and deceived Isaac. He pretended to be more religious than he was.[1] There is, though, a quite different explanation, closer to the plain sense of the text, and very moving. Isaac loved Esau because Esau was his son, and that is what fathers do. They love their children unconditionally. That does not mean that Isaac could not see the faults in Esau’s character. It does not imply that he thought Esau the right person to continue the covenant. Nor does it mean he was not pained when Esau married Hittite women. The text explicitly says he was. But it does mean that Isaac knew that a father must love his son because he is his son. That is not incompatible with being critical of what he does. But a father does not disown his child, even when he disappoints his expectations. Isaac was teaching us a fundamental lesson in parenthood.

Why Isaac? Because he knew that Abraham had sent his son Ishmael away. He may have known how much that pained Abraham and injured Ishmael. There is a remarkable series of midrashim that suggest that Abraham visited Ishmael even after he sent him away, and others that say it was Isaac who effected the reconciliation.[2] He was determined not to inflict the same fate on Esau.

Likewise he knew to the very depths of his being the psychological cost on both his father and himself of the trial of the binding. At the beginning of the chapter of Jacob, Esau and the blessing the Torah tells us that Isaac was blind. There is a midrash that suggests that it was tears shed by the angels as they watched Abraham bind his son and lift the knife that fell into Isaac’s eyes, causing him to go blind in his old age.[3] The trial was surely necessary, otherwise God would not have commanded it. But it left wounds, psychological scars, and it left Isaac determined not to have to sacrifice Esau, his own child. In some way, then, Isaac’s unconditional love of Esau was a tikkun for the rupture in the father-son relationship brought about by the binding.

Thus, though Esau’s path was not that of the covenant, Isaac’s gift of paternal love helped prepare the way for the next generation, in which all of Jacob’s children remained within the fold.

There is a fascinating argument between two mishnaic sages that has a bearing on this. There is a verse in Deuteronomy (14:1) that says, about the Jewish people, “You are children of the Lord your God.” Rabbi Judah held that this applied only when Jews behaved in a way worthy of the children of God. Rabbi Meir said that it was unconditional: Whether Jews behave like God’s children or they do not, they are still called the children of God.[4] Rabbi Meir, who believed in unconditional love, acted in accordance with his view. His own teacher, Elisha ben Abuya, eventually lost his faith and became a heretic, yet Rabbi Meir continued to study with him and respect him, maintaining that at the very last moment of his life he had repented and returned to God.[5]

To take seriously the idea, central to Judaism, of Avinu Malkeinu, that our King is first and foremost our parent, is to invest our relationship with God with the most profound emotions. God wrestles with us, as does a parent with a child. We wrestle with him as a child does with his or her parents. The relationship is sometimes tense, conflictual, even painful, yet what gives it its depth is the knowledge that it is unbreakable. Whatever happens, a parent is still a parent, and a child is still a child. The bond may be deeply damaged but it is never broken beyond repair.

Perhaps that is what Isaac was signalling to all generations by his continuing love for Esau, so unlike him, so different in character and destiny, yet never

rejected by him – just as the midrash says that Abraham never rejected Ishmael and found ways of communicating his love. Unconditional love is not uncritical but it is unbreakable. That is how we should love our children – for it is how God loves us.

[1] He would ask him questions such as, “Father, how do we tithe salt and straw?” knowing that in fact these were exempt from tithe. Isaac thought that meant that he was scrupulous in his observance of the commandments (Rashi to Gen. 25:27; Tanchuma, Toldot, 8).

[2] See Jonathan Sacks, *Not in God’s Name*, 107-124.

[3] *Genesis Rabbah* 65:10.

[4] *Kiddushin* 36a.

[5] *Yerushalmi Hagigah* 2:1.

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.

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Rabbi Ari Kahn on Parsha

Inside Information

The home life of Rivka and Yitzchak was complicated. This is not to say there was a lack of love, honor or respect; in fact, quite the opposite is the case. Theirs is the first relationship the Torah explicitly states was one of love[1]. Indeed, we might even say that theirs was love at first sight, and, as far as we can tell, that love continues until death separates them. What complicated their relationship were their children. After years of infertility, years of prayer and tears, Rivka became pregnant, but it was an unusual, difficult pregnancy, and it is likely that she was unaware that she was carrying twins.

To ease her distress, Rivka sought Divine guidance, and was told that she carried two sons. Furthermore, she was told that each of them would be the father of a nation, but they would not get along, and the younger one would be more successful.[2] Rather than putting her at ease, we can imagine that this knowledge must have been a heavy burden for Rivka to bear. Even before it began, she knew how the story would end. Moreover, a moral quandary immediately presented itself: Should she, or should she not, share the “inside information” with her husband? If both parents know the outcome, will it impact their attitudes toward their children? Will the knowledge become a self-fulfilling prophecy? Many people like to peek at the end of a book to see the outcome before they begin, but is the outcome of our children’s lives the sort of information we want to be privy to?

Apparently, Rivka made a bold choice: She opted not to share the information with Yitzchak, hoping that Esav would be able to grow up without the shadow of this prophecy hanging over him. Only by keeping her information to herself would both sons enjoy equal opportunities and equally benefit from the love and attention of their father – even if she herself might not be capable of rising above the prejudice that this prophecy most certainly created in her heart.[3]

But even without Rivka’s help, Yitzchak knew. He may not have “sneaked a peek at the end of the book,” but he was not unaware of the differences between his two sons. One of his sons was “a man of the tents,” a man who reminded him of his own father Avraham, who sat in his tent in order to welcome guests and spread his belief in the One God, Creator of the universe and all its bounty.[4] His other son reminded him of someone else, someone far more sinister, a man whom Yitzchak had never met but had heard so much about: Nimrod. Esav’s fondness for hunting[5] was a passion he shared with Nimrod,[6] who was famed far and wide as a ruthless hunter.

According to rabbinic tradition, it was Nimrod who had thrown Avraham into a fiery furnace in order to eradicate his message of monotheism.[7] What did Yitzchak see when he looked at his twin sons? A “reincarnation” of this same rivalry, a second round of the Avraham-Nimrod battle now fought by Yaakov and Esav in his own home. Would anyone have thought less of him had he favored one son over the other, encouraging the son who embodied the values for which Avraham had risked his own life and the life of his son? Surely, he could not have been faulted had he rejected Esav, who appeared to be some sort of genealogical/theological anomaly. Either God was playing a cruel joke on Yitzchak, or he was presenting him with a nearly insurmountable challenge by giving him a son of this kind.

Apparently, Yitzchak met this challenge from a completely different angle: Yitzchak understood that if this new religion that he had been charged by his own father to teach and uphold, the belief in a God of kindness, were to have any meaning, it must bear a spiritual message and offer a place for the Esavs and Nimrods of the world, and not only for the spiritual elite who were blessed with the attributes of Avraham. According to one tradition, Yitzchak had seen this challenge successfully met in his childhood home: Eliezer, the faithful servant of Avraham, is said to have been the son (or grandson) of Nimrod.[8] Yitzchak had seen that the truth of Avraham’s message had the power to transform even those who were raised in the very darkest heart of paganism. He must surely have reasoned that Esav was not a lost cause: Like Eliezer, Esav, too, could be taught to use his strengths in the service of good, in the service of God.

With that thought in mind, Yitzchak devised an educational plan to train and elevate his wild son Esav: He would shower him with love, create a supportive environment that would accentuate his capabilities and value his strengths. Yitzchak loved Esav – not despite the fact that he was a hunter, but because Yitzchak had made a conscious decision to love Esav for his hunting prowess. Yitzchak gave Esav tasks, sent him on hunting missions, asked Esav to bring him food, in order to harness Esav’s strengths in the service of God through the commandment to honor his father: If Esav merely hunted for sport, this would be a cruel and disturbing occupation, but if he hunted in order to feed his father and his family, his wild streak would become focused, productive, and eventually, Yitzchak hoped, tamed.

Unfortunately, Yitzchak’s hopes and expectations created more pressure for Esav, who loved and respected his father but was always fearful of disappointing him. He did not want the responsibility of being the older son; he did not want responsibility of any kind. He wanted freedom – to marry whomever he pleased and live his own carefree life. He defied his parents by marrying not one but two local women;[9] even when his parents’ displeasure became known to him, he “corrected” the situation by taking an additional wife, one he could bring to family functions without causing friction, to “make his old man happy.”[10]

In a moment of weakness, Esav asked his brother Yaakov to feed him. Esav was tired: He was tired of living up to his father’s expectations, tired of searching for meaning in his hunting, tired of the charade he had been playing to appease his father.[11] He was not the Esav his father thought he was; he would never be reformed, as Eliezer had been. He had merely been wearing that other Esav’s clothes, but underneath he remained a free spirit who wanted no responsibility. Even more than he despised responsibility, he despised his birthright;[12] he wanted no part of the future Yitzchak envisioned for him. At his first opportunity, he sold the birthright to his brother Yaakov – who now had every right to wear Esav’s clothing. Yaakov, not Esav, is the future; Yaakov, not Esav, will take responsibility, beginning with the food he gave his brother on that very day.

Rivka always knew that day would come; from the start, she had been told how the story would unfold. She knew that Esav would never be reformed, would never be interested in taking part in the future of Avraham’s covenant with God. What Rivka had been told at the outset, Yitzchak finally understood only years later: Yaakov alone would inherit the blessings of Avraham, but sadly, the role that might have been taken by Esav, the role

that Eliezer had fulfilled happily in the service of Avraham, would also have to be fulfilled by Yaakov. Esav wanted no part in it.

For a more in-depth analysis see:

<http://arikahn.blogspot.co.il/2015/11/audio-and-essays-parashat-toldot.html>

[1] Bereishit 24:67. [2] Bereishit 25:23. [3] We find no direct interaction between Rivka and Esav. [4] Bereishit 21:33 and Rashi ad loc. [5] Bereishit 25:27. [6] Bereishit 10:9. [7] Talmud Bavli Pesachim 118a. [8] See Targum Pseudo Yonatan, Bereishit 4:14. [9] Bereishit 26:34-35. [10] Bereishit 28:8-9 and Rashi. [11] Bereishit 25:29-30. [12] Bereishit 25:34.

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Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Toldos

Yaakov was a Searcher While Eisav Engaged in Trivial Pursuits

The Torah describes the difference between the two children of Yitzchak and Rivka: "And the children grew up and Esav was a hunter, a man of the field and Yaakov was a wholesome man, abiding in tents (yoshev ohalim)."

[Bereshis 25:27]. Rashi comments on the use of the plural for the word tent – ohalim. According to Chazal the pasuk is referring to the fact that Yaakov sat in the Tent of Torah study. Rashi, citing the Medrash says on the words "yoshev ohalim" (sitting in tents): "The Tent of Shem and the Tent of Ever". It is a well-known teaching of Chazal that "Yaakov studied in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever". However, contrary to popular opinion, Shem and his great grandson Ever did not jointly run a single Yeshiva known as "The Yeshiva of Shem and Ever", rather there were two distinct institutions. Yaakov knew the value of studying from multiple teachers and studied both in the Yeshiva of Shem and in the Yeshiva of Ever.

This is indicative of the quest Yaakov had for acquiring Torah knowledge. He did not suffice to remain in one Yeshiva. He was a "dweller in Tents (plural)". He went to two different Yeshivas to acquire comprehensive Torah knowledge.

Rav Yeruchem, in his Sefer on Chumash – Daas Torah – points out that the Torah does not really explicitly tell us specific incidents about the lives of Yaakov and Eisav. It merely tells us one thing about each of them. It tells us that Yaakov was a dweller in tents and Eisav was a hunter. Targum Yonasan ben Uziel translates "The children grew up and Eisav was an idle person" (in other words he occupied himself with insignificant pursuits) "and Yaakov was a complete person and he served in the Study House of Ever, he demanded teachings from the Master of the Universe."

Rav Yeruchem emphasizes that the Torah does not choose to tell us about the specific incidents that happened to Yaakov and Eisav during the course of their youth and adolescence. The Torah is interested in telling us what makes them tick. When we define what makes a person tick -- what are his middos (character traits and aspirations) -- that determines his essence and reveals what type of activities he will engage in throughout his life.

When the Torah tells us that Yaakov sought out knowledge of G-d, it means he was not satisfied to remain in his place. He did not look at himself as a complete person. Yaakov was a searcher. The word Yaakov comes from the word akov, which means crooked. He perceived himself as a person who needs improvement.

Eisav, on the other hand, the Targum explains, was someone engaged in idle pursuits. The commentaries say that the word Eisav comes from the Hebrew word assui – made or complete. He saw himself as a complete person who could sit back and rest on his laurels. He could busy himself with going hunting and all kinds of nonsensical activities.

The Targum's words describe Yaakov's personality ("seeking G-d").

Similarly, the Targum's words describe Eisav's personality ("one engaged in idleness"). One was a seeker – a person always demanding to know more and learn more – and one was a person who viewed himself as complete, not

needing to grow further, such that he could busy himself with hunting and other such frivolous pursuits.

Whenever I read these words of the Targum Yonason ben Uziel and the comment of Rav Yeruchem upon them, I am reminded of an incident that happened to me several years ago.

I was invited to South Africa as a scholar in residence for a week and a half. I was flying back from Johannesburg to Atlanta, which was an eighteen hour trip. My South African hosts treated me well and had reserved seats for me in the upper deck of a 747 Jumbo Jet. I settled into my seat for this extremely long flight. The seating configuration was six across. Seated next to me were two brothers and their wives.

The plane had not yet taken off and the others in the row were already kvetching about how tight their seats were. (I was the lightest person in the row.) One of the brothers said to his wife "The next time we do this; we need to fly business class". I commented, "You know, business class is really quite expensive – it is several thousand dollars more." The person responded to me, "Well after what we spent on this trip, what's another few thousand dollars?"

As the trip went on, I built up my courage and asked the person next to me "Tell me, what exactly did you do on this trip?" He told me, "Well, we landed and we went hunting." They did not merely go to a game reserve where the animals are waiting to be hunted. They went to Namibia and they were out in the wilds – no lights, no electricity, no bathrooms – literally it was just them and the animals. They ate what they shot. If they did not shoot anything, they did not eat. I asked them if they were used to hunting and they told me they had their own rifles. "It took us three hours to get through customs with our rifles." I asked them if they were used to travelling abroad to go hunting. They said it was the first time they left Wisconsin.

This was their first trip abroad. They went to South Africa to go hunting in the wilds. They brought their own guns. I finally mustered up the courage and asked them "How much did this trip cost you?" Twenty-five thousand dollars!

Think about it. This was their first trip outside of Wisconsin. They couldn't have gone to Orlando first? They had to go to South Africa? I haven't spent twenty-five thousand dollars on a car and here they go spend twenty-five thousand dollars on a one week hunting trip! It was mind boggling to me. I just kept thinking of the pasuk, "And the children grew up and behold Eisav was a hunter, a man of the field." This is a family tradition they had from their great grandfather Eisav -- an idle person. There is nothing more important to do in life with \$25,000 than to spend it on one hunting trip. Then I had another incident on the same flight. It was in the middle of the night and virtually everyone on the plane was sleeping. I tried everything. I tried a sleeping pill, I tried this, and I tried that, but nothing helped. I was not wearing my glasses but I looked up and I saw something I could not believe. I put on my glasses to make sure I was seeing right. Lo and behold, a fellow was in the aisle between the seats, practicing his golf swing. In the middle of the night, thirty-thousand feet over Africa, in the middle of the aisle of the upper deck of a 747, he was practicing his golf swing!

I said to myself, if this guy can be golfing here in the middle of the night, I need to take out a Sefer. If he represents Eisav, the hunter, the man of the field, then the least I can do is try to represent Yaakov, the seeker of Torah knowledge. There were thus only two people awake on the plane that night – the golfer who represented Eisav, and yours truly who was trying to represent Yaakov.

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

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Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites

The Jerusalem Post

By Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Parshat Toldot – Hope, success and peace

November 12, 2015 Thursday 30 Heshvan 5776

Things that were true 3,700 years ago are still true today. The way to deal with enemies is by building, holding on to the land and developing it.

In the previous Torah portions, we have come to know the characters of our first father, Abraham, and first mother, Sarah. In this week's portion, we get to know the second father and mother – Isaac and Rebekah.

Among the three forefathers – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – Isaac stands out because of his special connection with the Land of Israel. This connection is expressed, first of all, in the fact that from his birth through to the day of his death, he never left the borders of Eretz Yisrael, the Land of Israel. This is as opposed to Abraham, who was not born in the Land of Israel, and Jacob, who died in Egypt. In addition, Isaac dealt intensively with settling the land. Indeed, we read about his efforts to establish his settlement in the land and his dealings with the Philistines, who were its earlier inhabitants.

Initially we read about his success and financial prosperity: “And Isaac sowed in that land, and he found in that year a hundred fold, and the Lord blessed him. And the man became great, and he grew constantly greater until he had grown very great. And he had possessions of sheep and possessions of cattle and much production...” (Genesis 26:12-14)

Then we discover that Isaac's neighbors are not pleased about his success: “... and the Philistines envied him. And all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father the Philistines stopped them up and filled them with earth. And Abimelech said to Isaac, ‘Go away from us, for you have become much stronger than we.’ And Isaac went away from there... And Isaac's servants dug in the valley, and they found there a well of living waters. And the shepherds of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's shepherds, saying, ‘The water is ours’... And they dug another well, and they quarreled about it also.” (Genesis 26:14-21)

And finally, we read about a surprising turn of events: “And he went up from there to Beersheba... and Abimelech went to him from Gerar and a group of his companions... And Isaac said to them, ‘Why have you come to me, since you hate me, and you sent me away from you?’ And they said, ‘We have seen that the Lord was with you... and let us form a covenant with you.’” (Genesis 26:23-28)

What can we learn from Isaac's behavior and from the direction in which the complicated relationship between Isaac and the Philistines is headed? The first point which stands out in Isaac's story is his lack of despair. Isaac does not despair even when he is expelled time and time again. Wherever he goes, he tries to establish his hold on the land by digging wells. Even when his wells are filled with earth and others try to steal his natural resources, it does not affect the great spirit that motivates him to move on. His reaction to his neighbors' scheming is clear and strong: he digs a new well. Though he does not take revenge, and it might even seem that he is giving in and withdrawing, in reality he rebuilds. He knows where it is best to invest his energies in order to prevail.

Another point that stands out in Isaac's story is the development of the Philistines' relationship with him.

Isaac annoys them. Jealousy turns to hatred and they expel him from the boundaries of the city. When Isaac continues to succeed and prosper, their jealousy overwhelms them and they steal the wells that he discovered and exposed. But when the Philistines come to see that Isaac's success is a fact on the ground and that he is succeeding in establishing himself despite them, they come to him with a respectable delegation and try to ingratiate themselves with flattery. They rewrite history and present themselves as peace-seekers while asking him to make a covenant with them that will assure their welfare.

Things that were true 3,700 years ago are still true today. The way to deal with enemies is by building, holding on to the land and developing it. We

inherited from Isaac the hope and faith that push aside despair and overcome it, pushing us to continue building, growing and flourishing.

And another thing that we learn is that when the People of Israel's success and prosperity are undeniable, when the nations of the world see that God protects His people and takes care of them, we will not have to chase after peace with our neighbors because they themselves, the enemies of yesterday, will come and ask us to make a covenant of peace with them.

May we be privileged to have true peace, speedily in our days. Amen.

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Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Psalm 103: Reaching Inwards to God

”לְדָוִד: בָּרַכְוּ יְהוָה אֱתֵי אֶת-ה', וְכָל-קִרְבֵי אֶת-שָׁם קִדְשׁוֹ.”

“To David. Let my soul bless God, and let all that is within me [bless] His holy Name.” (Psalms 103:1)

The psalm concludes with the same theme: “Let my soul bless God.” Clearly, the human soul is inherently connected to God. But what about our internal organs, “all that is within me”? Are they also able to sing God's praises?

Human versus Divine Creation

The Sages taught that David composed this psalm after reflecting on the unique nature of Divine creation.

“Mortal man is not like the Holy One. We are able to carve a figure on the wall. But we cannot place within it spirit and soul, organs and intestines. The Holy One, however, is different. God shapes a form within a form, and gives it spirit and soul, organs and intestines.” (Berachot 10a)

When we make an object, whether it be a table, a sculpture, or a skyscraper, we only manipulate its external properties. Even a robot is merely a sophisticated machine, lacking emotion and true intelligence.

Inventors, engineers, and artists cannot truly connect with the inner essence of the material they work with. We ourselves are created beings, and as such can only relate to other created objects on a superficial level. We may fashion its external shape - “carve a figure on the wall” - but we cannot provide it with a soul. We have no control over its true inner nature.

God, on the other hand, relates equally to all aspects of His creation, external and internal. The essence of Divine creation emanates from God's will. He creates and sustains the inner nature of all creatures. For inanimate objects - their very state of existence. For living creatures - their instinctive nature and life-force. And for human beings - their emotions, intellect, and soul.

Searching Inwards

We sometimes hear of an extraordinary spiritual journey. An individual seeks the meaning of life by scaling the heights of a remote mountain or withdrawing to the vastness of an isolated desert. The psalmist, however, shares a surprising insight: a more authentic journey may very well start closer to home. One may search for God, not by turning outwards to the distant and faraway, but rather inwards to the immediate and near. “All that is within me will bless God's Name.”

Rav Kook wrote:

“Within our soul, all worlds are revealed. As we deepen our inner awareness of the soul's qualities, we expand our understanding of all things. In particular, the soul of the universe and the original light from the Source of all life is revealed, according to the extent that we discover the universe within the soul itself.” (Arpilei Tohar, p. 74)

The human soul connects to its Creator through its very essence. “Let my soul bless God.” The soul seeks and finds God within itself - in its intellect and in its elevated feelings. If we want to relate to our Creator, then we need go no further than our own inner selves. We can most easily relate to God

through our innate qualities: our need for meaning, and our most powerful inner drives - for goodness, holiness, and justice. The soul is elevated when it identifies the Divine within its own inner nature. Then, through its self-awareness, the soul is able to recognize its Creator, and bless God with love and great joy. (Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, p. 52)
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<http://nachmankahana.com/toldot-5776/>

Rabbi Nachman Kahana
BS"D Toldot 5776

No weapon forged against you will prevail .. Yeshayahu 54,17:

כל כלי יוצר עליך לא יצלה וכל לשון תקוה אתך למשפט תרשיעי זאת נחלת עבדי ה'
ה' וצדקתם מאתי נאם ה'

No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me," declares the Lord.

In a broad sense, all of us are contemporaries of the personalities in this week's and last week's parshiot.

Last week's parasha, Chayai Sarah, ends with the death of Yishmael. This week's parasha Toldot begins with the birth of Ya'akov and Eisav. These three personalities and their descendants were and are the major "players" in world history – the Jewish nation, Christians and Moslems.

The three met in their lifetimes. Yishmael was 79 years old when Avraham died, and he came together with Yitzchak to bury their father, as is recorded in parashat Chayai Sarah. Yitzchak must have certainly brought his two sons, Ya'akov and Eisav, to their grandfather's funeral where they met their Uncle Yishmael.

Yishmael, the "pereh adam" (wild man), was savage and uncontrollable, as stated in the Torah. Eisav, the cool, conniving, devious murderer, who unlike his uncle Yishmael, would never blow himself up in a school or supermarket, waits patiently for his father's demise when he will murder his brother, Ya'akov.

World history was planned by the Creator to follow the natural instincts of these three descendants of Avraham Avinu, with the rest of humanity waiting in the wings for their time to appear on the future stage of history.

History has shown that Yishmael and Eisav contrived to make parallel albeit different assaults on Ya'akov.

Yishmael the "pereh adam" strives to destroy the moral teachings of Ya'akov by undoing the world order which Ya'akov, through the Torah, seeks to create. Eisav takes the devious, round-about path of creating a world in which there is no place for Ya'akov.

Islam has destroyed, among other things, the comfortable, secure order of world travel, whereas now every traveler is suspect. Suspicion has spread from the airport to the train station, to the local supermarket to the elevator and to the bet kneset. They crash into financial centers of nations to murder thousands. They destroy hotels and hospitals in India, thinking the more deaths they cause the better. Bali, Yemen, the underground in London, Chizbala and Chamas, and a passenger plane over the Sinai Peninsula.

Their wish is to return the world to the dark ages of ignorance and intolerance not only towards the stranger, but even towards their co-religionists who are just a bit different. Murder for them is not a dastardly crime. It is the fulfillment of the will of their demented Allah.

For Yishmael, death is superior to life. They fill the midrassas with millions of children, who will be trained to be human bombs to make the Kamikazes look like child's play. All of these efforts are a negation of what Ya'akov stands for. If they destroy the world order, they will have achieved victory over the Torah and the children of Ya'akov.

Eisav, compatible with his personality, seeks to uproot Ya'akov from our land in a much more elegant manner. Eisav schemes to murder Ya'akov while smiling at his brother in wait of their father's death.

While complimenting us on our democratic process and how advanced we are in all fields of academia, Eisav whispers in our ears that there will be no more construction in Yehuda and Shomron, that we are to deliver the Golan to the Syrians, to return to the borders of 1967, and to not react when thousands of rockets are fired at us. Moreover, we are to mark every produce of Shomron and Yehuda as such, so that the world should know not to purchase those products. Investment in Israeli projects should be divested. An academic boycott declared on Israeli schools of higher learning, the threat that Israeli military officers could be arrested when they step foot in the United Kingdom, and the key to Jonathan Pollard's cell thrown away in order to teach the uppity Jews to stay in their place. The list goes on and on ad nauseum.

If Yishmael has set his task to destroy all good by destroying world order, and has Eisav contrives to destroy his brother Ya'akov, what is the task of Ya'akov?

We were put in the world for the purpose of insuring that Man would not forget God, the Creator.

Were it not for Ya'akov and his children, the concept of God would be long forgotten.

Christianity would have diluted into atheism and Islam into avoda zara (idolatry).

Where is all of this heading?

Chazal (our Rabbis, of blessed memory) have revealed that the descendants of Yishmael will cause three wars: one on the sea, one on land and the third in the area of Yerushalayim. Yishmael will be defeated by the combined armies of Eisav, who in turn will be attacked by a nation from the end of the world (perhaps China). And at the end of days, the Jewish nation will be victorious over all our enemies, and the Holy Land will remain forever in our possession.

This is all written in the Zohar, at the end of parashat Va'ayra in the Book of Shemot and explained by the Malbim in his commentary to the Book of Yechezkel chapter 32 verse 17.

In the light of current events, I would not issue a life-insurance policy to any Jewish community in the galut. HaShem provided them with a 60-70 year window of opportunity to return home. So, from now on, what happens to the Jews of the galut is totally their own responsibility.

We, in Eretz Yisrael, will be like Noah in the ark. We will witness difficult days and the dangers will abound, but HaShem will bless His people in His holy land as Yitzchak blessed Ya'akov.

"No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me," declares the Lord.

The choice to be a Ya'akov or an Aisav

I was recently asked of my feelings regarding American Open Orthodoxy in general, and the matter of rabbinic ordination of women, in particular. My reply was a curt: These matters, as well as all others pertaining to galut Jewry, are irrelevant. The moment HaShem brought about the establishment of Medinat Yisrael, American Jewry and the other Jewish communities in the galut became irrelevant to the on-going and future history of the Jewish people. It is only a question of time, and no too long, when they will disappear.

Let me explain.

The Gemara (Yuma 83b) relates that Rabbi Meir was able to discern the basic character of a person from his name. And it is cited in various rabbinic works that when a parent names a child it is considered a nevu'a ketana – minor prophecy.

In our parasha, the world's most illustrious twins were named by their parents: Ya'akov and Aisav.

Aisav means wild growing grass, weeds or herb. Aisav is described as "a man of the field" – eesh ha'sadeh. Yaakov, taken from the Hebrew "aikev" (heel) implies consistency, as when walking one foot follows the other with

cadence and precision, and Ya'akov is described as “the dweller of the tents” – yoshev o'halim.

These descriptions serve to elaborate on the names and characters of the two brothers.

A field is an open area permitting unhindered free access to wherever one wishes to go. There is no obligation or responsibility to any one point or area in a field, so when it becomes uncomfortable one can just move on. A field contains any assortment of weeds, grass and herbs intertwined or growing alone depending where the wind scattered the seeds.

Open fields have no order. No law except the law of the jungle. Just pick and choose whatever appeals to you at that given moment and discard what is disturbing and irritating.

This was Aisav – the man of the field. He discarded the responsibilities that come with being a first born, selling it for a pittance. He returns from the field so tired that he implores his brother Ya'akov to feed him lentils. The details are a drag on him, just give him the pleasures without the effort. Aisav sees no importance in living a disciplined life because, as he says to Ya'akov (B'rayshiet 25:32):

ויאמר עשו הנה אנכי הולך למות ולמה זה לי בכרה

I will soon die, why do I need the birthright?

Aisav's value system serves as the ideological basis of the reform movement with its logical, inevitable result – assimilation. Discard what is inconvenient, like Shabbat, kashrut, family purity, marrying within the Jewish nation – and certainly the embarrassment of a Jewish State in Eretz Yisrael where Hebrew is spoken, and the chosen people take the Bible seriously.

With so much Judaism in the way, it becomes uncomfortable to be “one” with gentile neighbors and more difficult to become assimilated in their ways – so Judaism must be discarded.

If lentils were good enough for Aisav, son of Yitzchak and Rivka, then shrimp and lobster are good enough for those to wish to escape the unfortunate fact of their being born as Jews.

Wild weeds grow in their temples in the form of same sex marriages, and the “spiritual leader” who performs Joey and Jane's wedding together with the local minister. The reform leader who services the whims of his congregant, and counts them as Jews when one parent is Jewish. Wherever the money and convenience is, there you will find the many Aisavs of reform.

Ya'akov is different. He lived a structured life where consistency is the rule of the day. He is the “tent dweller” which demands conduct suitable for living in a demarcated life style. Structured davening (prayers) three times a day. Laws pertaining to what and when one eats. Moral and ethical conduct between people in accordance to the value system revealed by HaShem. The acceptance of responsibility without escaping through rationalizations based on weakness and fear.

Aisav cannot be Ya'akov any more than Ya'akov can be Aisav. Their dispositions, characters and ambitions are reflections of their souls. Rivka felt this when each child was aroused in her womb – Ya'akov upon passing a place of Torah study and Aisav when passing a place of avoda zara (idolatry).

The dichotomy of Ya'akov and Aisav is clear cut. Ya'akov clings to HaShem through Torah and mitzvot (commandments) from which he derives his lifeblood of existence, whereas Aisav sees his survival through his ability to stalk his prey in the field with his bow and arrows. He has no need for HaShem for he is the master of his own life and future.

Now with the distinction between the God fearing, responsibility taking Ya'akov and the anarchistic, hedonistic Aisav so clear, it would be true to conclude that the two cannot thrive together.

A Jew is either with the mainstream of God driven history where the galut has finished serving its historical purpose of “hosting” the exiled Jewish nation that had strayed too far from the Torah, or with the peripheral segments heading to oblivion.

At this time in our history, HaShem has placed before His children in Israel the huge historic challenge of restoring our national independence within the borders of Eretz Yisrael, in preparation for the next stage of world history. This stage will witness the execution of Godly justice upon those nations which dealt so cruelly with Am Yisrael, while the Jewish people will be under haShem's protective wing in Eretz Yisrael.

But confusion is king. Not much different from the time of Chanuka, which we will be celebrating this month. Then as now, Am Yisrael was faced with an existential threat. A large percentage of our people were drawn to Hellenism and discarded the Torah. Each Jew was faced with the personal challenge to the depths of his faith – join with the Maccabim at the risk of your life or be a bystander in the life and death struggle for the soul of Am Yisrael.

Through the sacrifices of the strong and courageous, HaShem awarded us independence from foreign rule for 200 years. And it is the mesirat nefesh (self-sacrifice) of those holy people that we celebrate the holiday of Chanuka.

At this juncture in our history, each Jew is again faced with the choice to be Ya'akov or Aisav. To pick up the gauntlet of the strong and courageous or to back off from the responsibility of a bechor.

The choices are: To join in the struggle to rebuild our nation in Eretz Yisrael or to cringe in the corner behind the apron strings of one's fears.

It is not easy to be a “Ya'akov” in a world surrounded by Aisavs, but it is the Ya'akov's who survive and guarantee the eternal existence of Am Yisrael.

Shabbat Shalom

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By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Nine and a Child

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Since the beginning of parshas Tolados discusses the education of Yaakov and Esav, it is appropriate for us to discuss the topic of:

Question #1: Nine and a Chumash?

“A friend of mine once moved to a community where the local daily *minyán* was not that reliable. On a regular basis, services were conducted by having a ten-year old hold a *chumash* as the tenth man. Is there a basis for this practice?”

Question #2: Studying Chumash

“When the *rishonim* referred to a *chumash*, what did they mean? After all, they lived before the invention of the printing press.”

Answer:

When Avraham prayed for the people of Sodom and its four sister cities, he asked *Hashem* to save them if forty-five righteous people lived among them, which *Rashi* (18:28) explains would be the equivalent of a *minyán* of righteous people per city: nine plus *Hashem* counting as the Tenth. Can one consider that there is a *minyán* present with a quorum of less than ten?

The basis of this topic is the *Gemara* (*Brachos* 47b-48a), which discusses whether one may conduct services requiring a *minyán* or a *mezuman* when one appears to be short of the requisite quorum. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi ruled that if one has nine adults and a baby, one can *bensch* as if one has a *minyán*. Rav Huna stated that if one has nine adults present one can count

the *aron hakodesh* to form a *minyan*. To this, Rav Nachman retorted, “Is the *aron* a person?” Rav Huna explained that he meant that there are situations in which a group of nine people can act as if they are a *minyan*. Rav Ami ruled that two great *talmidei chachamin* who sharpen one another in their *halachic* discussions can be considered the equivalent of three for a *zimun*. Rabbi Yochanan stated that a child who is almost bar mitzvah can be included as the third for a *zimun*. Some *rishonim* (*Rabbeinu Yonah*) quote a text that concludes that, on *Shabbos*, one can make a *mezuman* with two adults – with the day of *Shabbos* counting as the third “person.”

However, the *Gemara* concludes that we do not permit a *mezuman* with less than three adults or a *minyan* with less than ten -- the only exception being that we can count a child for a *zimun*, if he is old enough to know to Whom we are reciting a *brocha*. Nevertheless, *Rabbeinu Tam* rules that one may rely on the above-quoted opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi that nine adults and a baby qualify as a *minyan* even for prayer (*Tosafos, Brachos* 48a). The *Rivash* feels that one should not follow the lenient approach, but rules that those who do rely on it can do so only when the child is at least nine years old (*Shu't Harivash* #451). Others understand that a minor can be counted as the tenth man, but only if he is twelve years old, which *halachah* recognizes as an age of majority regarding oaths and vows (*Rabbeinu Yonah*). We should note that none of these authorities permit counting more than one child to complete a *minyan*.

Nine and a *chumash*

Tosafos (*Brachos* 48a s.v. *Veleys*) reports that some people counted a child holding a *chumash* as the tenth “man.” He then notes that *Rabbeinu Tam* criticized this approach, explaining that if we follow Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi’s opinion, a child qualifies as the tenth man even if he is not holding a *chumash*, and if we do not follow that opinion, counting a child holding a *chumash* is without *halachic* basis. *Rabbeinu Tam* explained further that even should one locate a statement of *Chazal* that a child holding a *chumash* completes a *minyan*, the ruling would mean a *chumash* as was commonly used in the days of *Chazal*, which comprised one of the five *chumashim* (*Bereishis, Shemos, Vayikra, Bamidbar, or Devorim*) of the Torah written as a scroll, similar in style and appearance to a small *sefer Torah* or a *navi* scroll used for reading the *haftarah*. However, in the time of *Rabbeinu Tam*, although *chumashim* were still handwritten, they were no longer written as scrolls, but were bound into books. Thus, there would be no basis to permit counting a child holding the type of *chumash* used in his era.

What is the source?

What is the source for this custom of counting a child with a *chumash* for a *minyan*? *Rabbeinu Tam* was unaware of any such source in the *halachic* literature that he knew. However, since the practice was widespread, the possibility existed that there was a *halachic* source somewhere. Bear in mind that in the days of the *rishonim*, all *halachic* material was handwritten, almost always on parchment, and that it was therefore very expensive and difficult to have access to *seforim*. (*Rabbeinu Tam* lived approximately 300 years before the invention of the printing press.) *Rabbeinu Tam* had such profound respect for this custom of *Klal Yisroel* that he assumed that there probably was a statement of *Chazal* somewhere, one that he had never seen, with a source for the custom. This is what the *Gemara* refers to as *hanach lahem levisroel, im ein nevi'im hein, bnei nevi'im hein* (see *Pesachim* 66a), “allow Jews [to continue their practice], if they are no longer prophets, they are descended from prophets,” and their customs are based on solid foundations.

However, *Rabbeinu Tam* understood that should such a statement of *Chazal* exist permitting a child holding a *chumash* to be counted as the tenth, it would include only a *chumash* written as a scroll and would not apply to what existed in his day.

Later authorities note that having a child hold a *sefer Torah* would count as the tenth man, according to this custom. Furthermore, Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Shu't Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim* 2:18) notes that the requirement of having the child hold a *sefer Torah* scroll would not require that it be a

kosher *sefer Torah*. Even a *sefer Torah* that is invalid because some words are no longer legible would qualify as a holy scroll for the purpose of counting towards a *minyan*.

Do we permit a child+Torah?

Most *rishonim* rule that one cannot count a child as the tenth man even when he is holding a *chumash* or a Torah. For example, the *Rambam* (*Hilchos Tefillah* 8:4) rules that a *minyan* for prayer must be a minimum of ten men, although for *bensching* he allows that the tenth “man” be a child who is seven years old or more (*Hilchos Brachos* 5:7). This is based on his understanding of the conclusion of the *Gemara* (*Brachos* 48a) we quoted above that allows counting a child for a *mezuman* or *minyan* for *bensching*, and this forms the basis of *Sefardic* practice. However, regarding prayer the *Rambam* does not allow counting a child who is holding a *chumash* or a *sefer Torah*. Praying with a *minyan* requires ten adult men, no exceptions. Nevertheless, the *Tur* mentions that “some permit the inclusion of one child with nine adults if they place a *chumash* in his hand.” The *Tur* then notes that his father, the *Rosh*, wrote that one should never count a child as part of a *minyan* or a *mezuman*. This *Rosh* is the main approach followed by *Ashkenazim*.

Kerias Hatorah

Some early authorities conclude that a minor cannot be counted as the tenth “man” of a *minyan* for *bensching* or for prayer, but can be counted to allow the reading of the Torah (*Tashbeitz Katan* #201). The reason for this distinction is that a minor can sometimes be given an *aliyah* to the Torah (see *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 282:3 and commentaries). Some authorities permit giving a child even one of the seven *aliyos*, and all authorities permit giving a child *maftir* and having him read the *haftarah*. Thus, for this mitzvah he is indeed considered a man.

The *Magen Avraham* (55:4; 690:24) cites this position of the *Tashbeitz*, but does not accept it, demonstrating that both the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chayim* 143:1) and the *Rema* (*Orach Chayim* 690:18) do not accept the line of reasoning proposed by the *Tashbeitz* (see also *Pri Megadim, Eishel Avraham* 55:4).

Shulchan Aruch and Rema

In regard to prayer, the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chayim* 55:4) concludes: “Some permit the recital of *devarim she'be'kedusha* [meaning *kaddish, borchu, kedusha*, reading of the Torah, etc.] when there are nine adults and one minor who is older than six years and understands to Whom we pray. However, this opinion is not accepted by the greatest of the authorities.” With these words, the *Shulchan Aruch* provides honorable mention to *Rabbeinu Tam*’s opinion that a child can count, on his own, as the tenth man, but he follows the majority of *rishonim* who reject it. The *Rema* comments that although one should not count a child as part of the *minyan* even if he is holding a *chumash*, there are those who permit it under extenuating circumstances.

Difference between *bensching* and *davening*

Some authorities note a curious reversal in the positions of the *Shulchan Aruch* and the *Rema*. The *Shulchan Aruch* rejects counting a child as the tenth man for *tefillah* (*Orach Chayim* 55:4), but accepts counting him as the tenth or third man for *bensching* purposes (*Orach Chayim* 199:10). This, of course, reflects the position of the *Rambam* and most *Sefardic Rishonim*. On the other hand, although the *Rema* mentions the practice of counting a child as the tenth man under extenuating circumstances, he absolutely rejects counting him as the third or tenth for *bensching* (*Orach Chayim* 199:10). Thus, he accepts the *Rosh*’s ruling not to count a child as the third or tenth man for *bensching*, and cites a leniency only with regard to *davening*. This is strange, since the *halachic* sources imply that there is more basis to be lenient regarding *bensching* than there is regarding *davening*.

The *Maharsham* explains that the *Rema* rules that a minor can count as part of the *minyan* only if he holds a scroll, which to us would mean that he must hold a *sefer Torah*. In *shul*, one may take a *sefer Torah* out of the *aron hakodesh* and place it in a child’s arms in order to have a *minyan*. However,

one would not be permitted to bring a *sefer Torah* to the dining room, and for this reason the *Rema* rules that one can never include a child in the count of a *minyan* or *mezuman* for *benschung*.

Later authorities

The *Magen Avraham* (55:5), whose opinion is highly respected by the later authorities, concludes that one may include one minor holding a *chumash*, but not more than one, to enable the recital of *borchu*, *kedusha* or a *kaddish* that is a required part of *davening*. However, when relying on a child to complete the *minyan*, one should not recite any of the *kaddeishim* at the end of *davening* (other than the full *kaddish* recited by the *chazzan*), since they are not obligatory. This means that when having a *minyan* of nine plus a child holding a *sefer Torah*, one may not recite *kaddish* after *Aleinu*, or after the *shir shel yom*.

After quoting this statement of the *Magen Avraham*, the *Mishnah Berurah* writes that many later authorities rule that one should not count a child as part of a *minyan* even under the limited circumstances established by the *Magen Avraham*. However, the *Graz* (*Rav Shulchan Aruch* 55:5) rules that one should not correct someone who completes a *minyan* under extenuating circumstances by counting a child at least six years old who understands to Whom we are *davening*, even if the child is not holding a *chumash*. We should note that, although the *Magen Avraham* ruled that even those who are lenient permit the inclusion of only one child, a much earlier authority (*Shu't Min Hashamayim* #53) ruled that one may include even two children, provided they are old enough to *daven*. He explains that since the *mitzvah* of *davening* with a community is rabbinic in origin, a child old enough to *daven* can be included in the count since he is also required to *daven* as part of his training in the performance of *mitzvos* (*Mishnah, Brachos* 20). (The obvious question is that this reasoning should permit counting more than two children, yet *Shu't Min Hashamayim* permits only two, but we will leave this question for the moment.)

The shul in which I don't daven!

In this context, it is highly educational to study two relatively recent cases recorded in the responsa literature. In the late nineteenth century, the *Bruzhaner Rav*, known also as the *Maharsham*, *Rav Shalom Mordechai Hakohen Shvadron* (the grandfather of *Rav Shalom Shvadron*, the famed *maggid* of *Yerushalayim*), was asked the following (*Shu't Maharsham* 3:162): The only *minyan* in a small community in Hungary has been meeting for the past 25 years on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* in the house of a local wealthy individual. Recently, this individual has been insisting that they incorporate certain innovations in the *davening*, including changing the *nusach* of the “*shul*,” and requiring that the audience recite the entire *davening* extremely quietly and that not even *amen* should be answered aloud. The individual who owns the house where the *minyan* has been *davening* has now agreed to allow some members of the community to form their own separate *minyan* whereby they will be able to *daven* as they are accustomed. However, the group desiring to form their own *shul* has only nine adult men. Their question: May they *lechatchilah* begin their own *shul*, knowing that, according to most authorities, they will not have a *minyan*? After listing many of the authorities who rule that they are forbidden to conduct services because they do not have a proper *minyan*, the *Maharsham* concludes that he is highly wary of the *baal habayis* of the original *shul* and therefore feels that they should rely on the lenient opinions and form their own *minyan*. He further concludes that they could rely on the opinion that, if necessary, upon occasion, they could have two children holding *sifrei Torah* to complete the *minyan*, thus ruling according to the above-quoted *Tashbeitz* and against the *Magen Avraham*. The *Maharsham* is the only late authority, of whom I am aware, who permits eight men plus two children to be considered a *minyan*.

Another responsum

Rav Moshe Feinstein was asked a similar question in which an established *shul*'s membership had dwindled to the point where there were only nine adults at its daily *minyan*. If the *shul* cannot count a child for the daily

minyan, it will be forced to disband. *Rav Moshe* discusses whether they may continue their *minyan* notwithstanding the fact that there is another *shul* in the neighborhood, although it is a bit distant. *Rav Moshe* notes that although a majority of *poskim* contend that one should not allow the recital of *kaddish*, *kedusha*, etc. when there are less than ten adult men present, maintaining the existence of this *shul* is considered extenuating circumstance. Since the prohibition of reciting a *davar she'be'kedusha* without a *minyan* is only rabbinic, this extenuating circumstance would allow one to follow the minority opinion against the majority. He concludes that since the members of this *shul* may not make the trek to the other *shul*, and will also stop attending the *shiurim* provided in their current *shul*, the *minyan* should be continued.

Rav Moshe then raises a few practical questions. The *Magen Avraham*, upon whom *Rav Moshe* is relying, permits counting a child for the tenth man only if he is holding a *sefer Torah*. However, this creates two interesting *halachic* questions.

1. One is not permitted to hold something while reciting *shma* and the *shemoneh esrei*, so how can the child be holding the *sefer Torah* then?
2. While the *sefer Torah* is being held by someone who is standing, everyone is required to be standing, which means that the entire membership of this *shul* will be required to stand for the entire *davening*. (It appears that *Rav Moshe* understands that one may count the child for a *minyan* only when he is standing. I am unaware of the source for this ruling.) Therefore, *Rav Moshe* suggests that the *sefer Torah* be placed on a table, and that the child stand next to the *sefer Torah* with his hands holding the *atzei chayim*, the “handles” of the *sefer Torah*, which *Rav Moshe* considers equivalent to holding the *sefer Torah*.

Rav Moshe writes that it is preferable to have a 12-year-old child hold the *sefer Torah*, citing the authorities we quoted above who permit a 12-year old to be the tenth man of a *minyan*.

Rav Moshe recommends that the *shul* relying on these *heterim* not have a repetition of *shemoneh esrei* (*chazaras hashatz*). This is because reciting *chazaras hashatz* without a *minyan* present involves a *brocha levatalah*, a *brocha* in vain, which, according to some authorities is prohibited *min hatorah*. *Rav Moshe* rules that the *chazzan* should not recite the quiet the *shemoneh esrei*, but, instead, should wait until everyone has finished their *shemoneh esrei* and then he should recite his own *shemoneh esrei* aloud.

Conclusion

At this point, let us return to our opening question: “A friend of mine once moved to a community where the local daily *minyan* was not that reliable. On a regular basis, services were conducted by having a ten-year old hold a *chumash* as the tenth man. Is there a basis for this practice?”

If we follow *Rav Moshe*'s *psak* and consider it applicable to their situation, then a child should hold the *atzei chayim* of a *sefer Torah* that is placed on the table. Only the *kaddeishim* required according to *halachah* should be recited, and no mourner's *kaddish* or *kaddish derabbanan*. The *chazzan* should preferably not recite his own quiet *shemoneh esrei*.

The *Gemara* teaches that *Ein Hakadosh Baruch Hu mo'eis bitefillasan shel rabim*, *Hashem* never despises the prayers of the community. Certainly, this should inspire all of us to *daven* with the *tzibur* whenever we can.