



BS"D

To: parsha@parsha.net
From: cshulman@gmail.com

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON **TOLDOS** - 5778

In our 23rd year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to <http://www.parsha.net> and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to parsha-subscribe@yahoo.com Please also copy me at cshulman@gmail.com A complete archive of previous issues is now available at <http://www.parsha.net> It is also fully searchable.

Sponsored anonymously in memory of
Chaim Yissachar z"l ben Yechiel Zaydel Dov

To sponsor a parsha sheet (proceeds to tzedaka) contact
cshulman@parsha.net

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org>
to: weeklydt@torahweb2.org
subject: TorahWeb
www.torahweb.org/thisweek.html

TorahWeb.org.

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 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 ("lehachziro") 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 haftorah 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."

Copyright © 2001 by The TorahWeb Foundation.

from: Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org>
reply-to: ryfrand@torah.org,
to: ravfrand@torah.org
subject: Rabbi Frand on Parsha

Torah.org

Rabbi Yissochar Frand

Two Approaches to a Redundancy

Parshas Toldos begins, "And these are the offspring of Yitzchak son of Avraham — Avraham begot Yitzchak." [Bereshis 25:19] Virtually all Chumash commentaries — including Rashi, the Ibn Ezra, and others — are quick to point out that the wording in this pasuk is superfluous. Once the pasuk said that Yitzchak was the son of Avraham, saying Avraham begot Yitzchak is completely redundant!

The Ibn Ezra suggests that the expression "Avraham holeed es Yitzchak" does not mean he gave birth to him. Rather, holeed means he raised and trained Yitzchak (geedail v'reebah). The Ibn Ezra cites other places where the verb holeed does not mean 'gave birth to,' but rather 'raised and brought up,' as in the pasuk "...even the sons of Machir son of Manasseh were raised (yooldu) on Yosef's knees" [Bereshis 50:23].

Nevertheless, it remains somewhat strange that this is the only time in Chumash where the Torah finds it necessary to say that a father raised and trained his son. Of course we assume it, but nowhere else does the Torah explicitly mention such a fact. What, then, is going on here?

The Sforno in Parshas Lech Lecha, on the pasuk "Then Avram said, 'See, You have not given me offspring, and see my steward inherits me'" [Bereshis 15:3] explains: Avraham 'complains' to the Almighty that he has no children, and Eliezer, his servant, will inherit all that he owns. The Sforno elaborates that Avraham is stating a double 'complaint': First, "I have no son to succeed me — to take over my financial and spiritual estate." Second, "even though I might eventually have a son, by that time I will be very old. I will not be capable of raising a young son. I will not be able to train him to follow in my footsteps."

The Sefas Emes in Parshas Lech Lecha comments on this theme as well. He notes that Avraham Avinu did not doubt that he would eventually have a son, as G-d promised him, but he was afraid that by the time this son would be born, he would be so old that he would not be able to give over to this son the essence of his life philosophy and life mission. Every parent wants to give over to his offspring his values and belief system. Parents spend almost a lifetime trying to give over to their children who they are, what they believe in, and what they feel their children should believe in — to carry on the traditions of the home.

The Sefas Emes derives this idea from the wording of the previous pasuk. Avraham laments, “What can You give me, being that I go childless, and the steward of my house is the Damascene Eliezer (hu Damesek Eliezer)” [Bereshis 15:2]. Chazal [Yoma 28b] derive from the description of Eliezer (that he was from Damascus) an additional lesson, based on a play on the Hebrew word damesek. They say this teaches that he was doleh u’ mashkeh m’Toraso shel Rabbo l’acherim — he drew up (the water of) his master’s Torah and gave from it to others to drink. Avraham assumed that Eliezer would be the only one left to transmit Avraham’s values to others after Avraham’s departure from the scene. True, he was a loyal servant, “but he is not me; he is not my flesh and blood.”

Avraham wanted his own child to give over the values that he nurtured and the worldview that he brought into existence, to the next generation. Therefore, the Ibn Ezra explains, the pasuk at the beginning of Toldos emphasizes that the Almighty kept His Word to Avraham. Not only did Avraham have a son (Eleh Toldos Yitzchak ben Avraham), but even more than that, Avraham holeed es Yitzchak — he was able to raise and train his son so that he could faithfully follow in his father’s footsteps. That is why the Torah goes out of its way here, and only here, to tell us that — contrary to his own expectations — Avraham was able to raise and train his son Yitzchak to become not only his financial heir but his spiritual heir as well. Rashi (based on Bava Metziyah 87a) has another approach to this question: The scoffers of the generation said that Sarah became pregnant from Avimelech (“Look, all these years she lived with Avraham and could not have a child; now after she briefly stayed in Avimelech’s palace, she suddenly became pregnant!”). Therefore, to demonstrate this cynical rumor as patently false, Hashem gave Yitzchak the identical appearance of his father Avraham. This is what the Torah is teaching by repeating the idea “Avraham begot Yitzchak” — it was clear to everybody that Avraham was the father of his son Yitzchak.

There are a couple of problems with this interpretation of Rashi. First, why does it use the term “the scoffers of the generation” (leitzaanei ha’dor). “The scoffers” means the cynics — the people who always sit in the back of the shul making snide remarks. Why are they called “leitzaanim”, why are they not called “resha’im” [wicked people]?

Rav Pam explained that they were called leitzaanim rather than reshaim because nobody believed this accusation for a minute. It was a patently false snide remark. It was common knowledge that Sarah’s infertility was not due to Avraham (who already had a child from Hagar). The problem was with Sarah. If she gave birth to a child now at age 90, it was clearly a miraculous event, fulfilling G-d’s promise to her and Avraham that the two of them would have a son together. No one treated the remark “Sarah became pregnant from Avimelech” seriously. It was not a libelous remark of the wicked but a remark by scoffers who had no credibility.

The question then becomes — if it was such a patently sick joke that no one in the world believed it, why did the Almighty need to counteract the cynical remark by creating the miracle that Yitzchak looked exactly like Avraham? Here we see a lesson in history. There is something called “revisionist history.” This means that it is possible to live through a period of time, knowing full well the facts of an era — exactly as they happened. Then, ten, twenty, forty, or sixty years later, people start saying “that’s not really the way it happened.” Even though anyone who was there knows this “revisionism” is not true, people start creating a different perspective on history.

Here is an example of this phenomenon: When I was born, Harry Truman was President of the United States. However, the first president I remember, once I reached an age where such things meant something to me, was Dwight Eisenhower. When I was growing up, everybody thought Eisenhower was a lightweight, especially in those days when we were all Democrats. Eisenhower was a Republican. We thought he was an incompetent politician — he played golf all day, he did not take any

initiatives, and the country was on autopilot. These are my childhood memories of Dwight Eisenhower.

The truth of the matter is that, in retrospect, people did not give Eisenhower appropriate credit for his leadership. We must remember that he was the supreme commander of the Allied invasion of Europe, the greatest military undertaking in the history of the world. A person cannot be an idiot, and still succeed as he did in that undertaking.

When the Nazis were defeated and the Allied soldiers entered the concentration camps, Eisenhower made his staff take pictures and movies of what they found. In 1945, he said, “I want history to record this. We must get all this on the record now — the film, the witnesses, everything — because somewhere down the road of history, some (obscenity) will get up and say that this never happened.”

He said this in 1945. How can anyone be a “Holocaust denier”? There are still people walking around today with tattoos on their arms. This is history.

This happened. Yet, there are people who get up today and say, “It did not happen.” This happens to such an extent that in the United Kingdom, there was a debate whether to include Holocaust studies in the school curriculum because “it offends the Muslim population who deny the existence of the Holocaust.” How can one deny the Holocaust?

That is why if there is a value to all these Holocaust museums. The value is that they permanently record these factual events. I am not by any means a fan of Stephen Spielberg, but he is doing a favor to the world. He has set up a project to record people’s stories “in order that your generations shall know...” (based on Vayikra 23:43).

How can Holocaust denial occur? The answer is this phenomenon of revisionist history. Even when confronted with incontrovertible evidence, such people try to minimize it by saying, “maybe it did happen, but maybe it was 6,000 people rather than 6,000,000 people who were killed.” This is what can happen, and that is what this Rashi is telling us regarding the “scoffers of the generation.”

Claiming that Avimelech was the father of Yitzchak is patently ridiculous, but facts can fade with time. A generation might pass, two generations might pass, and then somebody will say, “You know what, the Jews are not really the Jews — they are not really the descendants of Avraham. They are this tribe that was fathered by a king of Gerar named Avimelech. Therefore, Yitzchak is not legitimate, Yaakov is not legitimate, and the twelve tribes are not legitimate. The whole nation is illegitimate.

In fact, the Koran says that Avraham was about to sacrifice Yishmael, not Yitzchak. This is what they believe. Rashi here says that the scoffers of the generation will one day say (even though they clearly knew to the contrary) that Sarah became pregnant from Avimelech. This is why the Almighty had to step in and clear the record for all time (by making Yitzchak look identical to Avraham).

This Rashi is a testament to the unfortunate power of leitzaanei hador — the scoffers of every generation — to twist the truth and to create “revisionist history.” That is the reason for this significant redundancy in the opening pasuk of our parsha, in order to confirm for all time that indeed Avraham begot Yitzchak.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com

Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD

dhoffman@torah.org

Rav Frand © 2017 by Torah.org.

from: Shabbat Shalom shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org

subject: Shabbat Shalom from the OU

www.ou.org/torah/parsha/rabbi-sacks-on-parsha

Why Isaac? Why Jacob?

Toldot 5778 - Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Why Isaac, not Ishmael? Why Jacob, not Esau? These are among the most searing questions in the whole of Judaism.

It is impossible to read Genesis 21, with its description of how Hagar and her son were cast out into the wilderness, how their water ran out, how Hagar placed Ishmael under a bush and sat at a distance so she would not see him die, without feeling intensely for both of them, mother and child. They are both crying. The Torah tells us that God heard Ishmael's tears and sent an angel to comfort Hagar, show her a well of water, and assure her that God would make her son "a great nation" (Gen. 21:18) – the very promise he gave Abraham himself at the start of his mission (Gen. 12:2).

Likewise in the case of Esau. The emotional climax of the parsha occurs in chapter 27, at the point when Jacob leaves Isaac's presence, having deceived him into thinking that he was Esau. Then Esau enters, and slowly both father and son realise what has happened. This is what we read:

Then Isaac trembled with a very great trembling, and said, "Who then was it who hunted game and brought it to me and I ate it before you came and I blessed him?—and he will be blessed." When Esau heard his father's words, he cried an intensely loud and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me, me too, my father!" (Gen. 27:33-34)

These are among the most powerful descriptions of emotion in the whole of the Torah, and they are precisely the opposite of what we would expect. We would expect the Torah to enlist our sympathies for the chosen: Isaac and Jacob. Instead it almost forces us to empathise with the unchosen: Hagar, Ishmael and Esau. We feel their pain and sense of loss.

So, why Isaac and not Ishmael? Why Jacob and not Esau? To this there are two types of answer. The first is given by midrash. On this reading Isaac and Jacob were righteous. Ishmael and Esau were not.

Ishmael worshipped idols.[1] He violated married women.[2]. He tried to kill Isaac with his bow and arrow while making it look as if it were an accident.[3] Esau was attracted, even in the womb, to idolatrous shrines.[4] He trapped not only animals but also his father Isaac by pretending to be pious when he was not.[5] God cut short Abraham's life by five years so that he would not live to see his grandson violate a betrothed woman, commit murder, deny God, deny the resurrection of the dead, and despise the birthright.[6] Such is the way of midrash. It helps us see Isaac and Jacob as perfectly good, Ishmael and Esau as dangerously bad. That is an important part of our tradition.

But it is not the way of the written Torah itself, at least insofar as we seek what Rashbam called *omek peshuto shel mikra*, the "deep plain sense of Scripture." [7] The Torah does not portray Ishmael and Esau as wicked. The worst it has to say about Ishmael is that Sarah saw him *metzachek* (Gen. 21:9), a word with many meanings, most of them not negative. Literally, it means, "he was laughing." But Abraham and Sarah also laughed.[8] So did Isaac.[9] Indeed Isaac's name, chosen by God himself [10], means, "He will laugh." There is nothing in the word itself that implies improper conduct.[11]

In the case of Esau, the most pointed verse is the one in which he agrees to part with his birthright in return for a bowl of soup (Gen. 25:34). In a staccato series of five consecutive verbs, the Torah says that he "ate, drank, rose, went and despised" his birthright. Yet this tells us that he was impetuous, not that he was evil.

If we seek the "deep plain sense," we must rely on the explicit testimony of the Torah itself – and what it tells us is fascinating. An angel told Hagar before Ishmael was born that he would be "a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him" (Gen. 16:12). He became an expert archer (Gen. 21:20). Esau, red-haired, physically mature at a young age, was "a skilful hunter, a man of the field" (Gen. 25:27). Ishmael and Esau were at home in nature. They were strong, adroit, unafraid of the wild. In any other culture they might have emerged as heroes. And that is the point. We will only understand the Torah if we recall that every other religion in the ancient world worshipped nature. That is where they found God, or more precisely, the gods: in the sun, the moon, the stars, the storm, the rain that fed the earth and the earth that gave forth food.

Even in the twenty-first century, people for whom science has taken the place of religion still worship nature. For them we are physical beings. For them there is no such thing as a soul, merely electrical impulses in the brain. For them there is no real freedom: we are what we are because of genetic and epigenetic causes over which we have no real control. Freewill, they say, is an illusion. Human life, they believe, is not sacred, nor are we different in kind from other animals. Nature is all there is. Such was the view of Lucretius in ancient Rome and Epicurus in pre-Christian Greece, and it is the view of scientific atheists today.

The faith of Abraham and his descendants is different. God, we believe, is beyond nature, because He created nature. And because He made us in His image, there is something in us that is beyond nature also. We are free. We are creative. We can conceive of possibilities that have not yet existed, and act so as to make them real. We can adapt to our environment, but we can also adapt our environment to us. Like every other animal we have desires, but unlike any other animal we are capable of standing outside our desires and choosing which to satisfy and which not. We can distinguish between what is and what ought to be. We can ask the question "Why?"

After the Flood God was reconciled to human nature and vowed never again to destroy the world (Gen. 8-9). Yet He wanted humanity to know that there is something beyond nature. That is why He chose Abraham and his descendants as His "witnesses".[12]

Not by accident were Abraham-and-Sarah, Isaac-and-Rebekah, and Jacob-and-Rachel, unable to have children by natural means. Nor was it mere happenstance that God promised the holy land to a landless people. He chose Moses, the man who said, "I am not a man of words," to be the bearer of His word. When Moses spoke God's words, people knew they were not his own. God promised two things to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: children and a land. Throughout history, most people at most times have taken children and a land for granted. They are part of nature. They constitute the two most basic natural drives: the Darwinian imperative and the territorial imperative. All animals have children, and many have their own territory that they mark and defend.

Jews – one of the world's smallest people – have rarely been able to take children for granted. Abraham's first recorded words to God were: "O Lord God, what can you give me seeing that I go childless?" and even today we ask, Will we have Jewish grandchildren? Nor have they been able to take their land for granted. They were often surrounded by enemies larger and more powerful than themselves. For many centuries they suffered exile. Even today they find the State of Israel's very right to be called into question in a way that applies to no other sovereign people. As David Ben-Gurion said, "In Israel, to be a realist you have to believe in miracles."

Isaac and Jacob were not men of nature: the field, the hunt, the gladiatorial game of predator-and-prey. They were not Ishmael and Esau, people who could survive by their own strength and skill. They were men who needed God's spirit to survive. Israel is the people who in themselves testify to something beyond themselves.

Jews have consistently shown that you can make a contribution to humanity out of all proportion to your numbers, and that a small nation can outlive every empire that sought its destruction. They have shown that a nation is strong when it cares for the weak, and rich when it cares for the poor. Jews are the people through whom God has shown that the human spirit can rise above nature, testifying that there is something real that transcends nature. That is a life-changing idea. We are as great as our ideals. If we truly believe in something beyond ourselves, we will achieve beyond ourselves. Shabbat shalom,

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>
reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com
subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

TOLDOT

Our father Avraham was, according to the Mishna in Avot, tested ten times and overcame all of them. It is interesting that most of the commentators that describe and enumerate these ten tests do not identify Avraham as being the son of Terach as one of these tests. One can easily think that this perhaps would have been one of the major tests in his lifetime. But the Torah takes into account a fact of human nature that, in one way or another, every generation strives to be different than the one that precedes it. Sometimes this is for good and sometimes not.

Avraham differed from Terach in a good way. Eisav differed from Yitzchak in a negative fashion. The greater challenge seems to be to emulate and builds upon the positive attributes and accomplishments of one's forbearers. The challenge to Yitzchak is to emulate his father Avraham, to spread the idea of monotheism in a pagan and violent world, to dig once again all of the wells that his father had dug, from which the life giving waters of Torah would again flow.

It is easier to rebel and discard than to continue and replenish. The world is always unenthusiastic about revisiting old wells even if they have been proven to be bountiful and eternal. The prophet Yirmiyahu complained about new wells that do not really contain water and abandoning old wells that are yet bountiful and blessed with water. This would be the great test for Yitzchak and later for his own son Yaakov, in transmitting the legacy of Avraham and creating the Jewish people.

The challenge of continuity in the generations and their relationship one to another has been the internal challenge in Jewish life throughout the ages of our history. We have always longed to be fresh, new and different than our ancestors. Any new idea or ideal in world civilization always had Jewish adherents, even when it was obvious that it was against their own self-interest to advocate that new fad or ideal.

And, we have paid very dearly for those monumental errors of judgment and policy. Jewish history is littered with the wreckage created by these empty wells. And the non-Jewish world is complicit in this debacle. Avimelech, the king of the Philistines repeats the grievous moral error made with the wife of Avraham, and then with the wife of Yitzchak.

When it comes to the Jewish people the attitude of much of society is not to learn from the past. One would think that by now the world would have absorbed the lessons of self-destruction that anti-Semitism brought and continues to bring to its proponents. But, alas, such is not the case.

For centuries on end, the Philistines and others would continually make new peace treaties with the Jews only to revive fresh hatred and violence as a "new" tactic in their enmity towards the Jewish people. We have our challenges but so does the non-Jewish world. Ours is to retain continuity, theirs is to discard it.

Shabbat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff <ymkaganoff@gmail.com>
to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com

Do I say Yaaleh Veyavo, Retzei or both?

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Since Rosh Chodesh falls on motza'ei Shabbos, I thought it appropriate to discuss:

Question #1: Is it Shabbos versus Rosh Chodesh?

"When Rosh Chodesh begins on motza'ei Shabbos, do I say Yaaleh Veyavo in bensching at seudah shelishis?"

Question #2: Why is this night of Chanukah different from all other nights?

"Chanukah begins this motza'ei Shabbos. If I finish seudah shelishis after nightfall, do I include Al Hanissim in bensching?"

Introduction

When we recite birchas hamazon on Shabbos, Yom Tov, Chol Hamoed, Rosh Chodesh, Chanukah and Purim, we include special prayers to commemorate the holiday: on Shabbos, a passage beginning with the word Retzei; on Yom Tov, Chol Hamoed and Rosh Chodesh, the opening words are Yaaleh Veyavo; and on Chanukah and Purim, Al Hanissim.

In a different article, I discussed whether one recites these additions when one's meal was divided between a holiday and a weekday – i.e., one ate part of his meal on the holiday and part before or after; or when the change of date transpired between the eating of the meal and the bensching. Does one recite the special addition to commemorate the holiday when this happens, or does one omit it? We discovered that there are several opinions as to what to do. These are the earliest opinions that I found:

1. When one bensches

The Rosh rules that one recites the version of birchas hamazon appropriate to when one bensches, regardless as to when one ate the meal. In his opinion, one who finished seudah shelishis after nightfall does not recite Retzei. Similarly, one whose Purim seudah ends after Purim does not recite Al Hanissim. The Rosh also holds that someone who completed a meal before Rosh Chodesh and bensches after it is dark should recite Yaaleh Veyavo.

2. The beginning of the meal

The Maharam, as understood by the Bach and the Aruch Hashulchan, maintains that the text of the bensching is established according to what was correct when the meal began. Therefore, one who finished seudah shelishis after nightfall recites Retzei, since his meal began on Shabbos. (There is an exception – if he did something to declare that Shabbos is over, such as reciting havdalah, davening maariv, or even simply answering borchu, he does not recite Retzei any more, as it is therefore inconsistent to mention Shabbos in bensching.)

3. All of the above

The Maharam, as understood by the Taz, contends that one adds the special prayer if either the meal began on the holiday or one is bensching on the holiday. Thus, one who finished seudah shelishis after nightfall recites Retzei, and someone who completed a meal before Rosh Chodesh and bensches after it is dark should recite Yaaleh Veyavo.

The halachic conclusion

The halachic consensus regarding someone who began his meal on Shabbos or Purim and continued it into the night is that one recites Retzei or Al Hanissim, following the position of the Maharam and not the Rosh.

Conflicting prayers

The topic of our current article adds a new aspect to this question – what to do when Rosh Chodesh or Chanukah begins on motza'ei Shabbos, and seudah shelishis started on Shabbos and was completed on Rosh Chodesh or on Chanukah. According to the Rosh, one should recite Yaaleh Veyavo or Al Hanissim, whether or not one ate on Rosh Chodesh or on Chanukah. However, the consensus of halachic opinion is that the Maharam's opinion is accepted, in this topic, over that of the Rosh. According to those who understand that the Maharam ruled that one should always recite the text of birchas hamazon appropriate to the beginning of the meal, one should recite Retzei. Yet, many authorities follow the second interpretation of the Maharam mentioned above, that one adds the special prayer if either the meal began on the holiday or one is bensching on the holiday. What complicates our question is that there may be a requirement to recite both Retzei and either Yaaleh Veyavo or Al Hanissim, yet mentioning both in the same bensching might be contradictory in this instance, since the holiday begins after Shabbos ends. As we will soon see, whether or not this is a problem is, itself, debated by the authorities.

The earliest authority that I found who discusses this predicament is the Bach (end of Orach Chayim, 188). Regarding what to recite when seudah shelishis continues into Rosh Chodesh, he concludes that one should say Retzei and not Yaaleh Veyavo, because the beginning of a meal determines

the exact text of its birchas hamazon. As I mentioned above, this is precisely the way the Bach understands the Maharam's position – that the proper bensching is always determined by the beginning of the meal. Since the halacha follows the Maharam's position, the Bach comfortably rules according to his understanding of the Maharam, that one recites Retzei and not Yaaleh Veyavo.

The Magen Avraham (188:18; 419:1) analyzes the issue differently from the way the Bach does. First, he considers the possibility that one can recite both Retzei and Yaaleh Veyavo. This is based on his understanding of the Maharam's position that ending a meal on Rosh Chodesh or a different festival is reason to recite the holiday additions, even if the meal started on a weekday. However, the Magen Avraham concludes that one cannot recite both Retzei and Yaaleh Veyavo in this instance, because this is an inherent contradiction: If it is already Rosh Chodesh, it is no longer Shabbos, and if it is still Shabbos, it is not yet Rosh Chodesh. Since this is now a conundrum, the Magen Avraham concludes that one should follow the Rosh's opinion, that one recites whatever is appropriate to be said at this moment, which means to recite only Yaaleh Veyavo. Magen Avraham contends that this practice is followed only when one ate bread on Rosh Chodesh. If he did not eat bread on Rosh Chodesh, then he should say only Retzei, following the Maharam's opinion that the special prayers are determined by the beginning of the meal.

Chanukah on motza'ei Shabbos

The Magen Avraham also rules that there is a difference in halachah between Rosh Chodesh and Chanukah. When Chanukah begins on motza'ei Shabbos and seudah shelishis extended into the beginning of Chanukah, he rules that one should recite only Retzei and not Al Hanissim, even if he ate bread on Chanukah.

Why is Chanukah different from all other nights?

The Magen Avraham explains that, whereas when reciting Yaaleh Veyavo on a weekday Rosh Chodesh bensching is required, reciting Al Hanissim in bensching of a weekday Chanukah is technically not required, but optional. Therefore, when his meal began on Shabbos (which was as yet not Chanukah) and he is, therefore, required to recite Retzei, even if he continued the meal into Chanukah and ate bread then, the optional addition of Al Hanissim does not cancel the requirement to recite Retzei.

More opinions

Thus far, we have seen two opinions concerning what to do for the bensching of a seudah shelishis that extended into Rosh Chodesh that begins on motza'ei Shabbos:

- (1) The Bach, that one should recite Retzei and not Yaaleh Veyavo.
- (2) The Magen Avraham, that if he ate bread on motza'ei Shabbos he should recite Yaaleh Veyavo, but otherwise he should recite Retzei.

A third position is that, once it is Rosh Chodesh, one should recite Yaaleh Veyavo and not Retzei (Maharash of Lublin, quoted by Shelah and Taz 188:7). The Maharash maintains that since at the time he bensches it is Rosh Chodesh, the requirement to recite Yaaleh Veyavo is primary and preempts the requirement to recite Retzei, which he considers to be secondary, since it is no longer Shabbos.

Why not both?

The Taz (188:7) disagrees with all the above-mentioned positions, challenging the assumption that one cannot recite both Retzei and Yaaleh Veyavo. He concludes that since Yaaleh Veyavo is recited after Retzei there is no contradiction, since Rosh Chodesh begins after Shabbos ends. Therefore, one who ate on Shabbos and is bensching on Rosh Chodesh should recite both additions.

To sum up, someone whose meal began on Shabbos and is bensching on Rosh Chodesh, should:
recite Yaaleh Veyavo, according to both the opinion of the Rosh and that of the Maharash,.

recite Retzei, according to the opinion shared by the Bach and the Aruch Hashulchan.

recite both Retzei and Yaaleh Veyavo, according to the conclusion of the Taz,.

According to the ruling of the Magen Avraham, if he ate bread after Rosh Chodesh arrived, he should recite Yaaleh Veyavo. If he did not, he should recite Retzei.

Rabbi, what should I do?

The Mishnah Berurah (188:33), when recording what to do, implies that one should follow the position of the Magen Avraham. He then mentions the Taz as an alternative approach – that one should say both Retzei and Yaaleh Veyavo. This is consistent with the Mishnah Berurah's general approach of following the Magen Avraham, except when the latter's position is opposed by most later authorities.

The Aruch Hashulchan, on the other hand, concludes neither as the Magen Avraham nor the Taz, but that what one recites is always determined by the beginning of the meal. Therefore, in this situation, he rules to recite Retzei and omit Yaaleh Veyavo, regardless of whether one ate on Rosh Chodesh. Since there are many conflicting positions as to which additions to recite when Rosh Chodesh begins on motza'ei Shabbos, many people avoid eating bread after nightfall. They eat all the bread that they intend to eat towards the beginning of the meal, and upon completing the seudah, recite bensching including Retzei and omitting Yaaleh Veyavo. This approach follows the majority of halachic authorities (Bach, Magen Avraham, Aruch Hashulchan, Mishnah Berurah [according to his primary approach]), although it runs counter to the opinions of the Maharash and the Taz. Those who want to avoid any question recite birchas hamazon before the arrival of Rosh Chodesh.

Conclusion

In our daily lives, our hearts should be full with thanks to Hashem for all He does for us. Birchas hamazon provides a regular opportunity to elicit deep feelings of gratitude for what Hashem has done in the past and does in the present. All the more so should we should acknowledge Hashem's help on special holidays.

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

from: Rabbi Yochanan Zweig <genesis@torah.org>

to: rabbizweig@torah.org

subject: Rabbi Zweig

Weekly Insights

Parshas Toldos - Cheshvan 5778

Based on the Torah of Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Jack Fefer, Yaakov Ben Yisroel Yitzchak . "May his Neshama have an Aliya!"

Conwoman?

And Yitzchak was forty years old when he took Rifkah for a wife, the daughter of Besuel the Aramean of Padan-Aram, the sister to Lavan the Aramean (25:20).

Rashi (ad loc) wonders why the Torah reiterates that Rifkah was the daughter of Besuel the Aramean and the sister of Lavan the Aramean. After all, last week's parsha clearly identifies Rifkah's lineage and from where she comes. Why should the Torah choose to repeat it at the beginning of this parsha? Rashi answers that the Torah is teaching us that even though Rifkah grew up with a wicked father and brother, and came from a place of wicked people, she didn't learn from their evil ways. Yet this explanation requires further clarification. In last week's parsha we see that Rifkah was a kind and generous person, as well as one of great modesty. Furthermore, Hashem clearly answered Eliezer's prayer for help and guidance by unmistakably indicating that He intended Rifkah to be Yitzchak's wife. But why is it necessary to once again highlight the difference between Rifkah and her wicked relatives from a wicked place?

Finally, it is odd that the Torah repeats by both Besuel and Lavan that they were Aramean. Why is there a special emphasis on their Aramean nationality?

The Babylonian Talmud is written in Aramaic, the language of Aram, while the Jerusalem Talmud is written in Hebrew, the language spoken in Eretz Yisroel. Yet the Talmud that is written in a foreign language is the one which enjoys a much wider popularity; it is studied far more than the Jerusalem Talmud and comprises the bulk of the curriculum in Yeshivos all over the world. The Babylonian Talmud is also the foundation and source of all halacha. Why is it that the Babylonian Talmud became more widely accepted than the Jerusalem Talmud, which is written in our native tongue?

The Aramean people were known for being conmen (which is exactly what Yaakov is worried about when making a deal with his wicked uncle Lavan in next week's parsha, and Lavan actually does try to trick him). What is the talent that makes a conman successful? He is able to delve into the reality of his "mark." In other words, a successful conman is able to see how his target will look at a situation; he then tailors the con to the other person's perspective and desires.

The Aramean language is one of understanding another's perspective. As an example, the word *chessed* in Hebrew means kindness, yet Rashi tells us (Vayikra 20:17) that in Aramaic it means shame. How can the same word mean both kindness and shame? It's all a matter of perspective: the giver feels that he is doing a kindness, but the recipient feels shame at having to accept charity. The Arameans focus on the other individual's perspective - hence in Aramaic *chessed* means shame.

The Babylonian Talmud is the most widely accepted authority for this very reason. When we have an argument in law, we want each opinion to be sensitive to the other's perspective before we decide on the proper approach. Only in understanding the other sides' perspective can we properly distill our own perspective. This is deeply rooted in the very essence of the Aramean culture.

The reason that Rifkah's lineage is repeated in this week's parsha is because it becomes very relevant to the story line. After all, it was her idea that Yaakov enter into Yitzchak's reality and, through a subtle subterfuge, receive the brachos that were intended for her wicked son Eisav. Rifkah too, being from Aram, had the quality of insight into another's perspective, but she used it to make sure that her righteous son prevailed over her wicked son.

In tribute to the tenth Yahrzeit of Binyamin (Barry) Ross OBM, and as continuing Zechus for R' Binyomin Yitzchak Ben Meir Z'L, the Ross family is sponsoring a free class every week for the entire year.

True Kibud Av

And Yaakov went near to Yitzchak his father; and he felt him, and said, the voice is Yaakov's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esav (27:23).

Rashi (ad loc) directly addresses the source of Yitzchak's confusion; even though he felt that Yaakov's arms were indeed hairy like Eisav's arms (as part of the disguise worn by Yaakov), his voice was dissimilar to Eisav. Rashi goes on to explain that Yaakov had addressed his father with a very respectful statement: "Please get up and sit to eat the food that I have prepared..." (27:19). Eisav, on the other hand, would speak in a combative tone "Get up father!"

The implication is that Eisav's tone was harsh and perhaps even disrespectful, while Yaakov's was more gentle and accommodating. However, we find in the Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 65) that Raban Shimon Ben Gamliel stated: "All of my days I served my father, and I didn't accomplish even 1/100th of the degree to which Eisav honored his father. When Eisav served his father he served him (wearing) royal garments." Even the great and pious Raban Shimon Ben Gamliel's kibud av did not compare with that of Eisav's.

Similarly, it is brought down from the Zohar that there was no one in the world who honored his father like Eisav did, and that zechus protected Eisav in this world. Thus, it is difficult to imagine that the very paradigm of kibud

av would err in such a basic area as communicating respectfully with his father. What can Rashi possibly mean?

Certainly, Yaakov addressed his father very respectfully, as we see from the pesukim. But Eisav actually superseded his brother's efforts. Rashi, in next week's parsha (see 28:13), says that Hashem associated His name with Yitzchak, even though Hashem does not usually associate His name with the living (for they might sin). But in the case of Yitzchak, he was considered as if he was dead because he was blind and homebound, and therefore no longer had an evil inclination. The implication in this week's parsha is also that Yitzchak was frail and bedridden, as we see that both Yaakov and Eisav have to tell him to get up and go over to eat.

While Yaakov treated his father with great deference, he was also catering to his father's self-image of being old and frail. Yaakov's kibud av was all about being deferential and respectful. On the other hand, Eisav was treating his father like a lazy teenager; he wasn't letting his father perceive himself as an old and sickly person. Eisav didn't accept the notion that Yitzchak is old and frail, and didn't let Yitzchak accept it either.

This is similar to people who hire personal trainers; they aren't hiring somebody who will gently ask them to "please do another pushup." Quite the opposite, they are literally paying someone to yell at them and push them past their malaise and perceived physical limits. But it is a very fine line. A personal trainer cannot be derisive or abusive, he must convey that he believes his client is far more capable than the client himself believes and push him in that direction. At the end of the day, one comes to understand that the personal trainer is making him suffer for his own good.

This was Eisav's approach, and obviously it is a much more difficult way of dealing with his father, for it requires constant pressure and refusing to let Yitzchak deteriorate to the point of actually physically requiring to become bedridden. In fact, Yitzchak goes on to live another sixty plus years.

Achieving this with anyone is quite an accomplishment; doing this with one's own father is a seemingly impossible task. Eisav managed to do this, which is why he is known as the quintessential example of kibud av.

Did You Know...

The last possuk in this week's parsha, "Esav went to Yishmael and took Machalas...as a wife" is, quite remarkably, the source for a well known teaching from Chazal. Rashi (Gen. 36:3) cites this possuk as the source for the maxim that on the day of their wedding a bride and groom are forgiven of their sins. This is why the name of one of Esav's wives is originally given as "Machalas" while later she was called Basemath (Machalas is related to the word *mechilah*, forgiveness).

Talmudic College of Florida, Rohr Talmudic University Campus, 4000 Alton Road, Miami Beach, FL 33140

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>
to: weekly@ohr.edu
subject: Torah Weekly

**Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Toldot
For the week ending 18 November 2017 / 29 Heshvan 5778
Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com
Insights**

Waiting for G-dot

"These are the generations of Yitzchak ben Avraham; Avraham gave birth to Yitzchak." (25:19)

Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch remarks that the universal sign if you want someone to be quiet, if you want them to listen, is to raise your finger to your lips and say "Shh!" The sound of air flowing over lips is the universal sign to be still. The English word "hush" is connected with this sound. The same sound appears in the name of the month we are in — Cheshvan. The root of the word Cheshvan is *chash*, which in Hebrew means quiet.

The very name of the month commands us to be still, to be quiet and reflect.

If you look at the prayers of Rosh Hashana, the overwhelming theme is that exile of the G-d's majesty. It's true that we also speak about teshuva and mending our ways — but time and time again we pray for the day when the whole world will recognize that the G-d of Yisrael is the "The King". All of the anti-Semitism of the world, whether the BDS of the cultured glitteratus knocking another brick from the wall of Jewish security, or the bloodied kitchen knife of a fanatic slaughtering a family in their Shabbat peace, or a truck driven down a cycling path mowing down the young and innocent — all of this, at its root, is a denial of the G-d of Israel. The reflection of the month of Cheshvan requires us to think: After praying so hard over the great High Holy Days, how much do our lives reflect that yearning for the coming of Mashiach and the re-establishment of the Kingdom of G-d?

For surely it is at hand.

The last verse of last week's Torah portion says, "These were the years of Yishmael's life... over all his brothers he dwelled." This week's portion begins, "These are the generations of Yitzchak ben Avraham; Avraham gave birth to Yitzchak."

When Yishmael ceases to dwell over all his brothers, when the petro-dollars have dried up, then the sun of Mashiach ben David, the scion of Avraham, will rise.

May it be speedily in our days!

Source: Based on the Ba'al HaTurim

© 2017 *Ohr Somayach International*

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

http://www.ou.org/torah/author/Rabbi_Dr_Tzvi_Hersh_Weinreb

from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org>

OU Torah

What Mystery Pervades a Well!

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

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

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

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

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

I conceded that I remembered very well just how difficult it was for me to convince him of the significance of the stories of the Bible. I also wondered aloud about whether he had changed his mind over these many years.

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

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

My former student was alluding to the brief narrative to be found in this week's Torah portion, Parshat Toldot (Genesis 25:19-28:9); specifically, the passage which tells of Isaac's encounter with Abimelech, King of the

Philistines. Isaac emerges from that encounter with such great wealth that the Philistines envied him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This time, the knowing smile was on my face.

After our meeting came to an end, I found myself pondering an entirely different question, one that teachers often ask themselves: "What is more gratifying to a teacher? To have a student remember a lesson taught long ago, or to discover that a student has learned to think for himself?"

Thankfully, that recent visit to a former community of mine helped renew my

acquaintance with an old student who remembered some of my lessons, but who also went on to think for himself.

I continued to reflect upon this encounter for several days after leaving my old community. During those days, bits and pieces of a poem by Emily Dickinson floated up from the depths of my memory. This poem speaks of the mystery of wells, a mystery hinted at in the story of the wells of Abraham and Isaac. Here are the first and last stanzas of that poem:

What mystery pervades a well!
The water lives so far,
Like neighbor from another world
Residing in a jar.
To pity those that know her not
Is helped by the regret
That those who know her, know her less
The nearer her they get.

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

© 2017 Orthodox Union

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald <ezbuchwald@njop.org>
subject: Weekly Torah Message From Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald
date: Mon, Nov 13, 2017 at 5:39 PM

njop.org
“Isaac’s Unconditional Love for Esau”

Toledot 5778-2017

Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

In this week’s parasha, parashat Toledot, we read of the birth of Esau and Jacob. Isaac was 60 years old when his wife, Rebecca, gave birth to twin boys after a difficult labor.

The Torah, in Genesis 25:27, highlights the different natures of the twins as they grew older: וַיִּגְדְּלוּ הַנְּעָרִים, וְהָיָה עֵשָׂו אִישׁ יָדָע צֹד אִישׁ שָׂדֵה, וַיַּעֲקֹב אִישׁ תָּם יָשָׁב אֲהָלִים, The lads grew up and Esau became one who knows hunting, a man of the field; but Jacob was a wholesome man, abiding in tents. This verse is understood by the commentators to mean that Esau was a hunter, while Jacob was a scholar who lived in the tents and, presumably, studied Torah.

In a particularly revealing verse concerning the relationships in Isaac’s home, the Torah, in Genesis 25:28 states, וַיֵּאָהֵב יִצְחָק אֶת עֵשָׂו כִּי צִיד בְּפִיו, וְרַבְּקָה, אֲהָבָה אֶת יַעֲקֹב, And Isaac loved Esau for game was in his mouth; but Rebecca loved Jacob. As we have noted previously (Toledot 5760-1999), this verse reveals much about the relationship between the parents and their twin sons. It underscores that Isaac loved (past tense) Esau for utilitarian purposes—because Esau fed his father venison. Rebecca, on the other hand, loves (a continuous present form of the verb) Jacob. No reason is given. She loves Jacob because he is Jacob, just a wonderful child.

While it is always easier to focus on the good child, our commentators expend much effort trying to understand the challenging and difficult Esau. A fascinating Midrash found in Exodus Rabbah 1:1, states that while yet young, Esau abandoned the good path. However, because Isaac loved Esau so much, he spared the rod and refused to reprove the child. Instead of this gentle approach bringing Esau closer to his father, it distanced Esau, to the extent that Esau subtly desired his father’s death. When describing Esau’s hatred toward Jacob for stealing his blessing from Isaac, the Torah (Genesis 27:41) reveals that Esau thought to himself, “May the days of mourning for my father draw near, then I will kill my brother, Jacob.”

While the unconditional love that Isaac showed Esau did not positively impact on his son, as Isaac had hoped, Isaac’s relationship with Jacob was quite different. According to tradition, Isaac would study Torah with Jacob in the house of study, and would reprove Jacob when necessary, fulfilling the dictum of Proverbs 13:24, “He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who

loves his child brings him closer with discipline.” The commentators explain that wise parents do not overlook their children’s faults, but exercise disciplinary measures that would hopefully correct those faults.

Some of the commentators are troubled by the fact that the “holy” Isaac loved his wicked son, Esau, simply because Esau fed him meat. Finding this interpretation difficult, the rabbis (Tanchuma 27:8) explain this to mean that Esau would “trap” his father with his words. Esau would deceive his father, Isaac, into thinking that he was righteous, by asking Isaac all sorts of sophisticated religious questions concerning the laws of tithing salt. The Talmud, in Tractate Sabbath 89b, records that in the future, the Al-mighty will confront all three patriarchs, and say to them, “Your children have sinned.” Both Abraham and Jacob will say to the Al-mighty, “If that is the case, wipe them [the Children of Israel] off the face of the earth, for the sanctification of Your name!” On the other hand, when the Al-mighty criticized Isaac, telling him that his children had sinned against G-d, Isaac will say, “Sovereign of the Universe! Are they my children and not Your children? Do You not call them, ‘My sons’?”

Isaac proceeds to argue with G-d that during the average life span of 70 years, there is really very little accountable sinning. Isaac notes that until age 20 a person is not punished for misdeeds. Of the remaining 50 years, 25 years of nights must be subtracted, for a sleeping person does not sin.

Another twelve and a half years are allotted to prayer, eating and taking care of bodily needs. Thus, only twelve and a half years of sins remain. “You, G-d,” said Isaac, “Should be able to handle those twelve and a half years. If not, let’s share, half will be my responsibility and the other half Yours. If you say that they should all be upon me, please recall that I offered myself up before You as a sacrifice at the Akeida, and in that merit all the sins should be forgiven.”

At that moment the people of Israel cried out, “You, Isaac, are our [true] father. You are our father.” Isaac protested, “No, G-d is our Father and our Redeemer, everlasting is His name.”

A story is told that the great Rabbi Chaim of Chernovitz, had a son who left the religious fold. Reb Chaim, nevertheless, embraced his son and supported him with food and clothing, taking care of all his needs, and fulfilling all of his requests with love.

Every morning, the rabbi would humbly open his prayers before the Creator of the World and cry: “Master of the World, look at what I am doing with my son. Although he fails to walk in the righteous path, nevertheless, I treat him generously and with loving-kindness, and I am but flesh and blood.

You, our merciful Father, are a kind Deity, Who has infinite loving-kindness, should You not behave in a like manner toward Your children, Israel. Even though they may not fulfill Your wishes, nevertheless, You should have mercy on them, like a father on a son. Al-mighty G-d have mercy on us, and invoke Your Divine influence to fulfill all our needs. Should You not, Al-mighty G-d, learn from an insignificant person like me how to treat Your children?”

The patriarch Abraham chased his son, Ishmael, from his home. Father Jacob was not faced with a prodigal child. Isaac alone showed unconditional love, so that in the end of days, he would be able to challenge the Al-mighty, and bring merit to all the Children of Israel.

Many parents face the often maddening challenges of nurturing children. We must all learn from Isaac not to embarrass them, not to put them down, and surely not to send them away. As difficult as it may be, we must embrace them, support them, clothe them and care for them with abundant love.

Hopefully, in this manner, they will return, and we, as parents, will derive great pleasure from them and their good and noble deeds.

May you be blessed.

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

<https://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Author.aspx/1199>

Arutz Sheva

Of all our forefathers, who is the ideal role model?

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

In this week's D'var Torah the Chief Rabbi explains why Yitzchak is the embodiment of continuity and stability.

'The son of his father and the father of his son.'

Is this the best we can say about our patriarch Yitzchak? In Parashat Toldot we're told about the life and times of Yitzchak. His father Avraham was such a towering figure, that the Hittites said of him: 'Nasi Elokim Atah Betocheinu – You're a prince of God in our midst' and his son Yaakov – his name Yisrael, continues to live on in our midst.

But what can we say about Yitzchak himself? I believe that Yitzchak is probably the most suitable role model for our times. And why do I say that? You see, Avram became Avraham, Yaakov became Yisrael but Yitzchak was born Yitzchak and he died Yitzchak – no change of name whatsoever. Indeed, his name is in the future tense – Yitzchak – he will laugh, indicating that from him will flow a happy future.

Yitzchak was married to the one and only Rivkah but Avraham had more than one wife as did Yaakov. Avraham was born in Mesopotamia, made Aliyah, left for Egypt in a time of famine and then came back to Eretz Canaan. Yaakov left the Holy Land for Mesopotamia and then in his later life went to Egypt where he died. Yitzchak, however, was born in the Holy Land and died in the Holy Land – he never set foot from there.

In our tradition Yitzchak's virtue is called gevurah – strength because he had the strength of character which enabled him to be a rock of stability and dependability. Yitzchak is the symbol of continuity, a strong link in an ongoing chain and this is reflected in our davening. According to tradition, Avraham started the custom of davening shacharit, Yaakov of davening maariv in the evening and Yitzchak introduced the idea of davening mincha in the afternoon. The mincha service is the link in this ongoing chain of commitment and spirituality which joins the morning with the evening and which provides that strong continuity.

Therefore, when it comes to our aspirations and dreams for our children many of us as parents would love to have an Avraham or Yaakov but deep down, more than anything, we'd like to have a Yitzchak – children who please God, who will be the children of their parents and the parents of their children and who will guarantee our own line within the future of the Jewish people.

© Arutz Sheva

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

From tech@nachmankahana.com

<http://nachmankahana.com/category/divrei-torah/>

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

What factors determine personality?

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

The Parsha and Current Events.

Rebecca suffered with her pregnancy and went to obtain advice at the yeshiva of Shem and Ever. There she was told that in her womb were twins who would become the forefathers of two nations who would change the course of history, and that the younger would surpass the older.

Why did Rebecca go to the yeshiva of Shem and Ever, which according to some was situated in the northern city of Tzfat, while Rebecca was living in Hevron; she could have taken advice from the greatest spiritual figure of her generation, her husband Isaac?

And altogether, how could Rebecca act to divert the blessings to Jacob against her husband's wishes?

I suggest that Rebecca could not in any way confide in her husband with this matter, as follows:

Rebecca knew that she was carrying twins. The Midrash says that when she passed a yeshiva, one fetus would become aroused, and when she passed an idolatrous temple, the second fetus would become aroused.

She knew that one of them constituted a bad seed from the moment of conception, so that nothing could change his basic nature.

Isaac was not aware of the terrible suffering of his wife, who knew she was going to give birth to an evildoer who craved idolatry. Rebecca concluded that her innately evil son was her fault, as Bethuel's daughter and Laban's sister, and the righteous son could be credited to Abraham's son Isaac.

When the twins grew up, Rebecca could not tell Isaac about Esau's evil deeds and just how far he had gone in his wickedness, lest Isaac blame her for having brought that evil soul from the house of Bethuel and Laban.

Rebecca's regular practice was therefore to praise Esau before Isaac.

Matters continued in that fashion until their bar mitzvah age. Jacob became a righteous man who sat in study, whereas Esau was a man of the field, a man of absolute licentiousness.

Rebecca heard that Isaac was about to bless "righteous" Esau thanks to her own words of praise over the years, and she understood that she had to correct the warped situation that she, herself had created by hiding the truth from her husband.

Rebecca succeeded in hiding her great secret until Yitzhak understood by himself that Esau was evil when he married Canaanite women.

Many lessons that can be learned from Rebecca's conduct; but perhaps the most important one is do not tamper, pervert or conceal the truth.

More on Rebecca's Great Secret

Educators and psychologists struggle over the question: What is the major factor that fashions the human personality - heredity or environment? A person is composed of traits he inherits from his parents, but he is also influenced by his surroundings. Which of the two is decisive?

The question becomes incisive when we talk about twins who are polar opposites in their personalities.

Heredity and environment indeed, constitute primary components in fashioning the personality, but it appears that the decisive factor is the divine soul that HaShem breathes into one.

Like an artist who creates using various media: paper, cloth, parchment, canvas and glass. Oil paint will ruin paper and chalk will leave no imprint on glass. Likewise, an educational approach that stresses character improvement will be lost on someone totally selfish, just as the free spirit may be repelled by an approach that emphasizes strictures.

Isaac and Rebecca strove to influence Esau to be true to Torah, but the call of the field was decisive. All of his parents' words of Torah and chastisement were rejected in the face of his desire to lead a life of licentiousness and immediate gratification. Esau, thus remained Esau.

Rebecca knew full well who Esau was, and Esau knew himself, as well.

Esau's twin, Jacob, knew very well who his descendants would have to deal with until the end of time.

When Rebecca learned of Isaac's intent to transmit the blessings to Esau, she was left with no choice but to prevent this occurring at any cost. She found herself in a situation that she herself had created by hiding the true nature of Esau from Isaac - the reality that Esau had a soul that detested holiness. Rebecca told Jacob, "Let any curse be on me, my son" (Genesis 27:13). I take upon myself the consequences liable to be caused by your deed, because I am responsible for the situation created.

Esau's son was Eliphaz, who bore a son named Amalek. The Midrash states (Sifri on Genesis 33:4), "There is a well-known rule that Esau hates Jacob." That hatred did not derive from anything Jacob did or said. Rather, Esau's soul was the total opposite of Jacob's, just as impurity is the opposite of purity.

The Talmud in Pesachim 118b relates that in the future the nations will bring a gift to the Messiah, and HaShem will reject Esau's gift.

Nowadays, who are Esau's descendants?

According to tradition, most of the population of Christian Europe is linked to Esau, including those who emigrated from Europe to other places like the Western Hemisphere. It is interesting to note that the flags of most of the

countries of Europe, including the United States, include the color red which is associated with Esau.

Rabbi Nachman Kahana is an Orthodox Rabbinic Scholar, Rav of Chazon Yechezkel Synagogue – Young Israel of the Old City of Jerusalem, Founder and Director of the Center for Kohanim, and Author of the 15-volume “Mei Menuchot” series on Tosefot, and 3-volume “With All Your Might: The Torah of Eretz Yisrael in the Weekly Parashah”, as well as weekly parasha commentary available where he blogs at <http://NachmanKahana.com>
Rabbi Nachman Kahana is an Orthodox Rabbinic Scholar, Rav of Chazon Yechezkel Synagogue – Young Israel of the Old City of Jerusalem, Founder and Director of the Center for Kohanim, and Author of the 15-volume “Mei Menuchot” series on Tosefot, and 3-volume “With All Your Might: The Torah of Eretz Yisrael in the Weekly Parashah”, as well as weekly parasha commentary available where he blogs at <http://NachmanKahana.com>

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

from: Rabbi Chanan Morrison <chanan@ravkooktorah.org>

to: rav-kook-list@googlegroups.com

subject: [Rav Kook Torah]

ravkooktorah.org

Rav Kook Torah

Jacob Rescued Abraham

According to an intriguing Midrash (Tanchuma Toldot 4), Abraham would not have made it out of his hometown of Ur Casdim alive were it not for the intervention of his grandson Jacob. King Nimrod ordered Abraham to be thrown into a fiery furnace because of Abraham’s rejection of idolatry. But Jacob came to the rescue, as it says:

“So said God to the House of Jacob who redeemed Abraham: Jacob will not be ashamed, nor will his face become pale.” (Isaiah 29:22)¹

Even given the poetic license of Midrashic literature, Jacob could not have literally rescued his grandfather in an incident that took place before Jacob was born. Rather, the Sages wanted to teach us that Abraham was saved due to some special merit or quality his grandson Jacob possessed. What was this quality?

Two Paths of Change

There are two paths of spiritual growth that one may take. The first path is one of sudden, radical change, usually the result of some external catalyst. One example of such a transformation may be found in the story of King Saul. The prophet Samuel informed Saul that he would meet a band of prophets playing musical instruments. This encounter, the prophet told Saul, will be a turning point in your life. “The spirit of God will suddenly come over you, and you will prophesize with them. And you will be transformed into a different person” (1 Samuel 10:6).

The second path is one of slow, deliberate growth. We attain this gradual change through our own toil; it does not require an external stimulus and thus is always accessible.

But why are there two different paths of change available to us? If God provided us with two paths, then clearly both are needed. We should first prepare ourselves and advance as much as possible through our own efforts. After we have attained the highest level that we are capable of reaching, we may then benefit from unexpected inspiration from the inner recesses of our soul.

Abraham was a spiritual revolutionary, initiating a revolt against the idolatry of his generation. Abraham is the archetype of radical change. The defining moments of his life were dramatic events of astonishing dedication and self-sacrifice, such as his brit milah (circumcision) at an advanced age, and the Akeidah, the Binding of Isaac. In the merit of Abraham’s far-reaching spiritual a his descendants inherited those soul-qualities which foster sudden transformation.

Future generations, however, cannot rely solely on Abraham’s style of radical change. As a normative path for all times, we need the method of

gradual spiritual growth. The model for this type of change is Jacob. Unlike his grandfather, Jacob never underwent sudden transformations of personality or direction. Rather, the Torah characterizes him as “a quiet, scholarly man, dwelling in tents” (Gen. 25:27). Jacob’s place was in the tents of Torah. He worked on himself step by step, growing through perseverance and diligence in Torah study.

Two Names for Jerusalem

The Midrash teaches that the name Jerusalem is a combination of two names, indicating that the holy city possesses qualities represented by both names. Abraham called the city 'Yireh,' while Malki-Tzedek called it 'Shalem.' Not wanting to offend either of these righteous men, God combined both names to naming the city 'Yerushalayim' — “Jerusalem” (Breishit Rabbah 56:10). What does the name 'Yireh' mean? The holy city, particularly the Temple, had a profound impact on all who experienced its unique sanctity. This profound spiritual encounter is described as a form of sublime perception — “Your eyes will see your Teacher” (Isaiah 30:20). This elevated vision inspired visitors to reach beyond their ordinary spiritual capabilities. Due to the spiritual transformation effected by perceiving Jerusalem’s holiness, Abraham named the city 'Yireh' — “he will see.”

Malki-Tzedek, on the other hand, referred to the city’s qualities which assist those who seek to perfect themselves in a gradual fashion. Jerusalem is a place of Torah and ethical teachings, “For Torah shall go forth from Zion” (Isaiah 2:3). Therefore, Malki-Tzedek named the city 'Shalem' (perfection), referring to this incremental approach towards achieving spiritual perfection. Jacob to the Rescue

Returning to our original question: how did Jacob rescue his grandfather from Nimrod’s fiery furnace? In what way will Jacob “not be ashamed”? The Kabbalists explain that the goal of humanity — the reason why the soul is lowered into this world — is so that we may perfect ourselves through our own efforts. This way, we will not need to partake of nehama dekisufa (the “bread of shame”), a metaphor for benefiting from that which we did not earn.

While this explanation fits the path of gradual change, it would appear that the path of radical transformation is an external gift that we do not deserve. Is this not the undesired nehama dekisufa that we should avoid?

Not necessarily. If we are able to take this unexpected gift and use it to attain even greater levels of spiritual growth through our own efforts, then there is no shame in accepting it. We can compare this to a father who gave his son a large sum of money. If the son simply lives off the money until it is finished, then the father’s gift is nehama dekisufa, an embarrassment for the son, reflecting no credit upon him. If, however, the son uses the money to start a new business, and through his efforts doubles and triples the original investment, then the son has certainly pleased his father and brought honor to himself.

This is exactly the way that Jacob “rescued” his grandfather Abraham. Left on his own, the most natural path for Abraham — whose revolutionary soul called for sudden, drastic change — would have been to achieve complete and absolute self-sacrifice in Nimrod’s fiery furnace. It was Jacob’s trait of gradual change that saved Abraham from the fate of martyrdom. Abraham adopted the path of measured spiritual change which his grandson Jacob exemplified. Abraham left the furnace, and over the years worked diligently to attain the spiritual elevation that he had relinquished inside Nimrod’s furnace.

Why bother with the slower path? “Jacob will not be ashamed.” By growing slowly through our own efforts, the spiritual gifts of radical change are no longer an embarrassing nehama dekisufa, but an honorable gift which we have utilized to the fullest.

¹The simple reading of the verse interprets the phrase “who redeemed Abraham” to refer back to God, not to Jacob.

*(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Midbar Shur, pp. 289-292)
Copyright © 2006 by Chanan Morrison*

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: Ohr Torah Stone <ohrtorahstone@otsny.org> reply-
to:yishai@ots.org.il

subject:Rabbi Riskin on the Weekly Torah Portion
Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's Weekly Parsha Column
Parshat Toldot (Genesis 25:19-28:9)

Efrat, Israel — “Now Isaac loved Esau, because the hunt was in his mouth, while Rebecca loved Jacob” [Gen. 25:28].

The watershed moment in Jacob’s life—the repercussions of which surface in every subsequent generation of Jewish history—is the act of deceiving his father, Isaac, in order to wrest the blessings of geopolitical family leadership apparently intended for Esau. What led the otherwise wholehearted Jacob, the studious dweller of tents, to conspire in this act of trickery, posing as his twin brother in disguise?

We cannot really understand the drama of our Torah reading, Toldot, without considering the emptiness in Jacob’s heart, the aching angst with which only a child who feels unloved and rejected by a parent can truly identify.

From the very first verses in the reading, the stage is set for the sibling rivalry between Jacob and Esau. It is important to take careful note of how the Torah testifies that Isaac loved Esau “because the hunt (or entrapment) was in his mouth”.

Based on the Torah’s phrasing, our Sages note that Isaac did not know that Esau’s entrapment skills extended to interpersonal manipulation. Esau knew how to deceive Isaac with his words, misleading the patriarch to assume incorrectly that his son was scrupulous in his observance of the commandments [Midrash Tanchuma, Toldot 8].

In contrast, although Isaac undoubtedly had feelings for his other son Jacob, the Torah is deafeningly silent on the matter. Every child yearns for—and deserves—unconditional love from his or her parents. After all, a child does not ask to be born into the world. The most potent armor he or she can receive as protection against the forces of both environment and society is protective, unconditional love from concerned, committed parents. Jacob especially yearned for the warm embrace of his father. Tragically, he did not receive it. As a result, he felt unloved and rejected, by his father, who explicitly loved Esau. Understandably, Jacob craved this love, even if but for a brief period.

But how could he receive it? By supplying Isaac’s requested venison meat [ibid., 27:3-4] and expressing the words, “I am Esau your firstborn,” perhaps Isaac would love him just as Isaac loved Esau of the venison; just as he loved Esau of the mellifluous verbal entrapment.

Feeling Isaac’s love and blessing was a crucial necessity in Jacob’s development, even if it entailed deceiving his father to achieve it.

Permit me to conclude with a fascinating anecdote about a beloved family friend, a survivor of the Holocaust, a beautiful and intelligent woman blessed with a strong sterling character, a stunningly frank but generous disposition, and a rare ability to express herself in prose and poetry.

During one of our many conversations in which she would reminisce about her childhood, she revealed that, paradoxically, one of the happiest recollections of her life was the day in which she was forcibly removed from her family and taken by the Nazis to an extermination camp.

Responding to our shocked expressions, she described a family situation in which her older sister was the favored, “frum” (religious) daughter and she was the rejected, rebellious one. If there was one pat of butter and one pat of margarine, her sister would get the butter and she would get the margarine.

What was even more difficult for her to bear was her mother’s complaint whenever she was angered by her younger daughter’s conduct: “You probably aren’t my biological daughter! Your sister was born at home, whereas you were born in a ‘clinic.’ The doctors probably exchanged my real daughter with you.”

Obviously, this was not a usual refrain spoken by the mother, but was only engendered by our friend’s occasional rebellion. But as the Yiddish proverb goes “A slap departs; a word still smarts” (A patsch dergeht; A vort bashteht).

The Nazis came to her hometown of Bendine and rounded up the children. Only she and her parents were at home. Her father tried to steady his trembling hands by writing a kvittel (petition) to the Gerer Rebbe; her mother threw herself at the feet of the Nazi beasts, begging them to take her and spare the life of her precious child.

But our friend said she felt absolutely no fear, even when they loaded her onto the cattle car; she could feel only joy, joy in the knowledge that her mother truly loved her after all, joy in the confirmation that she was indeed her parent’s own and beloved daughter, joy in the discovery that she was at last accepted and not rejected. It was such a moment for which the young Jacob desperately yearned.

Shabbat Shalom