



Parshat HaShavuah

תולדות

TOLDOT

ג' כסלו תשע"ג

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Ashreinu

חלקינו מה טוב

Candle Lighting

5:12

S"Z Kriat Shema

8:47

Sunset

5:30

Motzei

Shabbat

6:07



Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

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MRS. ORA LEE KANNER

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Our parsha begins with the enthralling tale of the birth of twin sons to Rivka and Yitzchak and concludes with the drama of the blessing "stolen" by Yaakov.

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Yet the center of our parsha recounts a rather boring and prosaic interlude describing three wells dug by Yitzchak and the ensuing clashes between him and the Plishtim. Why waste the space to describe an economic clash that seems to have no moral, religious or interest value?

Yitzchak names the first well Essek because of the strife it causes between him and his Grari hosts, while the second he names Sitna due to the enmity it unleashes between them. The third well, however, causes no hard feelings and in fact, brings peace, and is thus named Rechovot meaning peace or spaciousness.

Why does the third well not incur the same contention that the earlier two had wrought? How do we account for the inexplicable change in the relationship between Yitzchak and the Plishtim after the third well is dug?

Rabbi Norman Lamm quotes the suggestion of Rabbi Joseph M. Baumol, who points to a critical difference between the diggings of the first two wells versus the digging of the third. The first two wells were dug by the **servants** of Yitzchak, as the Torah recounts:

"vayachperu avdei Yitzchak" (26:19), and again for the second well, *"vayachperu be'er acheret"* (26:21). However, the third well was dug by Yitzchak himself, *"vayachpor be'er acheret"* (26:22). There clearly is a significant difference between the involvement of Yitzchak in the digging of the wells that accounts for the diametrically opposing responses of the Plishtim to him and his endeavors.

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Mrs. Kanner continued

A successful relationship can only be achieved when one **engages himself**, when he participates fully, dedicates his totality to its success, and **personally gets involved**. Relegating his responsibility to others, even his own agents and servants, can result in misunderstandings and miscommunications, thereby leading to strife and contention. Only after Yitzchak himself got involved and personally engaged, could the people of Grar see what a tzadik they had in their midst.

Be it success with our children, our students, school, or business, the take-away is simple. Nobody can do it like you! Get involved, get personal.

IT'S YOUR CHOICE BRANDON ORLINSKY ('16)

This week's parsha begins with the births of Yaakov and Esav. The pesukim clearly detail that even though they are twins, they have many differences, both spiritually and physically.

According to the midrash, these differences were apparent even during Rivka's pregnancy. When she would pass a synagogue or a place of learning, Yaakov would kick in her stomach, and when she would pass a place of idol worship, Esav would kick. This midrash shows how these two brothers' characters — whether negative or positive — were determined even before they were born.

Does this not contradict the basic Jewish principal of free will? From conception, Yaakov is already destined to be a tzadik, and Esav a *rasha*?

The Rambam provides a solution to this fundamental issue of free will. It is the privilege of every Jew to choose the path he wants to follow. Every person is given their own strengths and talents, and the challenge in life is for one to realize how to act upon the gifts and skills Hashem has given him.


When we keep this in mind, we can understand the story of Yaakov and Esav in a new light. Yaakov uses his talents to become a Torah scholar and devotee of Hashem, while Esav uses his talents to commit idolatry. Clearly, we see the two distinct personalities in the two sons of Yitzchak.

TIMELESS TENACITY BEN OVADIA ('14)

In this week's parsha we read about Yitzchak and Rivka praying to have a child. The pasuk states, "And Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite [*lenochach*] his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord let Himself be entreated by him, and Rivka his wife conceived" (25:21).

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Ovadia continued

Rashi explains that the word "*lenochach*" means that Yitzchak and Rivka pray in opposite corners of the room. They pray intently for a child, Yitzchak in one corner and Rivka in the other, until Hashem answers their prayers. Why then does the pasuk state, "Hashem let himself be entreated by **him** [Yitzchak]?" Why didn't Hashem grant Rivka a child in the merit of her own prayers?

Rashi explains that the reason Hashem accepted prayers "by him, and not by her [is that] the prayers of a tzadik who is the son of a *rasha* cannot be compared to the prayers of a tzadik who is the son of a tzadik." Yitzchak's father, Avraham, was clearly a tzadik, and Rivka's father, Betuel, is considered a *rasha*; therefore Yitzchak's prayers are accepted over Rivka's.

This seems a little shocking and unfair to Rivka. Why should her prayers be ignored because of her father? Furthermore, this statement of Rashi seems to contradict a well-known statement in the gemara which says that even a completely righteous Jew cannot stand in the place of a baal teshuva.

This gemara teaches that a tzadik who is the son of a *rasha* is considered greater than a tzadik who is the son of a tzadik. The reason for this is that it is easy to be observant if one grows up in an observant environment, but a baal teshuva, who tries to become observant later in life, is usually forced to make changes in his or her lifestyle that can be quite difficult. How can this be reconciled with Rashi's statement?

The answer, I think, is quite simple – it is NOT necessarily easier for someone who is "frum from birth" to be a tzadik than it is for a baal teshuva! A baal teshuva, whatever his difficulties may be, has an enthusiasm for an exciting new way of life, new experiences, and new friends which carries him through his transition.

It is sometimes difficult for someone who has grown up in an observant environment to maintain an enthusiasm for Judaism. Even though he may be the son of a tzadik, who may be the son of another tzadik, he may become blasé about performing mitzvot.

Even though most of us are privileged to be raised in observant Jewish households, we must not become lax in our religious duties; rather we must strive to emulate the enthusiasm that is often expressed by those who do not come from similar backgrounds.



GO BEYOND DAVID CUTLER ('14)

When we read this week's parsha, we cannot help but be amazed by Esav's disregard for the birthright as he sells it with ease for a pot of lentil stew. How could he have considered this an appropriate trade for the respected status of the firstborn?

Rashi attempts to answer this perplexing question by focusing on the religious applications and responsibilities of the birthright. Rashi writes that Esav asks Yaakov, "What is the nature of this [firstborn] service?" Yaakov answers, "There are several prohibitions and punishments and death sentences involved, like the one which we have learned - 'These are they that are [deserving] of death: those drunk with wine, and those whose hair is unkempt.'" After hearing of the stringent nature of the birthright, Esav responds, "I will end up dying as a result of it. If so, of what use is it to me?" Rashi thus views Esav's indifference towards the birthright as a function of its religious applications and stringencies.

Conversely, the Ramban views Esav's disregard for the birthright in a more practical light. He maintains that the reason Esav agrees to the sale is because he is in constant danger while hunting animals, and he will likely die while his father is still alive. The birthright assumes its significance only after the death of the father, so it will most likely be of no use to him. This is why the passuk states, "He ate and he drank and he arose and he went on his way" — after eating and drinking he returned to the field to continue his hunting, because the foolish want nothing more than to eat and drink and do as they please, with no concern for the future.

According to this approach, Yaakov and Esav represent two completely opposite world views. Esav's perspective focuses solely on the functional, practical benefits that one can gain. His only guiding principle in life is, "What's in it for me?" Considerations of responsibility and obligation are foreign to him and to his ideology, for they include no immediate gratification.

Yaakov, in contrast, is characterized by a totally opposite creed. His life is not a constant quest for self-gratification; rather, he aspires to live a spiritual and meaningful life. Yaakov recognizes the inherent quality and value of the status of the birthright, and therefore he aspires to attain it even if it involves increased responsibility with no short-term benefit. Yaakov is happy to assume the service of the firstborn. He does not mock values that carry no obvious benefits.

So too we, as the descendants of Yaakov, have a continuous obligation to strive for a life of meaningful, spiritual fulfillment that goes beyond life's functional necessities.

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