

וַיִּתֵּן לָךְ הָאֱלֹקִים מִטַּל הַשָּׁמַיִם
וּמִשְׁמַיַּי הָאָרֶץ
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SHABBOS

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12 MIN. before plag

12 MIN. before shkia

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RABBI DANIEL COREN



The Kedushah Hidden Within the Physical

In this week's *parsha*, we read about the great struggle between Yaakov and Eisav — who will receive the brachos from Yitzhak Avinu. At first glance, these *brachos* seem entirely physical: “מִטַּל הַשָּׁמַיִם וּמִשְׁמַן הָאָרֶץ” — blessings of dew, grain, and abundance. This seems puzzling. After all, wasn't it already determined before their birth that Yaakov would inherit the *ruchniyus* — the spiritual dimension of the world — while Eisav would receive the *gashmiyus*, the physical?

The answer is that physical blessing, when used as a vehicle for *kedushah*, is not a contradiction to Yaakov's mission — it is, in fact, its fulfillment. The material world was never meant to be rejected; it was meant to be transformed. The role of Klal Yisrael is to reveal the Divine energy hidden within the physical, elevating matter into spirit.

The *sefer Nishmasin Chadetin* records a striking story about the Chasam Sofer. One Pesach, he hosted the daughter of the Divrei Chaim of Sanz. She was childless and asked the Chasam Sofer for a *brachah*. Just as the soup was being served, the Chasam Sofer said, “As many *kneidlach* as you eat, that's how many children you'll have.” The woman hesitated — her father's custom was not to eat *gebrochts* — but she decided to eat one *kneidel*. Indeed, she was later blessed with one child.

This story captures a profound truth: *tzaddikim* often channel *brachah* through physical means. The Divine light is concealed within the material — a spoonful of soup, a coin of *tzedakah*, a loaf of challah. The test is whether we can see past the surface and connect it to *ruchniyus*.

This concept applies most powerfully to money, the force that drives all *gashmiyus*. As we discussed last week, Avraham Avinu's 400-shekel transaction with Ephron was not a random number — it was part of a spiritual chain leading to the 600 shekel Dovid HaMelech used to purchase the site of the Beis HaMikdash from Aravna HaYevusi. Money can trace the arc of holiness through generations.

Shlomo HaMelech said in *Koheles*: “הַכֶּסֶף יַעֲנֶה אֶת הַלֵּב” — “Money answers everything.” When used properly, money can create immense good; when misused, it becomes the root of terrible destruction. It is, in a sense, the most concentrated form of human energy — neutral by itself, but transformative depending on the intent behind it.

This message connects directly to Chanukah. The *Poskim* (see *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* and *Mishnah Berurah*) emphasize the special importance of *tzedakah* during this time, as it rectifies the soul's blemishes. The Rambam teaches that the Greeks not only defiled the oil and the Mikdash — “*pash'etu yedeihem b'mamonam shel Yisrael*,” they defiled the Jewish people's money. The Greeks understood the power of the physical and sought to corrupt it — to disconnect material success from spiritual purpose.

As we approach Chanukah, we are challenged to reclaim that connection — to ensure our wealth, our possessions, and even our daily comforts are infused with *kedushah*. The miracle of Chanukah teaches us that even a small jar of oil, seemingly ordinary and physical, can become a vessel for infinite light when used for the right purpose.

Let us take this week's *parsha* as a call to introspection: How much of our money and material success is being used for Hashem, and how much remains trapped in the hands of the Greeks — used for the self rather than for sanctity?

When we align our physical blessings with spiritual intention, we not only live as the children of Yaakov — we bring light into the darkest corners of the world.

RABBI ELI MANSOUR



The Cynics

The opening verse of *Parashat Toldot* introduces the story of Yitzhak Avinu and his family and writes, “This is the story of Yitzhak; Abraham begot Yitzhak.” Curiously, the Torah found it necessary to “remind” us that Yitzhak was Abraham's son, despite the fact that we are already very well aware of who Yitzhak was from the previous chapters of *Sefer Bereishit*.

The Midrash explains that the Torah here tells us not that Abraham begot Yitzhak but, rather, that it was clear to one and all that Abraham begot Yitzhak. The “*leitzaanim*,” cynics of the time charged that Yitzhak was actually fathered not by Abraham but, rather, by the Philistine leader Abimelech. After all, Abraham and Sara were married for many years without children, and then immediately after Sara was abducted by Abimelech, she conceived. The cynics pointed to this as “evidence” that Yitzhak was not really Abraham's son. G-d therefore made Yitzhak appear exactly like his father, thereby putting to rest the cynical denial of Yitzhak's relationship to Abraham.

The Hid”a (Rav Haim Yosef David Azulai, 1724-1806) noted how the rumors spread by the cynics of Abraham's time are typical of the way cynics speak. In a certain sense, the claim that Sara conceived as a result of Abimelech was true. After Abimelech returned Sara to Abraham, Abraham prayed on his behalf, asking that his wives should have children. In reward for his prayer, Abraham was blessed with a child. Hence, when the cynics went around proclaiming, “Sara conceived from Abimelech,” they were not entirely lying. Indeed, the Hid”a notes, the Midrash calls these people not “*resha'im*” — wicked people who spread lies — but, rather, “*leitzaanim*” — cynics. They spoke the truth, but deliberately phrased it in a way that guaranteed it would be misunderstood. Part of the reason why cynics are so dangerous is that they do not lie. Instead, they find a way to portray all things in a negative light without actually speaking dishonestly. Liars could easily be dismissed; formulating the truth in a negative, disparaging way attracts an audience.

Ensuring to speak the truth does not always ensure that we speak appropriately. The truth can be expressed in many different ways. The cynics excel in spinning the truth to make everyone and everything look bad, so they don't have to take anything seriously. We can learn from them the importance of exercising care and caution with regard to not only what we say, but how we say it, and of seeking to find all that is noble and commendable in other people, rather than constantly looking to insult and malign.

RABBI YY JACOBSON



Enthralled by Wells

In *parshat Toldos*, Isaac engages in relentless digging to uncover underground springs. He reclaims the wells that his father dug but that were plugged after Abraham's death. In addition, we read of at least another four wells that Isaac's servants dig anew. We are even told the names Isaac granted his wells and of the battles he fought to hold on to them!

When the Torah describes in next week's portion Jacob's journey from Israel to the East, it tells us that "Jacob looked and behold, a well in the field!" Jacob spends time at the well, and it is there that he encounters and decides to marry his wife-to-be, Rachel.

Why were the fathers of the Jewish people so connected to wells? And why does the Torah, a book of instruction and teachings, a roadmap for life, dedicate a significant part of this week's portion, *Toldos*, to discussing the details of Isaac's struggles to discover wellsprings?

TWO WATER SOURCES

In Jewish thought, water represents wisdom and inspiration. Just as water quenches the thirst of an arid body, rejuvenating its spirit and resuscitating its energy, the gifts of wisdom and enlightenment refresh a soul and grant it inspiration and vitality.

We have two sources of water in our world. There are waters above the

ground—oceans, rivers, lakes, streams, and rain—and water that flows below the earth, covered by grit. These latter waters seep out from sand and gravel, from amid soluble rocks and cleavage planes, as they struggle to emerge from beneath the earth that conceals them.

One would assume that the restricted flow of water fighting to emerge from rock and gravel would be inferior to the unrestricted and smooth beds of water that lie above the ground. Yet the reality is that there is something uniquely refreshing and clear about spring water. The very fact that these waters are hidden beneath the ground keeps them free from pollution and germs and grants them a freshness and sparkle not to be found in the above-ground waters. Plus, the journey through rock filters and refines these waters, so rich in minerals and nutrients.

TWO SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

The two sources of physical water in our world parallel two sources of wisdom and inspiration in our lives.

There is the wisdom and inspiration born above the mess of life's challenges. It comes to lucid people at lucid moments; it is straightforward, easy, and smooth. These are the waters that emerge from the hearts of pristine spiritual individuals, men and women unsoiled by filth and muck.

But then there is the wisdom that emerg-

es from life's grime, from amid struggle, pain, and failure; there is the clarity and passion born from hearts tarnished by toxicity. When a person, burdened by the daily pressures of earning a livelihood and raising a family, bogged down by trauma, fears, and anxiety; when a human being troubled by his earthly nature and his immoral urges, bursts out with a yearning to transcend his dirt and connect to Truth, this small, restricted flow of water seeping out from a sandy and rocky psyche is more refreshing and potent than all of the serene waters located above the "ground."

When a Jew, feeling so distant, engages in a mitzvah, cries out to G-d in yearning, or makes one move to excavate the inner faith, resilience, and idealism that lie buried in their soul, they connect to this spring of Divine infinity flowing deep below our earthiness. This is the most sparkling and refreshing water to the soul, to the universe, and to G-d.

This is why the fathers of the Jewish people were digging and preserving wells. They taught us to fight for and cherish those moments of truth, fleeting as they are, and those small sparks of idealism, buried within the deep rubble of trauma and confusion.

For this is the purpose of life, to discover heaven within the earth, to find your springs of joy, confidence, and wholesomeness that always flow beneath your surface.

SHIUR SCHEDULE

MONDAY & THURSDAY Chassidus Shiur 7:45 AM (18 Main) • **TUESDAY** Womens Shiur 9:30 AM (84 Viola Rd)
SHABBOS Friday Night – before Barchu (20 Upstairs) • **Morning 8:40 AM** (20 Upstairs) | **After Davening 12:00 PM** (20 Upstairs)
PLEASE NOTE: Rabbi Jacobson's Shabbos morning shiur will now begin at 8:40 AM, followed by the Minyan at 10:00 AM.

MISHMERET SHALOM

A Secretary Who Received a Hurtful Comment

Question: The manager of our local medical clinic is very tough. Several times, I've heard her berating her workers in a blatantly hurtful manner. Recently, I saw a secretary who was rebuked leaving the room with tears in her eyes. In order to ease her feelings, I told her not to take it to heart; her boss is just the type who explodes easily and then calms down. Was I allowed to say that? And if not, how do I rectify it?

Answer: The questioner acted properly and wisely. Apparently, the staff already knows that this manager tends to be very tough, and that's how she ensures that the system under her responsibility functions with precision. (Other managers find more pleasant ways to reach this result...) Consequently, the questioner was right

to calm the secretary by reminding her not to take the reproach as a personal affront, since that's just the way this manager keeps the clinic running smoothly, with a tough attitude and an occasional outburst, as befits her nature. By the way, one should assume that the manager is working on herself to make her methods more pleasant.



COUNTING DOWN UNTIL
UMAN
307 DAYS

RABBI NACHUM SCHEINER



Why a Shaliach Can Recite the Brachah on the Milah

We previously discussed that the *mohel* – or any *shaliach* – can recite the *brachah* when performing the *milah*, as we see in regard to *bedikas chometz* and *trumos* and *maasros*. We mentioned the opinion of the *Yad Ephraim*, who establishes that using an emissary is dependent on whether the mitzvah is a requirement on the person (on the *gavra*), which is regardless of circumstances, or if it is on the object (on the *cheftza*) and is contingent on a given situation. If it is a mitzvah incumbent on the person, an emissary cannot be used; if it is a mitzvah to be done on a certain object, an emissary can be used, and the emissary can recite the *brachah*.

EXPLANATION OF RAV SHLOMO ZALMAN

Rav Shlomo Zalman, in his *sefer Minchas Shlomo*, has another take on this question. He quotes another source in the *Magen Avraham* that sheds light on this point. The *Magen Avraham* (167:40) explains that the reason an emissary can recite a *brachah* on the person's behalf is based on the concept of *arvus* – the responsibility every Jew has to ensure that all of his fellow Jews are fulfilling the mitzvos. The *Rishonim* expound on this concept and explain that one's responsibility to others goes so far as to say that if one's fellow Jew has not yet fulfilled the mitzvah, it is as if he himself has not yet fulfilled his mitzvah in its entirety. It is therefore considered as if the person himself was commanded to perform the mitzvah.

THE FATHER STANDING NEXT TO THE MOHEL

Based on the aforementioned explanation of the *Acharonim*, the *brachah* is recited by the *mohel* only because he is a *shaliach* of the father. We can now gain a deeper understanding in the common practice that the father stands next to the *mohel* and, in some places, hands the knife to the *mohel* to make him a *shaliach*.

The simple reason for this practice is found in the *Tur*, who compares the *bris* to a *korban*, where the

owner of the *korban* was expected to be there. However, based on the above, it is also necessary in order for the *mohel* to be allowed to recite the *brachah*, which is only possible if he is a *shaliach*.

THE OPINION OF THE IGROS MOSHE

Rav Moshe Feinstein *zt"l*, in *Igros Moshe*, seems to have a different viewpoint. He sanctions the *mohel's* recital of the *brachah* even without being an emissary of the father. Rav Moshe discusses an unfortunate scenario of a father who, due to technical reasons, was unaware of the birth of his son and not told about the *bris*. He discusses a number of questions, including if the *bris* done without the father is valid and if the name given by the mother is considered permanent.

He then addresses the question of the validity of the *brachah* recited by the *mohel*. He asserts that the *brachah* recited is, indeed, valid, although he may have to pay for stealing the mitzvah and its *brachah*.

Rav Moshe proves this from the *Rosh*, who compares *bris milah* to *kisui hadam*, where the *brachah* is valid when someone else steals the mitzvah and recites the *brachah*. We see from here that both *kisui hadam* and *milah* are mitzvos that are incumbent on everyone, and, consequently, anyone who is performing the mitzvah can recite the *brachah*.

However, this seems to be in conflict with the aforementioned opinion of the *Yad Ephraim* and the *Minchas Shlomo*, who maintain that the power to recite the *brachah* is only based on being a *shaliach*. According to them, if the *mohel* was not a *shaliach*, his *brachah* should be rendered a *brachah l'vatalah*, an invalid *brachah*.

IN CONCLUSION

There are a number of ways to understand the reason for the *mohel's* recital of the *brachah*. According to some, it is only because he was appointed as a *shaliach*. Others disagree. A practical *halachic* difference between these opinions is if a *mohel* performing the *bris* without the father's appointment can recite the *brachah*.

UFARATZTA RABBI SHALOM BER MUNITZ



Rosh Chodesh Kislev 1977 is the day on which the Rebbe went home from his office in 770.

On Shmini Atzeres night, at the *hakafos*, the Rebbe suffered a heart attack. The Rebbe stayed in his 770 office that was set up as a makeshift hospital until Rosh Chodesh Kislev.

The following was related by Dr. Feldman *a"h*: Later, when I was alone with the Rebbe, I also tried to convince him [to go to the hospital]. "We have a lot of equipment here," I explained, "but it is better to have a full staff and more extensive equipment."

The Rebbe pointed at his desk. "Do you see this desk?" he asked me.

"Yes," I replied. He pointed around the room. "Do you see my chair? This desk, this chair, and these books have witnessed the tears of my Chassidim and absorbed their energy. This is the energy that is going to get me better."

I couldn't argue with that. There was no further discussion about going to the hospital...

==== From: Here's My Story, Chasid M.D.

SHIUR SCHEDULE

KOLLEL BOKER 7:00-8:00AM

Chavrusa learning - Gemara
Currently: מסכת יומא
Friday - Shuirim Beinyonei
Dyoma and relevant topics

NIGHT KOLLEL 8:15-9:45PM

Chavrusa learning - Halacha
Currently: הלכות ניבוי אב ואם

SHIURIM BY ROSH KOLLEL & FEATURED GUEST SPEAKERS

Daf Yomi | 8:45-9:45 PM
Mishna Yomis | 8:45-9:00 PM
Zera Shimshon Shiur | 8:15-9:00 PM

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Stories about R. Aryeh Levine zt'l

Reb Aryeh Levine zt'l would frequent the Yerushalayim prisons to visit the Jewish inmates. Once, someone asked a recently released prisoner whether he planned to steal again. He replied that he wouldn't return to the road of crime. And then he added, "Maybe I will steal once. Reb Aryeh Levine doesn't have a watch, and I want to get him one. If I can't get it for him in legal ways, I will steal. But after that, I won't steal again."

The man went to Reb Aryeh and asked him, "What kind of students do you have? I just spoke with one, and he said

he would steal to get you a watch."

Reb Aryeh Levine replied, "I don't tell them *mussar*, and I don't tell them not to steal. I teach them one thing: They must only speak the truth. And as you saw, this person was very truthful. He admitted that he would steal one more time. If someone is careful never to lie, he won't steal. He knows that if someone asks him whether he stole, he will have to admit the truth, so with being cautious with this one matter, he won't steal, and he won't commit other *aveiros*, either."

Once, a person was smoking a cigarette on the street on Shabbos, while Reb Aryeh was approaching from the other

side. One of Reb Aryeh's ex-prisoner friends ran to hear what Reb Aryeh would tell the smoker. Reb Aryeh said, "I won't tell you to stop smoking because you know on your own that it is Shabbos, and you smoke, regardless. But I will ask you not to put out the cigarette when you finish smoking it. Let it extinguish on its own. That way, you will have one *aveirah* less on Shabbos."

A couple of weeks later, this man said (to the person who had listened in on the conversation): "Now, not only don't I smoke on Shabbos, I don't smoke on the weekdays, either."



הרב בן ציון סנה

מה זה אושר ושמחה?

"ואלה תולדות יצחק בן אברהם, אברהם הוליד את יצחק", ידוע שהאמרי חיים ז"ל אמר ואלה ר"ת ליהודים היתה אורה ושמחה, והנה תולדות יצחק מה יוצא כשמישהו צוחק או מחייך הוא גורם שכולם ישמחו וזהו "ואלה תולדות יצחק", אם אני מחייך ובשמחה אני גורם שליחודים גם אורה ושמחה.

והנה ידוע שאברהם הכיר את בוראו וכלל ישראל מתייחסים אל אברהם כאב ולא אל תרם, א"כ ואלה תולדות יצחק, אם תהיה שריו ביצחק פירושו בשמחה אז תיקרא בן אברהם שאתה יהודי, אבל אל תחשוב שאם אתה יהודי יהיה לך עול מצות ולא תוכל להיות שמח, אלא אדרבה אברהם הוליד את יצחק היהדות זוהי מביא השמחה.

והנה השמחה פירושה להיות מאושר, וכמובא סיפור על מלך ששכב במיטת השנהג שלו, מעליו נפרסה כילה מרהיבה עשויה ממשי טהור שנמתחה על עמודי זהב טהור, תזמורת החצר נכנסה ובה להנעים לאוזניו של המלך, אבל המלך לא זז ממיטתו, כבר ימים שהוא לא חש בטוב. רופאי החצר נכנסו ובידיהם תיקי עור מהודרים, הם בדקו את המלך מכף רגל ועד ראש, פתחו את פיו, הניעו את לסתותיו, העלו והרימו את מפרקיו, דפקו על ברכיו, טפחו על גבו, הורו לו להשתעל ולהתעטש, לפהק ולגהק, לגלגל עיניים ולהניע שפתיים, ולא גילו דבר. 'המלך חולה', לחשו רופאי החצר באוזני היועצים, 'אנחנו עוד לא יודעים במה בדיוק, אבל הוא חולה, מאוד חולה'. הם השקו אותו בתה צמחים, בישלו לו מרק עשוי שורשים, אפו לו פשטידה מפירות היער הקסום, אך דבר לא עזר, המלך נותר על מיטתו, ולא הניד עפעף גם כשהמלכה נעמדה ליד הנבל ופרטה את המנגינה האהובה עליו.

בחסות המבוכה, הורשה גם רופא הכפר להיכנס פנימה, איש זקן וכבד משקל, הוא לא נשא תיק, רק הוא והמעיל שעליו, נכנס, הציץ, ראה והחליט. 'המלך סובל מדיכאון', קבע רופא הכפר, 'אם תביאו לו גלימה של איש מאושר, תהיה לו רפואה!', הציע הרופא את תרופת הפלאים ומשהו בפניו הקפואות של המלך הפשיר. 'תצאו לחפש!' הורה המלך, שהתעורר פתאום, ובין רגע העלה את מעמדו של רופא הכפר. יצאו לחפש, והיכן יחפשו את האושר אם לא בקרב עשירי הממלכה. קבעו פגישה דחופה עם היבואן הגדול ביותר במדינה, האיש שכל עשירי הממלכה תלויים במוצא פיו, האיש ששולט על מחצית מצי הספינות של הממלכה, ואחראי על שישים אחוז מהיבוא וחמישים אחוז מהיצוא. 'הוא בוודאי חייב להיות מאושר', התלחשו הנציגים בדרכם לפגישה, 'בוודאי ישמח גם לתת גלימה למלך', הם היו בטוחים שהפגישה תצליח. 'אני לא בטוח שאני האיש המתאים לתפקיד',

אמר העשיר, 'אני אמנם עשיר, אך חוששני שרוק מלהיות מאושר, אתם יודעים איך זה, עסקים, טרדות, ספינות וסערות, סחורות וגניבות, מיסים, עלויות, בנקים וכאב ראש, לא, אני לא מאושר!'

יצאו שליחי המלך, ונתקלו במודעת ענק המבשרת על הופעה מיוחדת של זמר הממלכה האגדי, במרכז הבריה. 'הוא בוודאי איש מאושר!' אמרו זה לזה, 'הוא מופיע בכל העולם, כולם מכירים אותו, יש לו ארבעה אלבומי זהב, הוא חייב להיות מאושר!', הם מיהרו אל הכיכר, מקווים לפגוש אותו עוד לפני המופע. 'אני לא איש מאושר', אמר הזמר, בשעה שההמונים הריעו לו מבעד לפרגוד, 'תאמינו לי שאני קם כל בוקר מזיע כולי מחלומות רעים שהקול שלי נעלם. וגם, לאחרונה התחילו להגיע לאוזניי שמועות שיש לי מתחרים, וגם המלך כבר לא הזמין אותי המון המון זמן. לא, אני לא מאושר! אבל אם המלך צריך גלימה, אז בשמחה, תמיד'. יצאו נבכים ושוטטו ברחבי הממלכה, מחפשים את האיש המאושר, באמת, האיש שיזכה להביא רפואה למלך.

הגיעו לקצה העיר, פסעו בשביל הסמוך לעיר, וקולו של חליל צלול שהתפרז בין עצי היער לכד את תשומת לבם. הם הלכו בעקבות הקול ופגשו איש עליז ושמח שיושב תחת סוכת ענפים דלה ומנגן במרץ. 'אתה נראה מאושר?' אמר אחד השליחים. 'בהחלט!' אמר האיש והמשיך לנגן. - 'ממה אתה כל כך מאושר, אני רואה שאפילו בית אין לך?' 'אבל יש לי את כל היער', אמר האיש שמאחורי החליל והצביע על העצים שמסביבו, יש לי את השמש שמאירה לי כל בוקר וכל היום, יש לי ירח וכוכבים, יש לי אוויר צלול, ויש לי ציפורים שעוזרות לי לשיר, והכי אני מאושר, על שיש לי את עצמי, ושאיני עדיין חי!'

'תסכים לבוא איתנו אל המלך!' שאלו השליחים שכבר התייאשו מלמצוא מישהו מאושר בתוך העיר הגדולה. 'בוודאי, אני אוהב את המלך, הוא איש טוב!' באו אל המלך, שטרם והתרומם כששמע שמצאו עבורו איש מאושר. המאושר קד קידה עמוקה וחייך אל המלך. שמעתי שאתה איש מאושר, אמר המלך, 'תוכל לתת לי גלימה אחת משלך'. 'הייתי שמח לעזור אדוני המלך, אבל כמו שאתה יכול לראות בעצמך, אין לי גלימה, אפילו חולצה אין לי!'

'אז איך אתה מאושר?' שאל המלך, וזכה לשמוע מהו אושר אמיתי של מישהו שמאושר ממה שיש לו באמת. המלך הבריא ולמד שהאושר לעולם אינו תלוי במשהו חיצוני, האושר בא מבפנים, מתוך האדם. כשאתה יודע להסתכל על החיים בצורה הנכונה, כשאתה מפסיק להיות תלוי בנסיבות חיצוניות, כשאתה לומד להעריך את המתנות הנפלאות שיש לך באמת, את החיים שיש לך, את מי שאתה, את העולם הנפלא שאתה חי בו אתה הופך לאדם מאושר באמת. וכמו שכבר אמרו חכמינו ז"ל: 'איזהו עשיר השמח בחלקו!' ומי לא רוצה להיות עשיר!?

RABBI YAKOV YOSEF SCHECHTER



Gan HaTorah

THE “TRICKERY”/“WISDOM” MADE IT UNCONDITIONAL

“ויאמר בא אחיך במרמה, ויקח ברכתך” 27:35

“And he (Yitzchok) said, ‘Your brother came with *mimah* and took your blessing.’” Although the usual translation for “*mimah*” is trickery, Rashi tells us here that the word means with “wisdom.” This whole story seems quite perplexing. The Torah tells us that Yaakov is the paragon of *emes*, truth. Yitzchok tells Eisav to bring him food, and then he will bless him. Rivkah has Yaakov dress up like Eisav and bring food to Yitzchok so that he can receive those *brachos*. There are different ways to understand this story, to explain how Yaakov did not lie and did not do anything wrong. However, with all of those explanations, why did Hashem make it that the *brachos* that Yaakov would receive, the *brachos* for Klal Yisroel for all future generations, should be given in a way that can certainly be construed as trickery? Why not have Yitzchok give them directly to Yaakov, a father blessing his child, the child whom he believes he is blessing?

The Torah uses the word “*mimah*” to explain why this was not a *mekah* טעות, an improper sale, which would have nullified the *brachos* given. The Midrash tells us that when Yaakov spoke and used the Names of Hashem, Yitzchok knew that it had to be Yaakov, for Yaakov commonly used the Names of Hashem, while Eisav never did. Why did Yaakov use the *Shem Hashem* when speaking to Yitzchok and trying to impersonate Eisav, who never would have used the *Shem Hashem*?

Yaakov wanted the *brachos* to have the full effect. When one gives *brachos* to another, in order for it to have the full effect, the one giving the *brachos* must have in mind the one to whom he is giving the *brachos*. Therefore, Yaakov wanted to create doubt in Yitzchok’s mind so that he would have in mind to give it to whichever son of his was there. “והקול קול” – There were two signs that the person there was Yaakov, for the voice sounded like his and the words he used included the *Shem Hashem*. On the other hand, there were two signs that it was Eisav: והידיים ידי, the hands of Eisav that brought Yitzchok the food and the feel of Eisav’s hands, very hairy hands. Being that it was two signs against two signs, Yitzchok was unsure who was before him and therefore had in mind to give the *brachos* to whichever son was in front of him. (עוד יוסף חי)

Had Yitzchok given the *brachos* to Yaakov knowing that it was Yaakov, in his mind he may have been giving the *brachos* to Yaakov due to his great attributes. That would not be good for Klal Yisroel, for if *chas v’sholom* they were to veer from that, it would nullify the *brachos*. While we know that Yaakov’s children are *zoche* to the *brachos* through *kol* - Torah and *tefillah* – nonetheless, being that they were given *cart blanche*, they are *brachos* that are always there for Klal Yisroel. The *brachos* needed to be given in a way that Yitzchok would have in mind to give it to whomever was in front of him, and at the same time, in a way that after he gave it, he should realize that Yaakov was in fact the right person to have received them. Yaakov was *zoche* to those *brachos* unconditionally. We must know at all times that Hakodosh Boruch Hu loves us unconditionally, and we, in turn, must love Him unconditionally.

RABBI YOCHANAN ZWEIG



Running out of Womb

Hashem allowed Himself to be entreated by him, and his wife Rivka conceived.” (25:21)

This week’s *parsha* introduces the miraculous pregnancy and birth of twins to our matriarch Rivka. After having been barren for twenty years, Rivka conceives. The Torah relates that although both Yitzchak and Rivka prayed for the birth of a child, Hashem answered the prayers of Yitzchak. Rashi explains that Rivka’s prayers were denied, for the prayer of a righteous individual whose parents are also righteous is more effective than the prayer of a righteous individual whose parents are wicked. Presumably, both Yitzchak and Rivka were praying for the same result. Therefore, Yitzchak’s prayer being more effective does not necessarily indicate that Rivka’s wishes were not met. Why then does the Torah emphasize that Rivka’s prayers were not answered?

The verse states “*vayisrotzatzu habanim b’kirbah*” – “the sons agitated within her.” Rashi cites the Midrash that “*vayisrotzatzu*” stems from the word “*ritzah*,” running. When Rivka would pass a house of study, Yaakov would rush to exit, while Eisav would do the same when Rivka passed a house of idol worship. How can fetuses contained within a womb be described as running?

Rivka was troubled with the physiological experiences of her pregnancy and went to seek counsel from Shem, who offered her Divinely inspired advice. The Ibn Ezra, citing the Midrash, explains that prior to seeking Divine counsel, Rivka spoke with other women to inquire as to whether her sensations were common for expectant mothers. When informed that her symptoms were unique, she proceeded to seek counsel. Why was her discomfort unique? Furthermore, why did Rivka not have any subsequent children? Finally, why do we find no mention of Rivka’s womb opening as we do in the cases of Rochel’s and Leah’s pregnancies?

Rabbeinu Bechaya explains that Rivka’s consternation was caused by her feeling the struggle within her from the onset of her pregnancy. This, he continues, was unique, for at the onset of pregnancy, a woman does not experience any movement at all within her. Rabbeinu Bechaya is explaining that Rivka’s pregnancy did not involve fetal development. Following conception, Hashem miraculously developed completely formed human beings in miniature size within Rivka’s stomach. Since there was no need for fetal development, the Torah mentions that the location of the pregnancy was “*b’vitnah*,” in her stomach. No womb was necessary.

The Talmud reveals that Rivka was born physically incapable of ever birthing a child. Whereas Rivka prayed to develop the necessary biological components to father Yitzchak’s child, Yitzchak prayed only for her to give birth. The Torah emphasizes that his prayers were answered, but hers were not, for her body did not develop in the manner necessary for birthing a child. Technically, she remained barren. Therefore, she subsequently had no more children.

R' Avraham Asulin שליט"א

Rosh Kollelim Tiferes Michoel and Mechaber Sefer Toras Imecha

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The Baby and the Bath Water

“And Yitzchak loved Eisav, as trapping was in his mouth, whereas Rivkah loved Yaakov.” (25:28)

There’s an old adage that runs: *Don’t throw out the baby with the bath water*. Meaning, don’t confuse the essential with the subordinate.

What does the Torah mean when it says “trapping” was in Eisav’s mouth? Rashi explains that Eisav knew how to trap with his mouth, to deceive. He asked his father how to tithe salt and straw, things that don’t require tithing. His father assumed from these questions that he was very pious.

Why did Eisav choose to ask his question about salt and straw? Surely there were many other ways he could have paraded his “piety.” Why specifically did he choose salt and straw?

All things are not created equal. Some things are of the essence; others are subordinate. Every palace has an entrance hall. No one would confuse the importance of the entrance hall with the palace itself. The palace is the essence. The entrance hall has importance only because it is the only way into the palace.

Similarly, this world is not the be-all and end-all of existence. This world is merely an entrance hall to a great palace of light, the World to Come. The World to Come is the essence. *This* world is subordinate to it. This world derives its importance only from the fact that it is the only access to the World to Come. By itself, it has no value.

In the realm of time, Shabbos is the essence. The six days of the week derive their importance because they lead to Shabbos. By themselves, they are insignificant.

The spiritual is of the essence. The physical is subordinate to it. The physical is only significant to the extent that it provides a stage on which Man may grow in spiritual stature.

Yaakov represents the spiritual; Eisav, the physical. The relationship between Yaakov and Eisav was supposed to be that of essence and subordinate. As long as Yaakov remains pre-eminent, the world can reach its fruition, and Eisav himself, while being the incarnation of the physical, can also achieve spirituality by supporting Yaakov. Eisav, however, wasn’t satisfied with his role. He wanted to be the star of the show. He wanted to be the essence of Creation.

Eisav betrayed his true intentions, to star in Creation, when he asked his father how one tithes salt and straw. Salt has no intrinsic value. It finds its value as a condiment to other foods. It is always subordinate. Straw, too, is subordinate to wheat. It is the vessel that carries the wheat, its support, its method of existence. But it is not the *essence*. The wheat is the essence. The Jewish People – Yaakov – are the “wheat of the world.” The nations of the world are the “straw,” the means by which the Jewish People can fulfill their spiritual mission.

In Eisav’s mind, however, straw and salt were of the essence. Thus, he could ask his father how to tithe them. Eisav’s question betrayed his true intentions. Eisav was trying to overturn the Divine order of Creation. Eisav was trying to turn the bath water into the baby.



The Blessed Life

Yitzchok’s uncertainty is finally resolved, and we expect the blessing to gush forward from father to son. Yet we are hardly past the first phrase of the blessing, and the *ba’al ko-reh* stops, and the person called for *shishi* comes forward. Only after that pause do we resume the familiar “*V’yitein*” in which Yitzchak asks Hashem to bestow bountiful physical blessings on Yaakov. Why the pause in mid-sentence?

Truth be told, many are quick to point out that we are not sure of the pedigree of these pauses and who determined their location. Nevertheless, in this case, as in most cases, they are widely held practices, and as such, deserve some attention.

Nonetheless, even if the pause would not pique our curiosity, the *pasuk* that begins this blessing deserves comment. “And he approached him, and he kissed him, and he smelled the scent of his clothes, and he blessed him and said: Look, the scent of my son is as the smell of the field that Hashem blessed” (27:27). Apparently, the Torah sees that calling attention to the scent of his clothes is part of the blessing. Not only is it introduced as such, but it is followed by the conjunctive “*vov*,” tying it to the material blessing that follows. Moreover, Rashi explains that Yitzchak perceived the aroma of Gan Eden unexpectedly, overwhelming him, and it is that fragrance that he insists on impressing on Yaakov prior to bestowing a blessing.

Perhaps Yitzchak first instructs his son how to effectively receive a *brachah* and how to best prepare oneself for the blessings and prayers of others. Moments of *brachah* in our experience usually come at the beginning of new stages and most often at celebrations of those beginnings. We, too, would do well to take lesson from these *pesukim*.

It would seem that the first part of every blessing and prayer is to appreciate what one has already. “*Re’eh bini*,” see and realize and be grateful for the scent of Gan Eden that is already yours. A blessing, a prayer, or a blessed life begins with dwelling on one’s strengths and gifts. How sad it is to see people totally unaware of their G-d-given talents, often casting about for years, if not decades, till they contribute in a self-fulfilling manner. On the other hand, isn’t it almost inspiring to see people who live with self-awareness and profound gratitude and seek out opportunities to simply be grateful? Perhaps that is why Klal Yisrael, the wisdom of whose customs we have long come to expect, has us pause when Yaakov is being forced by his father to become aware and absorb his own blessings.

Perhaps Yitzchok wants to make sure that his son realizes these strengths and aspires to the great heights that they can bring. If one indeed catches the whiff of Eden in one’s coat, is there any limit to where bestowed blessings will take him?

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RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND



Contemplating Life Under the Shadow of Death

In this week's *parsha*, we learn about the famous story of the sale of the birthright. A ravenously hungry Eisav saw his brother Yaakov preparing lentil soup. Yaakov negotiated a trade of soup for the rights of the firstborn in the family. Eisav agreed to the deal, and Yaakov bought the *bechorah* [birthright of the eldest son].

Our Sages tell us that Yaakov was cooking lentil soup because on that day, the patriarch Avraham had died. Yitzchak was observing the mourning practices for his father, and the custom was that lentil soup was served to the mourner. That is why Yaakov was cooking this.

Does it not seem strange and inappropriate that at this particular moment in history, the question of the birthright should emerge? Even if Yaakov really wanted this right, could he not have chosen another opportunity to enter into negotiations with Eisav?

Imagine – this was a house of mourning. The grandfather, Avraham, had just died. Yitzchak was sitting *shiva*. Yaakov was preparing the meal for the mourner. Eisav entered. What was on Yaakov's mind at this time? "Sell me the birthright." Why did Yaakov raise the issue of who will be considered the *bechor*, now, at this juncture?

The *Beis Av* suggests the following interpretation: Our Sages teach us that we serve lentils to a mourner because of the symbolism of their shape. Lentils are round. Life is a wheel that is forever turning around in the world. The round lentils symbolize the cyclical nature of the cycle of birth and death that is the way of all flesh. Mourning is a virtually inescapable condition that everyone must face sooner or later. Hopefully, it will be a child for a parent – after the parent has lived a long and fulfilling life.

People often first begin to think about life precisely at a time of mourning and death. That is when people think of death's inevitability. It is then that people think of their own mortality. Often, people only really contemplate life under the shadow of death.

This incident is teaching us that the way a righteous person views life and the way a wicked person views life are diametrically opposed. Yaakov looked at life as "What do I have to accomplish? What are my responsibilities?" The status of *bechor* determined more than who would receive a double inheritance. The status of *bechor* included responsibilities. Who would be the spiritual heir in the world? Who would do the Service of G-d in the world? When Yaakov contemplated death and thereby contemplated life, he was goaded on to seek the spiritual responsibility that comes with family leadership.

On the other hand, when a wicked person contemplates life, his attitude is "Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we may die." Yes. Death is inevitable. What does that tell me to do? Enjoy the good life while I can! Indulge now, before it is too late. Specifically now, when Eisav was thinking about the death of his grandfather and the *shiva* of his father, he first began to think, "I do not want the responsibility of being the firstborn. I do not want to 'waste' my life in servitude to G-d. I want to enjoy life now; I want freedom from the responsibility of being the firstborn."

Therefore, it was at this precise moment that the sale was consummated. This was when the status of the firstborn came into focus. Yaakov decided that he must acquire the *bechora* now. Eisav decided that he must be rid of it now.

RABBI JARED VIDERS



Brotherly Love

In 1965, Frank's, the family-owned Monsey Kosher Bake Shop, opened its doors on 51 Main Street in the then sparsely populated hamlet of Monsey. For decades thereafter, they serviced the Monsey community and Rockland County at large, supplying one and all with delectable challahs, yummy rugelach, and pastries of all types.

One day, a "new" bakery announced its grand opening, of all places – 40 Main Street, virtually across the street from Frank's. I did not call Monsey home at the time, nor did I ever discuss the matter with the proprietors of Frank's, but one can only imagine the super-human strength necessary not to harbor ill-will towards the "new kid on the block," which, in the eyes of even an amateur economist, would inevitably siphon off customers (and profits).

One Thursday evening, many years later, a fire broke out in the small shopping strip at 40 Main Street. The damage was extensive, and several stores had no choice but to relocate. And yet, the very next morning, Erev Shabbos, the busiest day of the week by far, the 40 Main Street Bakery was somehow able to service its customers via a makeshift, street-side, temporary "storefront" replete with challahs, rugelach, and cookies. How was this feasible given last night's blaze and the destruction it caused

to their ovens and production area?

When the owners of Frank's Bakery learned of the fire, they sympathized with the plight of their "competitor" and, in an act of remarkable selflessness, graciously invited the 40 Main Street bakery personnel to utilize Frank's *own* ovens (after hours) in order to service their loyal 40 Main Street customers the next morning. No grudge. No ill-will. No "all's fair in war and business." Just a sincere, deep-seated sense of connection with one's fellow Jews and an unadulterated desire to alleviate their plight.

To a significant degree, the history of our nation can be gauged by the relationship (or the lack thereof) among siblings. Yitzchak & Yishmael. Yaakov & Esau. Leah & Rachel. Yosef & his brothers.

This week, one such fraternal relationship will be front and center at your Shabbos table. The *parsha* is dominated by the fledgling stages of the now-timeless rivalry between Esau and his younger twin brother, Yaakov. Despite sharing the same parents, education, and upbringing, their diametrically opposed personalities and priorities were immediately apparent. The ensuing rift is readily apparent to this very day.

The Esau/Yaakov sibling rivalry can be contrasted with the fraternal relationship between Yosef's sons, Ephraim and Menashe, just two generations later. In-

deed, many a Shabbos meal the world over commences with a blessing upon one's son(s) with the heartfelt aspiration that "Hashem make you like Ephraim and Menashe." Of all the role models in our nation's history, why do these two represent the gold standard of *nachas*?

Rav Noach Weinberg *zt'l* explains, "The relationship of Ephraim and Menashe epitomizes the way brothers should love and trust each other. When Yaakov gave Ephraim, the younger brother, the favored blessing, Menashe, the firstborn, could have protested and resented his brother for taking what was rightfully his. But Menashe said nothing. He understood that what matters most is not his position or status but, rather, what is best for the Jewish People. We bless our sons to emulate Ephraim and Menashe because their relationship was without any trace of resentment. They are our role models."

We are reminded that at our core, we are all brothers and sisters who share in the perpetuation of the values and dedication of our ancestors. As we approach Shabbos, we capitalize on the opportunity to renew our dedication to one another and enter the month of Kislev amidst shalom and love for our fellow Jew.

RABBI MORDECHAI LABATON ZT"L

Shabbos Stories

Rabbi Yehudah Tzadka *zt'l* related a story about Rabbi Mordechai Labaton *zt'l*, who was the head of the rabbinical court in Aram Soba. When he became old and his strength began waning, he was no longer able to wake up early to go to the *beit keneset* or stay late. He therefore asked the people in his community to arrange for a *minyan* to come to his home morning and evening so that he could join a public prayer. And so, the *minyan* was arranged, and men would go morning and evening to pray in his home.

One day, in the middle of the winter, a furious rain poured down from the skies, and the group of men never came. The

tzaddik was terribly upset and said to his attendant, "Do me a favor, and gather the people together for the *minyan*."

The attendant agreed, and he went out into the storm and knocked on the people's doors. After a long while, he returned alone and reported, "The people will not come in these awful conditions. They told me that today they will pray privately in their homes."

The *tzaddik* responded, "You know that I am not a wealthy man, but over the course of my years, I have saved penny by penny, so that I have enough to pay for scholars to come to my house after my death to learn in my memory. Take this last money that I have prepared for after my death and use it to pay all the people of our *minyan* to come

here so we can pray together with a *minyan*."

The attendant obeyed the *tzaddik's* wish. When the people heard how precious public prayer was in the eyes of the *tzaddik*, that he was willing to allocate for this purpose the money set aside for the study of Torah in his memory after his death, they all came to his home, even in the pouring rain, and refused to take a single coin.

They enthusiastically reported this incident from mouth to ear, until the entire community recognized the importance of public prayer and how much one must sacrifice on its behalf. For it is worth far more than any sacrifice we make!



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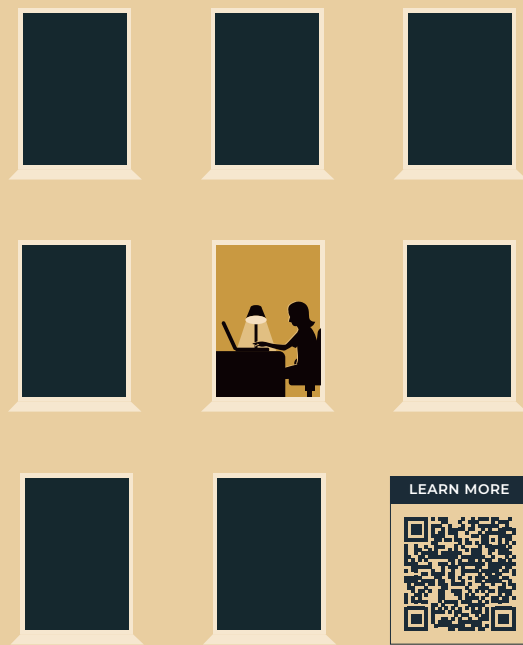
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JOKES

A man is walking on a beach carrying two fish in a bucket. A game warden walks up and asks to see his fishing license.

"I don't have a fishing license," says the man. "You know it's illegal to fish without a license, right?" asks the warden.

"I wasn't fishing, officer. These fish are my pets."

"Your pets?"

"Yes, officer. They like a little exercise, so when the weather's fine, I take them to the water and let them swim around. Once they're done, I give them a whistle, and they jump back into my bucket and we head home."

The officer isn't buying a word of it, so the man says, "Don't believe me? Watch!" and he throws the fish into the sea.

The warden waits for a minute, then says, "Alright, now whistle to your fish and make them jump out of the water."

The fisherman turns to the officer and says, "What fish?"

Who can hold up a bus with one hand?
A crossing guard

What's in the middle of nowhere?
The letter H

Which candles burn longer: bee's wax or tallow?
Neither, they both burn shorter.

Why don't honest people need beds?
They don't lie.



Brought to you by Uncle Benjy, author Laughter is the Best Medicine: Kosher and Jewish jokes for the whole family, 1 & 2, and Jewish joke book for kids available on Amazon.

ZERA SHIMSHON

Eisav and the Bechorah

And Eisav said, "I am going to die, so of what use is this birthright to me?" (25:32)

The *Medrash (Rabba 63:17)* says in the name of Reish Lakish that Eisav began to curse Hashem and denied His existence. Reish Lakish learns this out from the fact that Eisav added the word **ה**. Eisav could have simply said **ולמה לי בכורה**, "Of what use is a birthright to me?" Instead, he said **ולמה זה לי בכורה**, "Of what use is *this* birthright to me?" Reish Lakish says that since the "ו" elsewhere refers to Hashem with the word **וה** (*Shemos 15:2*, **וה** **אלי ואנורו**, "This is my G-d," etc.) and Eisav used this word while he was degrading the *bechorah*, he also included Hashem in his curses.

The *Zera Shimshon* asks that although the word **וה** may seem slightly unnecessary, it still seems drastic to therefore learn from it that Eisav cursed and denied the existence of Hashem.

The *Zera Shimshon* explains how Reish Lakish saw this in the word **וה** as follows.

The Gemara (*Eruvin 19a*) says that even the wicked sinners, when they are eventually punished by Hashem for their evildoings, proclaim Hashem's justice and agree with Him for punishing them for their actions. On the other hand, when a person is sentenced to death by a king, his mouth is stuffed so that he cannot curse the king. This is the difference between the way the Jewish people accept punishment from Hashem compared to the way people of the nations of the world accept punishment from their respective rulers.

On this Gemara, the *Maharsha* says that even amongst the Jewish sinners, those who have become heretics and do not believe in Hashem react as *goyim* would to punishment, namely, they curse Hashem.

Rashi writes that when Eisav asked Yaakov what the *bechorah* was all about, Yaakov answered him that it brings along with it many punishments and deaths. Upon hearing this, Eisav should have asked Yaakov that if so, why was he so interested in it. From the fact that Eisav just sold it and didn't ask Yaakov this question, it is apparent that Eisav understood that Yaakov was ready to accept any punishment and possible death associated with the *bechorah*. This Eisav had no interest in, and he promptly sold his right to the *bechorah* to Yaakov.

It is from here that Reish Lakish understood that the word **וה** represents more than meets the eye. From this exchange, Eisav made it clear that he was not from those who are willing to accept Hashem's punishments and possible death willingly. According to the above-mentioned Gemara, even the wicked sinners of the Jewish people, so long as they have not become heretics, accept Hashem's punishments. This places Eisav in the group of those who are heretics. Therefore, it now makes sense for Reish Lakish to back up his insight that Eisav denied the existence of Hashem from the seemingly extra word **וה** because it is no longer unfair to accuse Eisav of heresy. Once Eisav showed that he would not accept Hashem's punishments, he grouped himself with the heretics, uncovering his real intention with the word **וה**.

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