



אשרינו

**SOUTH FLORIDA
CANDLE LIGHTING**

6:17PM

MOTZEI SHABBAT

7:20PM

A Weinbaum Yeshiva High School Torah Publication

PARSHAT TOLDOT

~ כ"ט חשוון תשע"א ~

RABBI HOUBEN	1
JARED SAMILOW ('14)	2
ALIZA BLUM ('12)	2
ARIE HIZKIYA ('11)	3
MOSHE LEVENSON ('14)	3-4
TABLE TALK	4

THE LIFE OF YITZCHAK

RABBI ALLAN HOUBEN

Perhaps the most enigmatic personality amongst our forefathers, and possibly in the entire book of *Breishit*, is that of Yitzchak. While the Torah spends much ink discussing Avraham and Yaakov, there is little information provided about the life of Yitzchak.

We hear of the trials of Avraham: leaving his country and birthplace behind, waiting patiently to conceive a child, and preparing to sacrifice of his long awaited son. We are told of the struggles of Yaakov: from his early clashes with his brother *Esav*, to the trickery of *Lavan*, and the heartache of his children's sibling rivalry. However, the generation in between- the life of Yitzchak- takes up strikingly little space in the pages of the Torah.

This week's *parsha*, begins with the words: "וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת יִצְחָק בֶּן אֲבִרְהָם אֲבִרְהָם הוֹלִיד אֶת יִצְחָק". All the commentators struggle with this difficult phrase. Why does the Torah need to list Avraham here at all? Even if you will say that it is the style of the Torah to list the father when discussing the birth of his son's children, why complete the *pasuk* by repeating the same idea that Yitzchak was Avraham's son? There are many answers provided for this question. Perhaps the most obvious and compelling answer is that the essence of Yitzchak, the most important thing to know about him, is that he was his father's son.

Avraham was a man of the people- the outreach professional- spreading monotheism to the world. *Yitzchak*, however, was more reserved and inwardly focused. Despite his very different personality and focus, *Yitzchak* followed the path laid out by his father and literally followed in his footsteps. When he was finished, he passed the mantle of leadership to his son *Yaakov*. *Yitzchak* was the bridge between generations, the connection between *Avraham* and *Yaakov*. Without a *Yitzchak* there would never have been a *Yaakov*.

Yitzchak represents something that we can all relate to. *Yitzchak* was a link in the chain connecting generations and passing on the *mesorah* from his father to his son. He is the symbol of the daily grind, the challenge of normalcy, real life, day in and day out. His father was the outgoing patriarch of a nation, his son the father of the twelve tribes and in his own right the father of a nation that bears his name. *Yitzchak* is the link that holds it all together.

Continued on page 4

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

JARED SAMILOW ('14)

In *Parshat Toldot*, the Torah tells us about two very different brothers, Esav and Yaakov. The Midrash says that Yaakov gravitated towards study and keeping the commandments, and Esav turned to idolatry. The Torah then states that Yitzchak loved Esav, whereas Rivkah loves Yaakov. How could Yitzchak, one of our great patriarchs, love the son who worshipped idols more than one who learned Torah?

The Chafetz Chaim explains that Yitzchak loved his son Esav because Esav cared for his father, while Yaakov is absorbed in study. Why is Yitzchak's love for Esav described in the past tense, while Rivkah's love for Yaakov is described in the present? Yitzchak loves Esav because he is grateful that Esav provides food for the family. Rivkah's love for Yaakov isn't based on what he offers, but rather on who he is as a person. The Torah attempts to impress upon us the importance of both – dedication to family and unconditional love.

People perpetually pose the questions of "Why do the good die young?" and "Why the righteous suffer while evil prospers?" After one of the greatest tragedies in world history, the Holocaust, there were different reactions. Many survivors understandably lost faith in G-d. Others believed that humans cannot understand G-d's actions and motive. Some said that their experiences actually strengthened their belief in G-d.

There are many approaches to explain G-d's actions in this world and the corresponding consequences we face. Some believe that He created the world and set it in motion, but very rarely intervenes. Another approach is that G-d is weaving a piece of tapestry with a seemingly random pattern. We are not able to understand what G-d is weaving until his project is completed.

In *Pirkei Avot*, our sages teach that there are two kinds of love in this world: the love of Yonatan and David and the love of Amnon and Tamar. The love of Jonathan and David was not based on anything, and therefore lasts forever. However, the love of Amnon and Tamar was based on one thing (lust) and when that went away, so did the love.

Parshat Toldot teaches us the importance of judging and loving people for who they are, instead of how we can benefit from them. It cautions us about love that is based off something fleeting and easily changeable. We must love Hashem, our friends, and our family unconditionally. This kind of love, like Rivkah's for Yaakov, is everlasting, whereas the kind of conditional love that Yitzchak felt for Esav is fleeting. Furthermore, our Torah proclaims the importance of following Torah in our everyday lives, not only during study. May we incorporate this lesson into our daily lives.

HOLD YOUR HANDS UP HIGH!

ALIZA BLUM ('12)

In this week's *parsha*, Esav and Yaakov are born. Their conflict between their divergent lifestyles come to a head when Yaakov purchases the *brachah* from Esav. It seems pretty straight-forward. Yaakov will now get the *brachah* originally intended for Esav. However, when the time comes for the *brachot* to be given out, it's not so simple. When Yitzchak calls Esav to get the *brachah*, Yitzchak says, "The voice is the voice of Yaakov but the hands are the hands of Esav."

The more basic understanding that Yaakov and Esav had similar voices, and that's how Yaakov was able to get away with stealing the *brachah*.

Bereshit Rabbah takes a different approach. It explains that Esav has "the hands", while Yaakov has "the voice". This means that when the voice of Yaakov – the sound of Torah – is heard, then the hands of Esav – the threats of our enemies – have no power. However, when the voice of Torah is weakened, the hands of Esav may overcome us. The lesson we can learn is two-fold. First, that the conflict between the two brothers has an effect on our future. Secondly, as the children of Yaakov, we must always stay strong and learn Torah.

THE HIDDEN HERO

ARIE HIZKIYA ('11)

Have you ever wondered which details the Torah includes about our forefathers, and which ones it does not? There are plenty of well-known stories about Avraham-- he meets angels, makes a covenant with Hashem, and intervenes on behalf of the people of Sodom. The Torah teaches us of Yaakov's adventures, most famously when he fought with an angel. Yitzchak's most famous episode, *Akeidat Yitzchak*, is in fact a test for Avraham. Yitzchak plays a very passive role in that story.

In this week's *parsha*, we learn about one of the few stories about Yitzchak. The people of Gerar fill in the wells of Avraham. Yitzchak re-digs these wells, and names them the same names that Avraham gave them. Why is this story so significant? All he did was re-dig wells and give them his father's names!

In 1967, on a frozen field in Wisconsin, the Green Bay packers stood one yard and sixteen seconds away from winning the NFL Championship Game (currently known as "The Ice Bowl"). Bart Starr would lead the Green Bay Packers to a 21-17 victory and be bombarded with questions and lauded with praise after the game. However, Bart Starr would have never made it into the end zone were it not for Jerry Kramer's blocking on the opposing team's Jethro Pugh that enabled Starr to score the final points. Kramer was not interviewed by reporters, nor celebrated in the media. All he received was the satisfaction of helping his team succeed.

Similarly, Yitzchak is not interested in glory or fame. Sometimes we have dreams of grandeur and want to change the world, however we forget that the greatest people are those that enable others to shine. Not everyone is Avraham or Yaakov. That's okay- one person's greatness is wonderful, but it takes two to make a movement. If we could be a little bit more like Yitzchak maybe we could finally be worthy of *Mashiach* and bring about the final *geulah*, redemption.

(Concept from Rabbi Goldberg of Boca Raton Synagogue)

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE FUTURE

MOSHE LEVENSON ('14)

In this week's *parshah*, Yitzchak and his wife Rivkah both *daven* passionately that they should be able to conceive and bear a child. As it says in *Bereishit 25:21*, "And Yitzchak entreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord let Himself be entreated of him, and Rivkah his wife conceived." Rashi picks up on the phrase "*vaye'ater lo*," which translates to "And He (Hashem) listened to him." Rashi questions the *pasuk*, asking why it says "And Hashem listened to him," meaning just Yitzchak, instead of "And Hashem listened to them," meaning both Yitzchak and Rivkah. After all, didn't both Yitzchak and Rivkah daven for Hashem to help them?

To answer his question, Rashi quotes *Masechet Yevamot 64A*, which says that although they were both praying and they were both answered, the Torah describes Yitzchak's prayers as those that were answered. This is "because there is no comparison between the prayers of a righteous person who is the son of a righteous person and the prayer of a righteous person who is the son of a wicked person."

Yitzchak is the son of Avraham *Avinu*, a moral and righteous man who is arguably one of the most prominent figures in our Jewish heritage. Rivkah, however, is the daughter of Betuel, who is a wicked and depraved individual. Therefore, we see why it makes sense that the prayers of Yitzchak *Avinu* are answered by Hashem while the prayers of Rivkah *Immainu* are not. We can learn from this instance that each and every person is responsible for his child's future. Jews must act according to G-d, love and fear Him, and follow His ways- not only for themselves, but also for the sake of their descendants.

The *Ein Yaakov* recounts an argument amongst the rabbis as to what is the most important verse in the Torah. One suggests that it is the *pasuk* of *Shema*, in which we express the most basic principle of our faith, “שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד.” Another proposes the golden rule which should guide our interactions with our fellowman, “וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ.” In the end, the *Ein Yaakov* concludes that the most important verse in the Torah is that which describes the daily offering, “אֶת הַכֹּבֵשׁ אֶחָד תַּעֲשֶׂה בַבֶּקֶר וְאֶת הַכֹּבֵשׁ הַשְּׂנִי תַעֲשֶׂה בֵּין הָעֶרְבָיִם.” What is so important about this mitzvah that it trumps these other lofty commandments?

The answer is the message of consistency. The *korban tamid* was brought each morning and afternoon, day after day, without fail. We are naturally drawn to the excitement of fireworks, but do not give the aura of a light bulb a second thought. The fireworks fade in an instant. The light bulb, however, is a constant source of light. The inspirational power of fireworks is far greater than that of a light bulb, but at the end of the day, one is fleeting and the other is enduring. *Avraham* was a charismatic individual, rich in character and morals, a fitting founding father of a great nation. We would not have survived for as long, however, as we have if all our leaders were such. We needed a *Yitzchak* to teach us the lesson of consistency. Inspirational events and speeches are fleeting if we do not harness their ability to move us and translate that into our everyday lives. This is the challenge that faces us on a daily basis.

TABLE TALK

HADASSAH TIRSCHWELL ('11)

If someone offered you millions of dollars if you did them a favor, would you agree? You might be a little skeptical and question whether or not this person would really give you such a large sum of money. But what if you knew absolutely, that this person was going to carry through and give you the money? You would no doubt agree to the exchange immediately.

In *Parshat Toldot*, Hashem tells Yitzchak: “Live in this land (of Israel) and I will be with you and bless you.” Hashem proceeds to list all of the many great rewards he will give to Yitzchak if Yitzchak chooses to live in Israel. When Hashem promises anything, there is no doubt that Hashem will carry through on His promise. If so, there would be no reason whatsoever for Yitzchak to choose not to live in Israel.

What do you think: What is Yitzchak’s test? How does Yitzchak earn the great rewards that Hashem promises if there is no test involved?

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