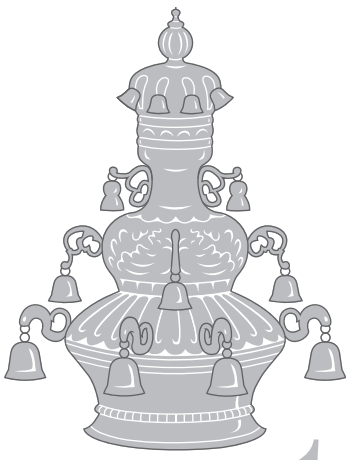




TORAH

חומש

בראשית

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TORAH

CHUMASH BEREISHIT

The Book of Genesis

Parshat Toldot

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*With an Interpolated English Translation
and Commentary Based on the Works of
The Lubavitcher Rebbe*

THE TORAH - CHUMASH BEREISHIT

WITH AN INTERPOLATED ENGLISH TRANSLATION
AND COMMENTARY BASED ON THE WORKS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

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*With an Interpolated English Translation
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The Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson*

CHUMASH BEREISHIT

The Book of Genesis

Parshat Toldot



Kehot Publication Society

770 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn NY 11213



GENESIS

Bereishit
Noach
Lech Lecha
Vayeira
Chayei Sarah

Toldot 6 תולדות

Vayeitzei
Vayishlach
Vayeishev
Mikeitz
Vayigash
Vayechi

EXODUS

Shemot
Vaeira
Bo
Beshalach
Yitro
Mishpatim
Terumah
Tetzaveh
Ki Tisa
Vayakheil
Pekudei

LEVITICUS

Vayikra
Tzav
Shemini
Tazria
Metzora
Acharei Mot
Kedoshim
Emor
Behar
Bechukotai

NUMBERS

Bemidbar
Naso
Beha'alotecha
Shelach
Korach
Chukat
Balak
Pinchas
Matot
Masei

DEUTERONOMY

Devarim
Va'etchanan
Eikev
Re'eh
Shoftim
Ki Teitzei
Ki Tavo
Netzavim
Vayeilech
Ha'azinu
Vezot Habrachah



תולדות Toldot

Overview

The subject of *Parashat Toldot* is Isaac, Abraham's heir and successor. Isaac was the child of Abraham and Sarah's old age, the son for whom they had prayed and waited for decades and on whom they pinned all their hopes of continuing their lifework so that their vision of making the world into God's home not come to naught. They made great sacrifices in order to properly groom him for his future role and arrange a suitable match for him so that he, in turn, could perpetuate their heritage and vision.

Yet, the picture the Torah presents us of Isaac seems in many ways the antithesis of all that we know about his father Abraham. True, Isaac is no less devoted to carrying out God's will than is Abraham, and is even prepared to sacrifice his life without hesitation at God's behest. But in the Torah's account of Isaac's life, we see no expansion of his father's great undertaking of educating humanity, no new branches in the family enterprise. Unlike Abraham, Isaac fights no great battles, hardly mingles in world affairs, never leaves the confines of the Holy Land, and takes no additional wives or handmaids in order to enlarge his immediate family beyond the two children born to him from his one wife. He seems content to passively let life unfold around him; he is much more passively acted upon by events and circumstances than actively initiating them. In fact, his life is so bereft of activity that although he lived the longest of the patriarchs, he is the subject of only one *parashah* (in contrast with Abraham and Sarah's three and Jacob's six!). The one and only active undertaking the Torah relates regarding Isaac is that he dug wells. Is this—of all things—the only achievement the illustrious heir to Abraham's legacy is capable of?

On the other hand, the Torah records no hint that anyone—not Abraham, and not even God Himself—was in any way dissatisfied by Isaac's apparent passivity. There seems to be a tacit understanding that Isaac was doing what he was supposed to be doing. Quietly, and without fanfare, he continued his father's enterprise, not by emulating his father's behavior but by taking it to the next, higher level.

Isaac understood (and, in all likelihood, so did Abraham) that as revolutionary and necessary as Abraham's work was, it was, by nature, of limited effect. Abraham's method of disseminating Divine consciousness was to spread it to everyone—to reach the widest-possible audience by making no prior demands on his listeners. This was really the only way he could succeed in publicizing his message, for since the world was not yet inter-

ested in what he had to say, stipulating conditions would have unnecessarily limited his influence. The disadvantage of his approach was that by not requiring any preparatory work from his audience, Abraham did not effect any permanent change in them.

When we read an assignment before hearing a lecture, we are much better able to absorb the contents of the lecture than when we hear it “cold.” If the subject-matter is totally new to us, we are likely to not understand a word and walk away as ignorant of the subject as we were before we entered the lecture hall, and certainly not be affected by what we heard. The most we can get out of such an experience is to be vaguely impressed by the personality of the lecturer and/or the apparent depth of the topic. We may be inspired to read the assignment *next* time, but the lecture’s success in having changed our perspectives or affected our lives in any tangible way is nil.

Similarly, Abraham may have impressed and inspired his audiences, but since he did not require them to do any “homework,” that is, to follow up his teachings by refining themselves further, they could not attain any levels of Divine consciousness higher than those he could expose them to himself. They remained essentially unchanged by his teachings. This is not meant to belittle the tremendous impact of Abraham’s efforts—he influenced thousands of people and attracted a sizeable following. But these masses were nourished wholly by his inspiration, charisma, and personal example. When they left his presence and resumed their own lives, their enthusiasm for his teachings waned.

Isaac thus sensed that the very approach responsible for the outstanding success of his father’s program was, paradoxically, also the greatest threat to its perpetuation. He understood that, in order to ensure the continued success of his father’s undertaking, his own discipline, strictness, rigorousness and a respect for standards (*gevurah*) would now have to complement his father’s loving-kindness (*chesed*), just as his mother’s particularism had had to complement his father’s universalism.

He introduced into Abraham’s program the ideal of self-refinement, of encouraging the disciple to assume responsibility for laying the spiritual groundwork before hearing the master’s lesson. Whereas Abraham’s approach can be conceived of as a downward vector, bringing Divinity “down” to even the lowest rungs of humanity, Isaac’s approach can be conceived of as an upward vector, elevating people so they can integrate increasingly higher levels of Divine consciousness into their lives.

This was precisely the message Isaac communicated to the world by digging wells. As opposed to filling a pit with water brought from elsewhere, digging a well reveals an already-existing source of water merely concealed beneath layers of earth. If Abraham’s message to the world was: “Come revive your jaded, insensate minds with the refreshing water of Divine consciousness,” Isaac’s message was: “Now that you have been revived, look for your own source of water. Dig away all the dirt, rid yourself of all the filth encumbering your life, and you will reveal within yourself a wellspring of Divine awareness that will serve to quench your spiritual thirst your whole lifetime.”

(True, Abraham also dug wells. But it is profoundly telling that all his wells were blocked up by his enemies. The whole notion of well-digging was so uncharacteristic of his approach that the wells he dug proved to be short-lived.)

In this regard, Isaac was the perfect model for humanity. We find him meditating in the field, shunning superficial conflict with his neighbors, constantly striving to refine himself, and always focusing inward. In this way, he reached a spiritual perfection so

intense that, coupled with his material success, it drew others to him instinctively.¹ He had no need to seek disciples; disciples sought *him*. His charismatic spirituality even won over the ruling powers, who had previously banished him from their country out of jealousy of his success and growing following.²

This is why this *parashah* is called *Toldot*, which means “descendants.” Adam, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Jacob, and even Terach, Ishmael, and Esau—all the central personalities of Genesis—had descendants, and the Torah sees fit to enumerate them. Yet it is only the chronicle of Isaac’s lifework, as recorded in the single *parashah* that focuses on him, that is entitled *Toldot*. For only Isaac embodied and preached the approach that ensures lasting results, that produces disciples—one’s spiritual “children”—capable of standing on their own.

The shortcoming in Isaac’s approach was that since he made his influence totally contingent on his disciples’ preparedness, they were limited by their ability to elevate themselves on their own. Thus, although the changes they made in their lives under Isaac’s tutelage were more long-lasting than those made by Abraham’s disciples under his, the levels of Divine consciousness they experienced were much less lofty. Abraham showed them great heights, but could not keep them there; Isaac kept them where he took them, but would not expose them to anything that they themselves were not ready to internalize.

Furthermore, by insisting that his audience elevate themselves in order to receive Divine consciousness, Isaac made it effectively impossible for Divine consciousness to filter down to the lower strata of humanity; for Abraham, this had not been a problem.

The lesson we must learn from Isaac’s life is that while it is true that we must primarily emulate Abraham’s work, spreading Divine consciousness as widely as possible, we must, at the same time, not neglect our own spiritual development. Successfully disseminating Divine consciousness depends on our own spiritual growth, for we cannot hope to inspire others if we allow our personal spiritual wellsprings to run dry. On the contrary, the more our audience senses that we take spiritual self-development seriously, the more they will be swept up by our enthusiasm, even if it is communicated to them only subliminally.

As we shall see, the true synthesis of Abraham’s and Isaac’s approaches was effected in the life and approach of Isaac’s son Jacob. Nonetheless, the unique inner intensity of Isaac’s approach renders it central to the prophetic vision of the messianic future. Until the Messiah comes, we, like Abraham, are required by the Torah to actively convey its message to the non-Jewish world.³ In the messianic future, in contrast, we will not have to reach out to the world; rather—

The mountain of God’s House shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. Many peoples shall go and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of God, to the House of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us of His ways so we may walk in His paths.” For the Torah will go forth from Zion and the word of God from Jerusalem.⁴

1. Below, 26:13. 2. Below, 26:16, 26-29. 3. *Mishneh Torah*, *Melachim* 8:10. 4. Isaiah 2:2-3.

The intense spirituality emanating from the Holy Temple in Jerusalem will draw the world-at-large to it like a magnet; just as Isaac had no need to leave the Holy Land, so, too, will the Jewish people's manifest spiritual charisma inspire the non-Jewish world to come to the Holy City to learn God's will, thereby transforming the whole world into God's home.⁵

5. *Torah Or* 17c; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, pp. 27-29, vol. 5, pp. 71-72, vol. 15, pp. 194-195, vol. 25, pp. 123-130.

— ONKELOS —

19 וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֵי יִצְחָק בֶּר אַבְרָהָם
אַבְרָהָם אוֹלִיד יִת יִצְחָק: 20 וְהָיָה
יִצְחָק בֶּר אַרְבָּעִין שָׁנִין כִּד נָסִיב יִת
רִבְקָה בֵּת בְּתוּאֵל אֶרְמָאָה מִפְּדוֹן
אָרָם אֶחָתָה דְּלָבָן אֶרְמָאָה לָהּ
לְאִנְתָּה:

25:19 וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֵי יִצְחָק בֶּן־אַבְרָהָם אֲבִירָהּ הוֹלִיד
אֶת־יִצְחָק: 20 וַיְהִי יִצְחָק בֶּן־אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בְּקָחָתוֹ
אֶת־רִבְקָה בֵּת־בְּתוּאֵל הָאֶרְמִי מִפְּדוֹן אָרָם אֶחָתָה לָבָן
הָאֶרְמִי לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה:

— RASHI —

הַעֲקָדָה שְׁמִתָּה שָׂרָה שְׁלֹשִׁים וְשֶׁבַע שָׁנָה, כִּי בֵּת תִּשְׁעִים
הָיְתָה כְּשֶׁנּוֹלַד יִצְחָק, וּבֵת מֵאָה עֲשָׂרִים וְשֶׁבַע כְּשִׁמְתָּהּ,
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַיְהִי חַיִּי שָׂרָה" וְגו'. הָרִי לְיִצְחָק שְׁלֹשִׁים
וְשֶׁבַע שָׁנִים, וּבֹו בְּפָרָק נִזְלָדָה רִבְקָה, הַמְתִּין לָהּ עַד
שֶׁתְּהָא רְאוּיָה לְבִיָּאָה שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים וּנְשָׂאָה: בֵּת בְּתוּאֵל
מִפְּדוֹן אָרָם אֶחָתָה לָבָן. וְכִי עָדִין לֹא נִכְתַּב שְׁהִיא בֵּת
בְּתוּאֵל וְאֶחָתָה לָבָן מִפְּדוֹן אָרָם? אֵלָּא, לְהַגִּיד שְׁבָחָהּ,
שֶׁהָיְתָה בֵּת רִשָּׁע, וְאֶחָתָה רִשָּׁע, וּמִקּוֹמָהּ אֲנָשִׁי רִשָּׁע,
וְלֹא לְמַדָּה מִמַּעֲשֵׂיהֶם: מִפְּדוֹן אָרָם. עַל שֵׁם שְׁשֵׁנִי אָרָם
הָיָה, אָרָם נִהְיָרִים וְאָרָם צוּכָה, קוֹרָא אוֹתוֹ "פֶּדָן" לְשׁוֹן
"צָמַד בְּקָר", תַּרְגוּם: "פֶּדָן תּוֹרִין". וַיֵּשׁ פּוֹתְרִין: "פֶּדָן
אָרָם", כְּמוֹ: "שָׂדֶה אָרָם", שְׁבָלְשׁוֹן יִשְׁמַעֲאֵל קוֹרִין
לְשָׂדֶה "פֶּדָן":

19 וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֵי יִצְחָק. יַעֲקֹב וְעֵשָׂו הָאֲמוּרִים בְּפָרָשָׁה:
אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד אֶת יִצְחָק. עַל יְדֵי שְׁכֵתָּה הַכְּתוּב "יִצְחָק
בֶּן אַבְרָהָם", הִזְקָק לִזְמַר "אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד אֶת יִצְחָק", לְפִי
שֶׁהָיָה לִיצְנֵי הַדּוֹר אוֹמְרִים: מִאֲבִימֶלֶךְ נִתְעַבְּרָה שָׂרָה,
שֶׁהָיָה כְּמָה שָׁנִים שֶׁהָיְתָה עִם אַבְרָהָם וְלֹא נִתְעַבְּרָה
הַיָּמִינוּ. מָה עָשָׂה הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא? צָר קִלְסְתָּהּ פָּנֶי
שֶׁל יִצְחָק דּוֹמָה לְאַבְרָהָם, וְהַעֲדִידוֹ הַכֹּל: "אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד
אֶת יִצְחָק". וְהוּא שְׁכֵתָּה כֵּן: "יִצְחָק בֶּן אַבְרָהָם" הָיָה,
שֶׁהָיָה עֲדוּת יֵשׁ שֶׁ"אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד אֶת יִצְחָק": 20 בֶּן
אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה. שֶׁהָיָה כְּשֶׁבָּא אַבְרָהָם מִהָרַם הַמּוֹרִיָּה
נִתְבָּשֶׁר שֶׁנּוֹלַדָּה רִבְקָה, וְיִצְחָק הָיָה בֶּן שְׁלֹשִׁים וְשֶׁבַע
שָׁנָה, שֶׁהָיָה בּוֹ בְּפָרָק מִתָּה שָׂרָה, וּמִשְׁנִינֵי יִצְחָק עַד

1. בְּרֵאשִׁית כג, א. 2. שְׁמוּאֵל א, יא. 3. הוֹשֵׁעַ יב, יג.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

either out of fear of punishment or out of fear of the spiritual defilement caused by sin. This is referred to as the lower level of fear (*yirah tata'ah*).

- ♦ [Son of] Abraham (kindness/love): doing God's will and loving Him in order to receive material or spiritual reward. This is called "small love" (*ahavah zuta*).
- ♦ Abraham: doing God's will and loving God without regard for reward. This is called "great love" (*ahavah rabbah*).
- ♦ [was the father of] Isaac: doing God's will out of a humility born of the awareness of God's loftiness and infinite greatness. On this level, one is not motivated by fear of the repercussions of contravening God's will but rather by revulsion at the very act of contravening the will of the infinite God. This is the higher level of fear (*yirah ila'ah*). This level transcends the level of "great love," since in the latter, some vestige of the self that experiences love remains. In this fourth and highest level, we have risen to a state of true selflessness.

The sequence in which Abraham and Isaac's names are mentioned reflects the order in which we climb the ladder of spiritual development, first serving God out of self-interest¹¹ and eventually maturing to a relationship built on self-transcendence.

We tend to limit our relationship with God to being either love-based or fear-based, since we all possess a natural propensity toward one or the other. This verse

teaches us that as heirs of Abraham and Isaac, we are both able and obligated to fulfill God's will out of all four levels of motivation, regardless of our natural predisposition.¹²

Abraham was the father of Isaac: As we have seen,¹³ God miraculously made Isaac resemble Abraham so that it would be obvious that Abraham was his father. The Torah's only allusion to this fact, however, is in this verse, which the Midrash¹⁴ interprets as testimony to the fact that "Isaac was the son of Abraham," for their uncanny resemblance made it self-evident that "Abraham was the father of Isaac."

The Torah alludes to this miracle only at this point, when Isaac is already a grown man, for it was only once Isaac had matured and formulated his own unique style in fulfilling his Divine mission—which was very different than that of his father's—that his fidelity to his father's ideals came into question. Unlike Abraham, Isaac did not actively engage in outreach; rather, people were drawn to him by virtue of his being a paragon of virtue. This gave the impression that he was more of an innovator interested in forging a new path than a perpetuator of his father's legacy, lending weight to the arguments of those scoffers who questioned his legitimacy. In fact, since Abraham personified kindness and Isaac severity, it could be argued that Ishmael—who personified at least a fallen version of kindness¹⁵—should be considered the true perpetuator of Abraham's message to the world.

9. Psalms 22:2. See also Psalms 52:3. 10. *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, Zohar 1:11 ff. 11. See Nazir 23b. 12. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 3, pp. 781-782. 13. Above, 21:2. 14. *Agadat Bereishit* 37; *Tanchuma*, Toldot 1; *Bava Metzvia* 87a. 15. See above, on 25:18.

The Birth of Jacob and Esau

25:19 After recording Abraham's death in the previous *parashah*,¹ the Torah began its description of how God fulfilled His promise of making his two "highborn" sons, Isaac and Ishmael, into great nations. It detailed the history of Ishmael's descendants, noting how they imitated the behavior of Abraham's "lowborn" sons (whom he had fathered with his concubine Hagar) in choosing to sever themselves from Abraham's spiritual heritage. In this *parashah*, the Torah now details the history of Isaac's descendants, noting how they followed the pattern set by Abraham's "highborn" sons:

- ♦ Isaac (like his father Abraham) had two full-status sons: Esau and Jacob.
- ♦ Isaac's elder son, Esau (like Abraham's eldest son), although born first, was in fact of secondary status, for he had been conceived second.
- ♦ Isaac's elder son, Esau (like Abraham's eldest son), chose the path of unbridled sensualism, while his younger son, Jacob (like Abraham's younger son) chose the path of Divine service.
- ♦ Isaac's elder son, Esau (like Abraham's elder son), protested the transference of the mantle of leadership to his younger brother.

The following—Jacob and Esau, whose births will presently be recounted—**are the descendants of Isaac, son of Abraham.** Although **Abraham** was also the father of Ishmael, his life's work was perpetuated by virtue of the fact that he **was the father of Isaac**, who remained loyal to Abraham's moral legacy.

20 Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebecca, in the year 2088, when she was three years old. Although Rebecca was **the daughter of the wicked Bethuel the Aramean of Padan Aram and the sister of the wicked Laban the Aramean** as well, and she had been born into and raised in an immoral environment, their influence did not taint her spiritually. Aram is referred to here as *Padan Aram* because *padan* means both (a) "double" (the region of Aram comprised two countries, Aram Naharayim² and Aram Tzovah³) and (b) "field."

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

19 Isaac son of Abraham...Abraham was the father of Isaac: The Midrash interprets this seeming tautology to mean that Isaac took pride in being Abraham's son and, conversely, that Abraham took pride in being Isaac's father.⁴

Taking pride in the achievements of our forebears, although praiseworthy, is not sufficient. We must conduct ourselves in a manner that enables our forebears to take pride in us, as well.⁵

In this verse, the second mention of Abraham's name occurs immediately after the first, whereas the second mention of Isaac's name occurs a number of words after its first mention. This alludes to an important lesson, both in educating the young as well as in how we are to conduct our personal interactions.

As we have seen, Abraham embodies kindness, while

Isaac embodies severity. Despite the necessity of sometimes employing disciplinary measures, we should never do so twice in succession. There must always be an interval of kindness between every two such occasions.⁶

This is why Isaac's name never appears twice in succession throughout the entire Torah. In contrast, the names of Abraham (signifying kindness) and Jacob (signifying harmony) do appear consecutively.⁷ Similarly, the Name of God that indicates His severity (*Elokim*) never appears twice in succession in the entire Torah, whereas the Names that indicate His kindness (*Havayah*⁸ and *Keil*⁹) do.¹⁰

The names of both patriarchs mentioned in this verse each appear twice; these four mentions allude to the four types of motivation to fulfill God's will:

- ♦ *Isaac* (severity/fear): doing God's will out of fear—

1. Above, before v. 12. 2. Above, 24:10. 3. 2 Samuel 10:6-8; Psalms 60:2. 4. *Tanchuma*, Toldot 4; *Bereishit Rabbah* 63:2. 5. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 2, p. 661, vol. 3, pp. 780-787. 6. See above on 6:14. 7. Abraham: this verse and above, 22:11; Jacob: below, 46:2. 8. Exodus 34:6.

ONKELOS

21 וְצִלִּי יִצְחָק קָדָם יי לִקְבֹּל אֶת־הָאָרִי עֲקָרָה הִיא וְקָבֵל צִלּוֹתֶיהָ יי וְעִדִּיאת רִבְקָה אֶת־הָאָרִי: 22 וְדַחֲקִין בְּנִיָּא בְּמַעְהָא וְאִמְרָתָא אִם בֶּן לְמָא דְּנָן אָנָּא וְאִזְלֵת לְמַתְבַּע אוֹלָפִן מִן קָדָם יי:

21 וַיַּעֲתֵר יִצְחָק לִיהוָה לְנֹכַח אִשְׁתּוֹ כִּי עֲקָרָה הוּא וַיַּעֲתֵר לוֹ יְהוָה וַתֵּהָר רִבְקָה אִשְׁתּוֹ: 22 וַיִּתְרַצְצוּ הַבָּנִים בְּקִרְבָּהּ וַתֹּאמֶר אִם־בֶּן לְמָה זֶה אֲנֹכִי וַתֵּלֶךְ לְדָרֶשׁ אֶת־יְהוָה:

RASHI

הַמְקָרָא הָיָה אוֹמֵר דְּרִשְׁנִי, שְׁטַתָּם מֵהָיָא רְצִיצָה זֹו, וְכַתֵּב: "אִם בֶּן לְמָה זֶה אֲנֹכִי". רְבוּתִינוּ דְּרִשְׁוֵהוּ לְשׁוֹן רִיצָה, כְּשֶׁהֵיכָתָה עוֹבְרָת עַל פִּתְחֵי תוֹרָה שֶׁל שָׁם וְעָבַר, יַעֲקֹב רָץ וּמִפְּרָכָס לְצֵאתָ. עוֹבְרָת עַל פִּתְחֵי עֲבוּדָה וְרָה, עָשׂוּ מִפְּרָכָס לְצֵאתָ. דְּבָר אַחֵר: מִתְרַצְצִים זֹה עִם זֹה וּמְרִיבִים בְּנִחֲלַת שְׁנֵי עוֹלָמוֹת: וַתֹּאמֶר אִם בֶּן. גְּדוֹל צַעַר הָעָבוּר: לְמָה זֶה אֲנֹכִי. מִתְאָה וּמִתְפַּלֵּל עַל הָרִיוֹן: וַתֵּלֶךְ לְדָרֶשׁ. לְבֵית מִדְרָשׁוֹ שֶׁל שָׁם: לְדָרֶשׁ אֶת ה'. שְׂגִיד לָהּ מֵהָ תֵּהָא בְּסוּפָה:

21 וַיַּעֲתֵר. הִרְבָּה וְהִפְצִיר בַּתְפִּלָּה: וַיַּעֲתֵר לוֹ. נִתְפַּצֵּר וְנִתְפָּס וְנִתְפַּתָּה לוֹ. וְאוֹמֵר אָנִי, כָּל לְשׁוֹן "עֲתֵר" לְשׁוֹן הַפְצִירָה וְרְבוּיָהּ הוּא, וְכֵן: "וַיַּעֲתֵר עֲנֵן הַקְטָרֶת", מִרְבִּית עֲלִית הָעֵשָׁן, וְכֵן: "וַהֲעֵתַרְתֶּם עָלַי דְּבָרֵיכֶם", וְכֵן: "וְנִנְעֲמֹת נְשִׁיכוֹת שׁוֹנֵא", דּוּמּוֹת לְמִרְבוֹת וְהֵנָּה לְמִשְׁא, אֵינִקְרִי שִׁמְיָנוּט בְּלַעֲזִי: לְנֹכַח אִשְׁתּוֹ. זֹה עוֹמֵד בְּזוּיָת זֹו וּמִתְפַּלֵּל, וְזֹו עוֹמֵד בְּזוּיָת זֹו וּמִתְפַּלֵּל: וַיַּעֲתֵר לוֹ. "לוֹ" וְלֹא לָהּ, שְׁאִין דּוּמָה תְּפִלַּת צָדִיק בֶּן צָדִיק לְתִפְלַת צָדִיק בֶּן רָשָׁע, לְפִיכָךְ "לוֹ" וְלֹא לָהּ: 22 וַיִּתְרַצְצוּ. עַל כְּרִחֻק

4. יחזקאל ח, יא. 5. יחזקאל לה, יג. 6. משלי כו, ו. 7. רבוי. 8. בראשית רבה סג, ו.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

purposes, whereas Ishmael and Esau did not). In our case, Jacob personified the naturally-pious type and Esau personified the type challenged by an inborn evil inclination.

Thus, Esau's God-given mission in life was to demonstrate that a person with a strong propensity for evil is capable of overcoming temptation and remaining righteous. God intentionally created him with an inborn penchant for idolatry in order that he overcome it. And in fact, until he turned thirteen,²⁵ Esau's propensity toward wickedness did not lead him astray. He channeled his innate cunning toward outsmarting his evil inclination, co-opting the material and sensual aspects of life for holy purposes. It was only when he turned thirteen that he rejected the ideals of his father and grandfather. He became a "man of the field" and an expert in ensnaring in the negative sense.

The patriarchs themselves seemingly personified only the first type of spiritual self-refinement, that of the innately pious. Upon closer examination, however, we see that they also personified something of the second type. They, too, had to overcome many challenges, albeit from without—hostility toward them and persecution by others.

As we have seen, the lives and experiences of the patriarchs presage our own, endowing us with the strength to overcome our challenges. Their success in overcoming their own challenges is what gives us the strength to overcome our challenges, both external and internal.

In addition, Esau's intended existence—and as he in-

deed lived until age thirteen—serves as a model for how we should interact with the "field" of life, i.e., our mundane pursuits, the challenging arena outside the protective cocoon of the synagogue and of studying the Torah. Our task is not only to emulate Jacob by being "dwellers of tents," but to also emulate Esau by becoming "hunters" in the jungle of mundaneness and transforming even that untamed domain into a home for God. Nonetheless, we must first be "dwellers of tents," immersed in the study of the Torah and the fulfillment of God's commandments, in order to garner the necessary strength with which to engage in "hunting" and, in turn, transforming the "field."²⁶

According to Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim Lunshitz,²⁷ Rebecca understood on her own that she was carrying twins, and assumed that one of them was wicked since it kept trying to escape her womb whenever she would pass by a temple of idol worship. As such, she felt she would have no advantage over Hagar, who had borne the wicked Ishmael. (As for the righteous child in her womb, she attributed that merit to Isaac.) She approached the sages of the academy of Shem and Ever to ask if her prayers had been at all effective beyond simply enabling her to conceive.

The prophet consoled her by telling her that although one of the twins would indeed be wicked, he would have noble descendants, many of whom would even convert to Judaism and become prophets and sages. She would thus be superior to Hagar, since Ishmael would have no such descendants. And indeed, throughout history, most converts to Judaism have been descendants of Esau; almost none have been descendants

24. Maimonides, *Commentary on the Mishnah*, Avot, chapter 6. 25. See below, verse 27. 26. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 20, pp. 108-114. 27. *Kli Yekar* on this passage.

21 Rebecca only became physically mature enough to conceive at the age of thirteen. Despite this, she still remained barren even after reaching maturation. Isaac and Rebecca waited and prayed for children for ten years, just as his parents, Abraham and Sarah, had,¹⁶ after which they realized that the time had come to take additional measures. But unlike his father, Isaac did not want to procreate through his wife's handmaid. Abraham had conferred upon him the status of a sacrificial animal;¹⁷ hence Isaac understood that, because of this holy status, he should not defile himself, even in such a subtle way as this.¹⁸ Isaac and Rebecca therefore decided instead to increase the intensity and frequency of their prayers. **Isaac pleaded with God** while **his wife** did the same at the **opposite** side of the room, **for she was barren**. Even though they both prayed intensely, **God responded** specifically to Isaac's **plea**, for the prayers of a righteous person who is the child of a righteous parent are more effective than those of a righteous person who is the child of a wicked parent. Thus, **his wife Rebecca conceived**. She became pregnant with twins; the first one to be conceived developed deeper inside her womb than the second, who developed positioned to be born first.¹⁹

22 The children struggled within her. When she would pass by the academy of Shem and Ever, Jacob would try to get out; when she would pass by a temple of idol worship, Esau would try to get out. They also fought between themselves over which one would inherit the blessings of the physical world and which one the blessings of the World to Come. Not knowing she was carrying twins, **she said, "If the pain of pregnancy is so great, why did I pray for it?" So she went to the academy of Shem and Ever to inquire of God** as to what exactly was causing her so much discomfort.

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

This is an additional reason why the Torah alludes at this point to Abraham's incontrovertible paternity of Isaac. Having just finished detailing the line of Ishmael, it now emphasizes that Abraham's moral legacy was perpetuated specifically by Isaac. For, as we have seen, the true way to actualize kindness is by tempering it with severity.²⁰

21 Isaac pleaded with God: According to the Midrash, Rebecca's inability to bear a child was not caused by ordinary infertility but rather due to the fact that she was born without a womb.²¹ Only direct Divine intervention could enable her to bear a child. This is why Isaac and Rebecca did not merely pray for a child; they pleaded for one. They increased the intensity and frequency of their prayers to elicit a level of Divine beneficence so sublime that it would engender the creation of a new, supra-natural reality.

The Talmud²² thus associates the word for "plead" (יעתר) with the word for "pitchfork" (עזר). Just as a pitchfork overturns the grain and moves it from place to place, so do the prayers of the righteous "overturn" God's attitude toward us, changing it from severe

to merciful.²³

22 When she passed by a temple of idol worship, Esau would try to get out: How could the child of two entirely righteous individuals possibly possess a propensity for evil, even *in utero*?

The answer is, paradoxically, that it is precisely *because* the patriarchs and matriarchs were paragons of spiritual perfection that some of their children were born with seemingly problematic propensities. Perfection implies completeness, so the patriarchs and matriarchs' spiritual perfection had to comprise all possible paths of spiritual self-refinement.

These diverse paths in spiritual self-refinement can be grouped into two general categories: that of the innately pious, who are not tempted by evil, and that of those who behave righteously despite their attraction to materiality.²⁴ Thus, all three patriarchal couples bore both types of children: Abraham and Sarah bore Isaac and Ishmael, Isaac and Rebecca bore Jacob and Esau, and Jacob and Leah bore Issachar and Zebulun (the difference being, of course, that Zebulun channeled his attraction to materiality for holy

16. Above, 16:3. 17. Above, 22:13. 18. Rashi on v. 26, below. 19. Rashi on v. 26, below. 20. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 20, pp. 101-105. 21. *Bereishit Rabbah* 63:5. 22. *Yevamot* 64a. 23. *Or HaTorah Bereishit*, vol. 1, p. 274; *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5684, p. 112.

ONKELOS

23 וַיֹּאמֶר יי לֵה תְרִין עֲמִינִין
בְּמַעֲיָכִי וְתִרְתִּין מִלְכּוֹן מְמַעֲיָכִי
יִתְפָּרֶשֶׁן וּמִלְכּוֹ מְמַלְכּוֹ תִתְקַן
וְרָבָא יִשְׁתַּעְבֵּד לְזַעֲדָא:
24 וּשְׁלִימוֹ יוֹמָהָא לְמִילָד וְהָא
תִּיּוֹמִין בְּמַעֲהָא: 25 וְנִפְקַן קְדָמָהָא
סְמוּק כְּלָה בְּגָלִים דִּישְׁעָר וְקָרוּ
שְׁמָהּ עֶשָׂו: 26 וּבִתְר כּוֹן נִפְקַן אַחֲוֵי
וִידָה אַחֲדָא בְּעֵקֶבָא דְעֶשָׂו וְקָרָא
שְׁמָהּ יַעֲקֹב וְיִצְחָק בֶּר שְׁתֵּינִי שְׁנִין
כּוֹד יְלִידַת יִתְהוּן:

23 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לָהּ שְׁנֵי גַיִם {בְּבִטְנָהּ וּשְׁנֵי לְאֻמִּים
מִמַּעֲיָהּ יִפְרְדּוּ וְלֹאֵם מְלֹאֵם יֵאֱמָן וְרַב יַעֲבֹד צַעֲיָר:
24 וַיִּמְלְאוּ יָמֶיהָ לֵלְדָת וְהִנֵּה תוֹמָם בְּבִטְנָהּ: 25 וַיֵּצֵא
הָרֹאשׁוֹן אֲדָמוֹנִי כֻלּוֹ בְּאַדְרֶת שַׁעַר וַיִּקְרָאוּ שְׁמוֹ עֶשָׂו:
26 וְאַחֲרָיָהּ יֵצֵא אַחִיו וַיְדוּ אֶחָת בְּעֵקֶב עֶשָׂו וַיִּקְרָא
שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב וַיִּצְחָק בֶּן־שָׁשִׁים שָׁנָה בְּלִדְתָּ אֹתָם:

RASHI

לְעֵקֶב, יַעֲקֹב נּוֹצֵר מִטְפָּה רֹאשׁוֹנָה וְעֶשָׂו מִן הַשְּׁנִיָּה,
צֵא וְלִמַּד מִשְׁפּוֹפֶרֶת שְׁפִיחַ קֶצֶרָה, מִן בְּה שְׁתֵּי אֲבָנִים
זו תחת זו, הַנִּכְנָסֶת רֹאשׁוֹנָה תִּצָּא אַחֲרוֹנָה, וְהַנִּכְנָסֶת
אַחֲרוֹנָה תִּצָּא רֹאשׁוֹנָה. נִמְצָא, עֶשָׂו הַנּוֹצֵר בְּאַחֲרוֹנָה
יֵצֵא רֹאשׁוֹן, וַיַּעֲקֹב שְׁנוֹצֵר רֹאשׁוֹנָה יֵצֵא אַחֲרוֹן. וַיַּעֲקֹב
כֹּא לְעֵקֶב, שִׁיחָא רֹאשׁוֹן לְלִידָה כְּרֹאשׁוֹן לִיצִירָה,
וַיִּפְטֹר אֶת רַחֲמָהּ, וַיִּטֵּל אֶת הַבְּכוֹרָה מִן הַדִּין: **בְּעֵקֶב**
עֶשָׂו. סִימָן שֶׁאֵין זֶה מִסְפִּיק לְגַמֵּר מִלְכוּתוֹ, עַד שֶׁזֶּה
עוֹמֵד וְנוֹטֵלָה הֵימָנוּ: **וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב**. הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ
הוּא. אָמַר: אֹתָם קְרִיתוֹן לְכַבֹּדֵיכֶם שֵׁם, אִף אֲנִי אֶקְרָא
לְבְנֵי כְבוֹדִי שֵׁם, הֵדָא הוּא דְכֶתִיב: "וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב."
דְּבַר אַחֵר: אֲבִיו קָרָא לוֹ יַעֲקֹב, עַל שֵׁם אַחֲזִית הָעֵקֶב:
בֶּן שָׁשִׁים שָׁנָה. עֶשָׂר שָׁנִים מִשְׁנַעֲשָׂאָה עַד שֶׁנַּעֲשִׂית בַּת
שְׁלֹשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה וְרֹאשִׁיָּה לְהָרִיוֹן, וְעֶשָׂר שָׁנִים הֵלְלוּ
צָפָה וְהִמְתִּין לָהּ, כְּמוֹ שֶׁעָשָׂה אֲבִיו לְשָׂרָה, בֵּינָן שְׁלֹשׁ
נִתְעַבְּרָה, יָדַע שֶׁהִיא עֹקְרָה וְהִתְפַּלֵּל עָלֶיהָ. וְשִׁפְחָה
לֹא רָצָה לָשׂא, לְפִי שֶׁנִּתְקַדֵּשׁ בְּהַר הַמּוֹרִיָּה לְהִיּוֹת
עוֹלָה תְּמִימָה:

23 וַיֹּאמֶר ה' לָהּ. עַל יְדֵי שְׁלִיחַ, לְשֵׁם נֶאֱמַר בְּרוּךְ
הַקֹּדֶשׁ הוּא אָמַר לָהּ: **שְׁנֵי גַיִם בְּבִטְנָהּ**. "גַּיִם" כְּתִיב,
כְּמוֹ "גַּאִים", אֵלּוֹ אֲנִטוּנִינּוּס וְרַבִּי, שֶׁלֹּא פָּסְקוּ מֵעַל
שְׁלֻחָנָם לֹא צָנוֹן וְלֹא חֲזָרָת, לֹא בִימוֹת הַחֲמָה וְלֹא
בִימוֹת הַגְּשָׁמִים: **וּשְׁנֵי לְאֻמִּים**. אֵין "לֹאֻם" אֵלָּא מִלְכוּת:
מִמַּעֲיָהּ יִפְרְדּוּ. מִן הַמַּעֲיָם הֵם נִפְרָדִים, זֶה לְרִשְׁעוֹ וְזֶה
לְתוֹמָה: **מְלֹאֵם יֵאֱמָן**. לֹא יִשּׁוּ בְּגִדְלָהּ, כְּשֶׁזֶּה קָם זֶה נּוֹפֵל.
וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמְרִי: "אֲמַלְאָה הַחֲרָבָה", לֹא נִתְמַלְאָה צוּר
אֵלָּא מִחֲרָבָהּ שֶׁל יְרוּשָׁלַיִם: 24 **וַיִּמְלְאוּ יָמֶיהָ**. אֲבָל
בְּתִמְרָה כְּתִיב: "וַיְהִי בַּעַת לְדָתָהּ", שֶׁלֹּא מְלֹאֵם יָמֶיהָ,
כִּי לְשִׁבְעָה חֳדָשִׁים יִלְדָתָם: **וְהִנֵּה תוֹמָם**. חֶסֶר. וּבְתִמְרָה
"תֹּאמִים" מְלֹא, לְפִי שֶׁשְׁנֵיהֶם צַדִּיקִים, אֲבָל כָּאֵן אֶחָד
צַדִּיק וְאֶחָד רָשָׁע: 25 **אֲדָמוֹנִי**. סִימָן הוּא שִׁיחָא שׁוֹפֵף
דְּמִים: **כֻּלּוֹ בְּאַדְרֶת שַׁעַר**. מְלֹא שַׁעַר, כְּטִלִית שֶׁל צֶמֶר
הַמְלָאָה שַׁעַר, פְּלוֹקִיד "א בְּלַעַז": **וַיִּקְרָאוּ שְׁמוֹ עֶשָׂו**.
הַכֹּל קָרָאוּ לוֹ כֵּן, לְפִי שֶׁהִיא נַעֲשָׂה וְנִגְמָר בְּשַׁעַר כֵּן
שָׁנִים הִרְבָּה: 26 **וְאַחֲרָיָהּ כֵּן יֵצֵא אַחִיו וְגו'**. שִׁמְעַתִּי
מִדְּרַשׁ אֲגָדָה הַדּוֹרְשׁוֹ לְפִי פְּשׁוּטוֹ: בְּדִין הָיָה אוֹחֻז בּוֹ

9. יחזקאל כו, ב. 10. בראשית לח, כו. 11. ארני צמרי. 12. בראשית רבה סג, ח.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

On a deeper level, however, Rebecca's complete nine-month pregnancy can be seen as a manifestation of the completion embodied in the unification of the two paths of self-refinement embodied in her twins. As we have seen,³⁹ Jacob and Esau personified the two general types of virtuous people—the innately virtuous (Jacob) and those who must overcome their animalistic inclinations (Esau) to become virtuous. This latter type, in one aspect, is superior to the former, since it must evince greater commitment to goodness by transforming even the unholy aspects of creation into holiness. Tamar's twins, in contrast, were both inclined to goodness. Her pregnancy was therefore "incomplete" in this regard.⁴⁰

25 The first one emerged: As we have seen, Esau is a metaphor for our animating soul. Just as Esau emerged

from Rebecca's womb before Jacob, so, too, does our inner Esau get a head start on our inner Jacob: whereas our Divine soul manifests itself gradually, only becoming fully manifest when we reach the age of *bar* or *bat mitzvah*, our animating soul is fully manifest from birth.⁴¹

Yet, "his hand was grasping Esau's heel": Our inner Jacob, our Divine soul, grasps at our inner Esau, our animating soul. The purpose of its descent into this world is to refine the animating soul and actualize its inherent potential for goodness.⁴²

Moreover, Esau's heel symbolizes the lowest levels of Esau, meaning the lowest levels of animalistic materialism. Our Divine soul strives to elevate and refine even those aspects of life normally considered intrinsically outside the realm of holiness.⁴³

HaMa'amarim 5691, p. 328 (Sefer HaMa'amarim Kuntreisim, vol. 1, 196b). 37. Below, 38:27. 38. Rashi. 39. On verse 22 above. 40. Likutei Sichot, vol. 30, pp. 114-115. 41. See Zohar 1:179b. 42. See Likutei Sichot, vol. 5, p. 416. 43. Sefer HaSichot 5751, vol. 1, pp. 145-146.

23 God told Shem to say to her, “The progenitors of two nations are in your womb. Both nations will be powerful and, in the future, their two leaders will be world-renowned for their wealth.”²⁸ Nonetheless, these two powers will diverge the moment they emerge from within you: The younger will be predisposed toward righteousness and the elder toward wickedness. Furthermore, although they will both be powerful, they will never wield equal power simultaneously; when one rises, the other will fall, and vice-versa. Thus, the upper hand will pass from one power to the other and back again. Nonetheless, even when the younger has the upper hand, the elder and his descendants will always serve the younger and his descendants.”²⁹

24 Her pregnancy reached full term, because one of the twins in her womb was predisposed to wickedness. Rebecca therefore did not possess enough merit to warrant that God shorten her uncomfortable pregnancy.³⁰

25 The first one emerged ruddy—a portent that he would be a shedder of blood—and full of hair all over like a woolen cloak that is covered with hair, so everyone present at his birth called him Esau [*Asui*—“completed”]. This name stuck.

26 His brother then emerged, and his hand was grasping Esau’s heel—a portent that the nation that would descend from him would rise to power “on the heels” of the nation that would descend from Esau: as soon as the latter’s power would begin to wane, the former would wrest dominion from it. He was also born grasping Esau’s heel because, since he was conceived first,³¹ he wanted to emerge first and receive the birthright. God named this second son Jacob [*Ya’akov*, from *akeiv*—“heel”] by inspiring Isaac to give him a name recalling how he was born grasping Esau’s heel. Jacob was born circumcised.³² Isaac was in his sixtieth year when Rebecca gave birth to them.

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of Ishmael.³³

The historical fact that most converts to Judaism have been descendants of Esau is one manifestation of the sublime Divine energies that he possessed, as we shall explain.³⁴

Which one would inherit the blessings of the physical world and which one the blessings of the World to Come: This is a further indication that Esau was not innately evil, for had he been so, he would not have been interested in the World to Come. True, his focus was on this world, but he saw the World to Come as a source of inspiration and guidance in accomplishing his goal of refining the world. Jacob’s focus, in contrast, was mainly the World to Come, the goal of the constant ascent in Divine consciousness. But he wanted this world also, since he knew that answering the challenges of this world enables us to attain higher levels in the World to Come.³⁵

23 When one rises, the other will fall: Metaphorically, Jacob and Esau represent the two opposing drives that

exist within us all. We each possess an inner Jacob—our Divine soul with its Godly drives, and an inner Esau—our animating soul with its selfish drives. When our Divine soul asserts itself, it weakens the materialistic tendencies of the animating soul.

The Divine soul overcomes the animating soul in the same way that light overcomes darkness. Light does not have to actively exert itself to disperse darkness—the darkness simply fades away. Similarly, as soon as we let the holiness and goodness of our Divine souls shine, by studying the Torah and observing the commandments, the selfishness of the animating soul disappears.³⁶

24 Her pregnancy reached full term: Two generations later, another set of twin boys was born, to Rebecca’s grandson Judah and his wife Tamar.³⁷ But since both of Tamar’s twins, Peretz and Zerach, were righteous, God rewarded her by shortening her uncomfortable pregnancy to seven months.³⁸

28. Referring to Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi (president of the Sanhedrin 165-192 CE) and (presumably) the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (ruled 161-180 CE). 29. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 294-295. 30. Cf. below, 38:27. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 30, pp. 110-115. 31. Above, v. 21. 32. *Bereishit Rabbah* 84:6, cited by Rashi on 37:2, below. 33. *Midbar Kedeimot*, s.v. *geirim*; *Sefer HaMa’amarim* 5562, vol. 2, p. 505. 34. Below, on verse 28. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, p. 196, note 54. 35. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 20, pp. 108 ff. 36. *Sefer*

ONKELOS

27 ורביאיו עולימיא ויהוה עשו גבר
נחשירכן גבר נפיק חקלא ויעקב
גבר שלים משמש בית אולפנא:
28 ורחים יצחק ית עשו ארי
מצידה יהוה אכיל ורבקה רחמות
ית יעקב: 29 ובשיל יעקב תבשילא
ועל עשו מן חקלא והוא משלהי:

27 ויגדלו הנערים ויהי עשו איש ידע ציד איש שדה
ויעקב איש תם ישב אהלים: 28 ויאהב יצחק את-עשו
ביציד בפיו ורבקה אהבת את-יעקב: 29 ויזר יעקב
נזיר ויבא עשו מן-השדה והוא עיף:

RASHI

שדה. במשמעו, אדם בטל וצודה בקשתו חיות ועופות:
תם. אינו בקי בכל אלה, אלא כלבו בן פיו. מי שאינו
חריף לרמות קרוי "תם": יושב אהלים. אהלו של שם
ואהלו של עבר: 28 בפיו. בתרגומו, בפיו של יצחק.
ומדרשו: בפיו של עשו, שהיה צד אותו ומרמהו
בדבריו: 29 ויזר. לשון בשול, בתרגומו: והוא עיף.
ברציקה, כמדה דתימא: "כי עיפה נפשי להרגים":

27 ויגדלו הנערים ויהי עשו. כל זמן שהיו קטנים
לא היו נכרים במעשיהם, ואין אדם מדקדק בהם מה
טיבם, כיון שנעשו בני שלש עשרה שנה, זה פרש לכתתי
מדרשות וזה פרש לעבודה וזה: ידע ציד. לצוד ולרמות
את אביו בפיו, ושואלו: אבא, היאך מעשרין את המלח
ואת התבואה בסבור אביו שהוא מדקדק במצות: איש

13. בראשית רבה סג, י. 14. ירמיה ד, לא.

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his children, despite their diverse personalities.⁵³

The fact that Jacob uniquely possessed this level of perfection was also reflected in his being born circumcised.⁵⁴ As was discussed above, the act of circumcision effects three distinct changes of status in the person being circumcised: the negation of the status of being uncircumcised, the acquisition of the status of being circumcised, and the acquisition of the status of having undergone the act of circumcision itself. When a child is born circumcised, as was Jacob, the first two types of status are achieved automatically; all that is required is a symbolic drawing of blood from the organ so he can acquire the third status.

As we saw, the first two aspects of circumcision allude to the first two types of perfection, which were attained by Abraham and Isaac. The third aspect, the act of circumcision itself, alludes to the type of perfection that only Jacob attained. Thus, the fact that Jacob was born circumcised and thereby automatically satis-

fied the first two aspects of circumcision indicates that he was uniquely connected to the third aspect, which alludes to the third type of perfection, which he alone attained.⁵⁵

He went to live in the tents of Shem and Ever to study the Torah: Not only did Jacob devote himself to the study of the Torah; he also took pains to ensure that the study of the Torah continue to thrive and grow. Later in his life, he established a center for Torah study in Egypt before moving there.⁵⁶ By studying Torah himself as well as establishing study centers for his children, he ensured that all of his children remain loyal Jews.

As long as we follow in Jacob's path—both scheduling fixed times to study the Torah ourselves as well as having our children educated in schools whose primary focus is the study of the Torah—we can be certain that all of our children will remain loyal Jews. Furthermore, we are assured that we will merit to see them succeed, not only spiritually but materially as well.⁵⁷

INNER DIMENSIONS

[28] Isaac loved Esau for the game he provided: Metaphorically, "game" refers to the sublime "sparks" of holiness that Esau possessed, including the sparks of the lofty souls of future converts to Judaism who would become great Jewish leaders. Counted among Esau's descendants are the prophet Obadiah,⁵⁸ the great sages of the Mishnah—Shemayah, Avtalyon,⁵⁹ Rabbi Akiva,⁶⁰ and Rabbi Meir⁶¹—and Onkelos,⁶² the author of the standard Aramaic translation of the Torah. Isaac sensed this great potential for holiness within Esau, and loved him for it.

Esau's latent holiness, being his greatest asset, is symbolized by his head, while his wicked, lowly

behavior is symbolized by his body. For this reason, Esau's severed head was buried in Isaac's bosom,⁶³ for once it was isolated from the wickedness of his body, it was indeed suitable to rest in Isaac's proximity.

As we will see,⁶⁴ Isaac's lifelong mission was to dig beneath the surface and reveal the dormant potential in that which appeared to be lowly and unredeemable. It was precisely for this reason that he loved Esau so greatly and wanted to give him his blessings, for he felt that by showering him with love and blessings, he would awaken and unleash the potential for holiness hidden deep within him.⁶⁵

Sichot, vol. 5, pp. 417-418. 58. Sanhedrin 39b. 59. Mishneh Torah, Introduction; Maimonides, Commentary on the Mishnah, Eiduyot 1:3, 5:6; Seder HaDorot, s.v. Shemayah; Eiden Tzion, s.v. Shemayah v' Avtalyon. 60. Mishneh Torah, Introduction; Seder HaDorot, s.v. Akiva; Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Introduction 34. 61. Mishneh Torah, Introduction; Seder HaDorot, s.v. Meir; Eiden Tzion, s.v. Rabbi Meir. 62. Torah Or 20c; Torat Chaim, Bereishit 121b, 187b; Ma'amarei Admor HaEmtzi, Bereishit, pp. 182, 270. 63. Targum Yonatan on 50:13 below. 64. See below 26:18-22. 65. Likutei Sichot, vol. 15, pp. 192-198.

The Sale of the Birthright

27 Although Esau was indeed inclined toward sensuality from birth, Abraham's tutelage and positive influence inspired him to channel this inclination positively. But when **the boys grew** to maturity and turned thirteen (in the year 2121), they chose divergent paths in life. Jacob continued studying and living an unblemished life, while Esau, although continuing to don the external trappings of righteousness, secretly⁴⁴ pursued a life of unbridled sensualism. In order to hide this tendency from his father, **Esau became an expert in ensnaring** him into thinking he was exceedingly pious by asking him clever questions. For example, Isaac continued Abraham's practice of voluntarily observing the commandments, including tithing all his possessions.⁴⁵ Esau asked a clever question about tithing salt and straw: although the intrinsic value of these commodities is negligible, they can be used to enhance other commodities. For example, salt enhances the natural taste of food; straw can be added to clay to make bricks. Should their worth be assessed according to their actual monetary value or according to their value when used to their best advantage, as in the above example?⁴⁶ Questions like this led Isaac to believe that Esau was truly pious. In reality, however, Esau was an undisciplined **man**, who spent his time in **the field**, hunting animals and birds. In contrast, **Jacob was a guileless man**, and, not pretending to be anything he was not, went to **live in the tents** of Shem and Ever to study the Torah.

28 Isaac loved Esau, both **for the game he provided** from his hunting and **because he was deceived by his cunning words**, while Rebecca loved Jacob.

29 By the time Esau turned fifteen (in the year 2123), he was eager to start living his chosen, immoral lifestyle openly. Although God had originally intended that Abraham live to the age of 180, He shortened his life by five years so that he not have to witness Esau's defection from his ideals.⁴⁷ On the day his grandfather Abraham died, **Jacob was cooking a stew** of red lentils to serve his father as the customary first meal of mourners (for the round lentils are a reminder that mourning is part of the cycle of life). **Esau came in from the field, exhausted** from his first foray into active immorality, in which he actually committed murder.

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27 **Esau became an expert in ensnaring him into thinking he was exceedingly pious:** The Torah mentions this negative characteristic of Isaac's son in order to warn us to always be on guard against the machinations of our own inner "Esau," our evil inclination. Not always does the evil inclination counsel us to deliberately defy God's will. At times, it may offer an ostensibly pious excuse for not doing a specific good deed; at other times, it may provide a seemingly righteous and justifiable reason to perform a specific misdeed. We must train ourselves to see through these ploys and recognize them for what they are: obstacles to the fulfillment of our Divine mission.⁴⁸

Jacob was a guileless man: The word for "guileless" (*tam*) also connotes completeness and perfection (*temimut*). As we have seen,⁴⁹ although all the patriarchs possessed the quality of perfection, Jacob was the

only one who embodied the highest implication of this word—unquestioning faith in God and unwavering commitment to Him under all circumstances.

Jacob left the Land of Israel to live in Charan, a degenerate, idolatrous environment.⁵⁰ He was forced to flee his brother, who sought to kill him, and then to live with and work for the devious Laban for twenty years. He subsequently endured decades of painful separation from his beloved son Joseph, whom he thought dead. Yet throughout all his travails, he remained devout, his faith in God never wavering. Jacob thus personified unchanging, consistent truth.⁵¹

Thanks to this quality of consistent truth, Jacob succeeded—unlike Abraham and Isaac before him⁵²—in raising all his children to follow the path of holiness. Specifically because his perfection lay in his overarching commitment to God, he was able to instill it in all

44. Mizrachi. 45. Above, 14:20. 46. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, pp. 116-119. 47. Above, vv. 7-8. 48. *Hitva'aduyot* 5744, vol. 4, p. 2397; see *HaYom Yom*, 23 *Sivan*. 49. On 17:1, above. 50. Above, 12:2, 24:1-7. 51. *Zohar* 1:139a; *Tanya*, chapter 13. 52. See *Sifri* on Deuteronomy 32:9. 53. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 30, pp. 48-52. 54. Above, v. 26. 55. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 30, p. 52, note 78. 56. Below, 46:28. 57. *Likutei*

30 וַיֹּאמֶר עֲשׂוּ אֶל־יַעֲקֹב הַלְעִימְנִי נָא מִן־הָאָדָם הָאָדָם
הַזֶּה כִּי עֵיף אָנֹכִי עַל־כֵּן קָרָא־שְׁמוֹ אֱדֹוֹם׃ 31 וַיֹּאמֶר
יַעֲקֹב מְבָרָה כֵּוֹם אֶת־בְּכֹרְתְךָ לִי׃ 32 וַיֹּאמֶר עֲשׂוּ הִנֵּה
אָנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ לָמוֹת וְלַמָּוֶה־זֶה לִי בְכֹרָה׃ 33 וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב
הַשִּׁבְעָה לִּי כֵּוֹם וַיִּשָּׁבַע לוֹ וַיִּמָּכֶר אֶת־בְּכֹרְתוֹ לְיַעֲקֹב׃
34 וַיַּעֲקֹב נָתַן לְעֵשָׂו לֶחֶם וְנִיד עֲדָשִׁים וַיֹּאכַל וַיֵּשֶׁת׃
וַיָּקָם וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיִּבֹז עֲשׂוּ אֶת־הַבְּכֹרָה׃ פ
26:1 וַיְהִי רָעַב בָּאָרֶץ מִלְּבַד הָרָעַב הָרֹאשֹׁן אֲשֶׁר הָיָה
בִּימֵי אַבְרָהָם וַיֵּלֶךְ יִצְחָק אֶל־אֲבִימֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ־פְּלִשְׁתִּים
גִּרְרָה׃ 2 וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־תֵּרֶד מִצְרַיִם שָׁכֵן
בָּאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֵלֶיךָ׃

30 הלעיטני. אָפֿטח פֿי וּשְׁפָךְ הָרֶבֶה לְתוֹכָהּ. כֻּמוֹ שִׁשְׁנֵינוּ! אֵין אוֹבְסִין אֶת הַגָּמֶל, אָבֶל מַלְעִיטִין אוֹתוֹ: מִן הָאָדָם הָאָדָם. עֲדָשִׁים אֲדָמוֹת. וְאוֹתוֹ דְּיוֹם מֵת אֲבָרָהִם, שְׁלֹא יֵרָאֶה אֶת עֵשׂו בֶּן בְּנוֹ יוֹצֵא לְתַרְבוֹת רַעֲיָה, וְאֵין זוֹ שִׁיבָה טוֹבָה שֶׁהַבְּטִיחוּ הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא!¹⁶ לְפִיכָךְ קֶצֶר הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא חֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים מִשְׁנוֹתָיו, שְׁיִצְחָק חֵי מָאָה וּשְׁמוֹנִים שָׁנָה, וְזֶה מָאָה שָׁבָעִים וְחֲמֵשׁ שָׁנָה. וּבִשְׁל יַעֲקֹב עֲדָשִׁים, לְהַכְרוֹת אֶת הָאָבֶל. וְלָמָּה עֲדָשִׁים? שְׁדוּמֹת גִּלְגָּל, שֶׁהָאֲבִלּוֹת גִּלְגָּל הַחוּזוֹר בְּעוֹלָם. וְעוֹד, מָה עֲדָשִׁים אֵין לָהֶם פֶּה, כִּי הָאָבֶל אֵין לוֹ פֶּה, שְׁאִסּוֹר לְדַבֵּר. וּלְפִיכָךְ הַמִּנְהֵג לְהַכְרוֹת הָאָבֶל בְּתַחֲלַת מֵאָכְלוֹ בִּיצִים, שֶׁהֵם עֲגָלִים וְאֵין לָהֶם פֶּה, כִּי אָבֶל אֵין לוֹ פֶּה, כִּדְאֻמְרֵינוּ בְּמוֹעֵד קֶטֶן¹⁷: אָבֶל, כֹּל שֶׁלֵּשָׁה יָמִים הָרִאשׁוֹנִים אֵינוֹ מִשִּׁיב שְׁלוֹם לְכָל אָדָם, וְכֹל שֶׁכֵּן שְׂאִינוֹ

It was because Isaac was consecrated as an ascent-offering that God did not allow him to leave the Holy Land. The more we emulate Isaac's holiness, the more deeply will we feel how the Holy Land is our home and how incongruous is our exile from it.⁷⁷

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30 Esau said to Jacob, “Now feed me a gulp of that red, red stuff, for I’m exhausted!” He was therefore given the nickname Edom [adom — “red”].

31 Jacob knew that Esau’s birthright as the firstborn included the duty and privilege of offering the family’s sacrifices. But since Esau’s degenerate behavior clearly rendered him unworthy of this privilege, Jacob replied, “I will feed you, but only if you sell me your birthright, irrevocably, so the transaction will be as clear as day.”

32 Esau foresaw that the day would come when the privilege of offering sacrifices would no longer belong to the firstborn. Furthermore, he asked Jacob, “Why do you want the birthright, anyway?” Jacob answered, “Offering sacrifices is clearly a very serious and important occupation, because performing it incorrectly makes one liable to serious punishment. Some infringements, such as performing it when drunk or with hair that has not been cut in thirty days, are even punishable by death!”⁶⁶ Esau said, “Look, I’m going to eventually die, and after my death the birthright will in any event not pass on to my progeny down through the generations; furthermore, even while it still belongs to me, I’m going to die on account of it anyway, so of what use is a birthright to me? Fine, I agree to sell it to you.”

33 Jacob said, “Make an oath to me this day,” so he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob.

34 Jacob then gave Esau bread and the lentil stew; he ate and drank, and got up and left. And thus Esau spurned the birthright, in accord with his increasing wickedness.

Isaac in Philistia

26:1 There was again a famine in the land, apart from the first famine that had been in the days of Abraham, so Isaac left Hebron and went to dwell with Avimelech, king of the Philistines, in Gerar.

2 Isaac had previously considered going down to Egypt, just as his father Abraham had, but God appeared to him and said, “Do not go down to Egypt, for since you have the sacred status of a sacrificial animal,⁶⁷ it is not fitting for you to live outside the Land of Israel, in a place where people are not yet conscious of God’s presence.⁶⁸ Rather, live in the part of the Holy Land of which I shall tell you. Go to Philistia and settle in Gerar. True, this area is not actually part of the land I promised to Abraham,⁶⁹ but it is close enough to have been positively influenced by him; moreover, it will eventually become part of the Holy Land.⁷⁰ It is therefore not inappropriate for you to live there.

~ A CLOSER LOOK ~

[2] Outside the Land of Israel, in a place where people are not yet conscious of God’s presence: Abraham’s educational efforts in the Land of Israel had succeeded in disseminating Divine awareness among its inhabitants.⁷¹ Although the effect his efforts had on their behavior was minimal, they were still considered God-fearing in contrast to those living outside the Land of Israel, who possessed only the slightest awareness of God and whose behavior

was commensurately ungodly. It was therefore inappropriate for the saintly Isaac to leave the Land of Israel to dwell among them.

In this vein, the Midrash⁷² relates that when Jacob left the Land of Israel to descend to Egypt, he thought, “How can I leave the land of my fathers, the land of my birth, and the land in which God’s presence rests, to go to a land...where there is no fear of Heaven among the populace?”⁷³

ONKELOS

3 דור בארעא הָדָא וְהִי מִימֵרִי
בְּסַעֲדָךְ וְאֶבְרָכְךָ אֲרִי לָךְ וּלְבָנֶיךָ
אֲתָן יֵת כָּל אֲרַעְתָּא הָאֵלִין וְאֶקִּים
יֵת קִימָא דִּי קִימִית לְאַבְרָהָם אָבוֹךְ:
4 וְאֶסְגִּי יֵת בְּנִיךָ כְּבֹכְבֵי שְׁמַיָּא
וְאֲתָן לְבָנֶיךָ יֵת כָּל אֲרַעְתָּא הָאֵלִין
וְיִתְבָּרְכוּן בְּדִיל בְּנִיךָ כָּל עַמְמֵי
אֲרַעָא: 5 חֶלֶף דִּי קָבֵל אֲבָרְהָם
לְמִימְרֵי וְנָטַר מִטְּרַת מִימְרֵי פְקוּדֵי
קִימֵי וְאוֹרְתֵי:

3 גִּיּוֹר בְּאַרְצֵן הַזֹּאת וְאֶהְיָה עִמָּךְ וְאֶבְרַכְךָ כִּי־לָךְ וּלְזֶרְעֶךָ
אֲתָן אֶת־כָּל־הָאֲרֶצֶת הָאֵל וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת־הַשְּׂבָעָה אֲשֶׁר
נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם אָבִיךָ: 4 וְהִרְבֵּיתִי אֶת־זֶרְעֶךָ כְּכֹכְבֵי
הַשָּׁמַיִם וְנָתַתִּי לְזֶרְעֶךָ אֶת־כָּל־הָאֲרֶצֶת הָאֵל וְהִתְבָּרְכוּ
בְּזֶרְעֶךָ כָּל גִּוְיֵי הָאָרֶץ: 5 עָקֵב אֲשֶׁר־שָׁמַע אֲבָרְהָם בְּקֹלִי
וַיִּשְׁמֹר מִשְׁמַרְתִּי מִצְוֹתַי חֻקֹּתַי וְתוֹרֹתַי:

RASHI

משמרתִי. גִּיּוֹרֹת לְהִרְחָקָהּ עַל אֲזָרוֹת שְׁבִיתוֹרָה, כְּגוֹן:
שְׁנִיּוֹת לְעִרְיּוֹת, וּשְׁבוּת לְשִׁבְתָּ: מִצְוֹת. דְּבָרִים שְׂאֵלוּ
לֹא נִכְתְּבוּ רִאשִׁיּוֹן הֵם לְהִצְטוּת, כְּגוֹן גִּזּוּל וּשְׁפִיכוֹת
דָּמִים: חֻקֹּתֵי. דְּבָרִים שֶׁיֵּצֵר הָרַע וְאִמּוֹת הָעוֹלָם מְשִׁיבִין
עֲלֵיהֶם, כְּגוֹן אֲכִילַת חֹזֵיר וּלְבִישַׁת שַׁעֲטָנִי, שְׂאִין טַעַם
בְּדָבָר אֶלָּא גִּזְרַת הַמֶּלֶךְ וְחֻקֹּתָיו עַל עֲבָדָיו: וְתוֹרָתִי.
לְהִבְיָא תוֹרָה שְׂבַעַל פֹּה, הִלְכָה לְמַעַשׂ מְסִינִי:

3 האל. כמו "האלה": 4 והתברכו בזרעך. אדם
אומר לבנו: יהא זרעך בזרעו של יצחק. וכן בכל
המקרא, וזה אב לכלל: "כך יברך ישראל לאמר
ישמך אלהים באפרים ובמנשה". ואף לענין הקללה
מצונו בן: "והייתה האשה לאלה", שהמקלל שונאו
אומר: תהא כפלונית. וכן: "והנחתם שמכם לשבועה
לבחירי", שהנשבע אומר: אהא כפלוני, אם עשיתי כך
וכך: 5 שמע אברהם בקולי. כשנסייתי אותו: וישמר

19. בראשית מח, כ. 20. במדבר ה, כז. 21. ישעיה סה, טו.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

Abraham's life of self-sacrifice for God enabled him to reach an even higher level of "hearing": God's voice and message not only penetrated his mind and heart; they also affected his whole physical body and entire life, even their lowest aspects, as represented by the heel.⁸⁵

Abraham heeded My voice, and observed My restrictions, My commandments, My rules, and My instruction: The Talmud deduces from this verse that Abraham observed all the precepts of the Torah prior to their having been commanded at Mount Sinai.⁸⁶ However, he observed many of them solely in a spiritual way, and not in the physical manner mandated once

the Torah was given.⁸⁷ What can we learn from Abraham's spiritual observance of the commandments, being that we are commanded to fulfill them physically?

When we encourage people to perform commandments and they subsequently do so at our behest, they have fulfilled the commandment physically. However, because it was our influence that brought them to do so, it is considered as if we had performed these commandments spiritually. Thus, in addition to the physical observance of the commandments that we ourselves fulfill, we must also imitate Abraham's spiritual observance, by influencing others to perform them.⁸⁸

A CLOSER LOOK

[5] **Because Abraham heeded My voice:** The word used here for "because" (עָקֵב) is numerically equivalent to 172. The Talmud states that this alludes to the fact that Abraham heeded God's voice for a period of 172 years: he recognized God's existence at the age of three, and worshipped Him continually until his passing at the age of 175.⁸⁹ Maimonides, in contrast, tells us that Abraham discovered God at the age of forty.⁹⁰

At age three, Abraham was clearly not mature

enough to understand the philosophical necessity of God's existence. His recognition of God was therefore limited to belief in, rather than knowledge of, God. Since for Maimonides, apprehension of God was superior to belief in Him, he therefore wrote that Abraham first recognized God's existence at the age of forty, since only at the age of full intellectual maturity, i.e., forty,⁹¹ can a person be said to know God—at least to the extent possible for the human mind.⁹²

85. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5697, p. 306; *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5708, pp. 252-254; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 31, p. 202. 86. *Kidushin* 82a. 87. *Torah Or* 11d. 88. *Hitra'aduyot* 5745, vol. 1, p. 575. 89. *Nedarim* 32a. 90. *Mishneh Torah*, *Avodah Zarah* 1:3. 91. See *Avot* 5:22. 92. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 34, p. 175; see *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 20, pp. 20-21.

3 Sojourn in this land, and even though it has also been somewhat affected by the famine,⁷⁸ **I will be with you and bless you, for I will give all these lands to you and your descendants, and I will fulfill the oath that I made to your father Abraham.**⁷⁹

4 I will make your descendants so numerous that you will not be able to count them, just as it is impossible to count **the stars of the sky,**⁸⁰ **and will give all these lands to your descendants. And all the nations of the earth will bless themselves** by mentioning the names of **your descendants:** when someone will want to bless his children, he will say, 'May you be like Isaac's children.'

5 I confer all these blessings upon you because your father Abraham heeded My voice when I tested him, **and** voluntarily chose to scrupulously adhere to the teachings of the Torah, even though he was not at all legally required to: There are certain commandments that I have given humanity explicitly, yet others that they have taken upon themselves voluntarily to observe, and one (circumcision) that I commanded him expressly. But above and beyond all this, **he also observed My restrictions,** i.e., the unofficial safeguards (which I will in the future leave up to the sages to legislate) designed to keep people from violating official restrictions; **My commandments,** i.e., the ordinances that human intellect dictates in any case; **and My rules,** i.e., those commandments that have no rational explanation. In addition, I confer these blessings upon you because your father Abraham studied **My instructions,** i.e., the written Torah and its oral explanation."⁸¹

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

Isaac had considered going down to Egypt, just as his father Abraham had: Having been raised by his father to believe in Divine providence, Isaac assumed that the famine was meant to induce him to journey outside the Land of Israel in order to disseminate Divine teachings there, just as his father had done.⁸²

But God told Isaac not to leave the land, thereby affirming that his particular mode of bringing Divine awareness to the world differed from Abraham's. Abraham taught through outreach, traveling to his audience and tailoring his message to his listeners' ability to grasp. Isaac, in contrast, was to focus on intensifying his own Divine consciousness and that of his own immediate milieu. The force, clarity, and vigor this inner work would give Isaac a magnetic charisma that would draw the outside world to him and make them aspire to emulate him.

And, indeed, the subsequent events proved this the case. As we will see later, Avimelech, king of Philistia, sought to make Isaac his ally, telling him that "we have seen that God is with you."⁸³

Abraham is the paradigm of those who sanctify the world from within; Isaac is the paradigm of those who sanctify the world from without, sequestered in synagogues and centers of Torah study. The latter should

intend, as did Isaac, that their insular activities affect the world around them.

Since the patriarchs are the fathers of us all, each type of person must take time out to sanctify the world through the means that that is primarily the domain of the other type. Torah students must take time off from their studies to teach and help others, and working people must take time off from their jobs to study the Torah. But even when working people take time out for study, they should do so with the intent of spiritualizing the material world, only this time through an insular-type activity.⁸⁴

5 Because Abraham heeded My voice: The word for "because" in this verse (עַקֵּב) also means "heel" (just as the result of a cause is said to follow "on its heels"), and the word for "heeded" (שָׁמַעַ) literally means "heard." This phrase can thus be interpreted to read: "Abraham heard My voice down to his heel."

In general, there are two levels of hearing someone else's words: superficial hearing, by which the listener physically hears that which is said but does not absorb the message, and profound listening, by which the information is both heard and penetrates to the listener's mind and heart, as well.

⁷⁸ Rashi on v. 12, below. ⁷⁹ Above, 22:16-17. ⁸⁰ *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 19, p. 20, note 49. ⁸¹ *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 17, p. 317. ⁸² Above, 12:10. ⁸³ See above on 17:15 regarding Sarah. ⁸⁴ *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, pp. 124-129.

ONKELOS

6 וישיב יצחק בגר: 7 וישאלו אנשי המקום לאשתו ויאמר אחתי הוא כי ירא לאמר אשתי פן יהרגני אנשי המקום על רבקה כי טובת מראה הוא: 8 ויהי כי ארכו לו שם הימים וישקף אבימלך מלך פלשתים בעד החלון וירא והנה יצחק מצחק את רבקה אשתו: 9 ויקרא אבימלך ליצחק ויאמר אך הנה אשתך הוא ואיך אמרת אחתי הוא ויאמר אליו יצחק כי אמרתי פן אמות עליה: 10 ויאמר אבימלך מה זאת עשית לנו כמעט שכב אחד העם את אשתך והבאת עלינו אישם: 11 ויצו אבימלך את כל העם לאמר הננע פאיש הנה ובאשתו מות יומת: 12 ויזרע יצחק בארץ ההוא וימצא בשנה ההוא מאה שערים ויברכהו יהוה: שלישי 13 ויגדל האיש וילך הלך וגדל עד כי גדל מאד: 14 ויהיו לו מקנה צאן ומקנה בקר ועבדה רבה ויקנאו אתו פלשתים: 15 וכל הבארות אשר חפרו עבדי אביו בימי אברהם אביו סתמום פלשתים וימלאום עפר: 16 ויאמר אבימלך אל יצחק לך מעמנו כי עצמך ממנו מאד: 17 וילך משם יצחק ויחן בנחל גרר וישב שם:

RASHI

לעשות, ועשתה על אחת שאמרה — מאד. ורבותינו²³ אמרו: אמר זה למעשרות היה: 13 **בי גדל מאד**. שהיו אומרים: זבל פרדותיו של יצחק ולא כספו וזהבו של אבימלך: 14 **ועבדה רבה**. פעלה רבה, בלשון לעז אוברייני"א²⁴. "עבדה" משמע עבודה אחת. "עבדה" משמע פעלה רבה: 15 **סתמום פלשתים**. מפני שאמרו: תקלה הם לנו, מפני הגיסות הבאות עלינו. "טמונון פלשתאי", לשון סתימה. ובלשון התלמוד²⁵: מטמטם את הלב: 17 **בנחל גרר**. רחוק מן העיר:

7 **לאשתו**. על אשתו, כמו²²: "אמרי לי אחי הוא": 8 **כי ארכו**. אמר: מעתה אין לי לראו, מאחר שלא אנסוה עד עכשו. ולא נזהר להיות נשמר: וישקף אבימלך וגו'. שראהו משמש מטתו: 10 **אחד העם**. המיוחד בעם, זה המלך: **והבאת עלינו אישם**. אם שכב כבר הבאת עלינו אישם: 12 **בארץ ההוא**. אף על פי שאינה חשוכה בארץ ישראל עצמה, בארץ שבעה גוים: **בשנה ההוא**. אף על פי שאינה בתקנה, שהיתה שנת רעבון: **בארץ ההוא בשנה ההוא**. שניהם למה? לומר, שהארץ קשה והשנה קשה: **מאה שערים**. שאמדה כמה ראוייה

22. בראשית כ, יג. 23. בראשית רבה סד, ו. 24. מכלול עבודות. 25. פסחים מב, א.

◆ **Second Reading 6** So Isaac settled in Gerar.

7 When the local people asked about his wife, he said—just as Abraham had responded regarding Sarah—**“She is my sister.”** He purposely misled them **because he was afraid to say** to them, **“She is my wife”**—**“lest,”** he thought to himself, **“the local people kill me on account of Rebecca, because she is of beautiful appearance.”**

8 But, unlike what Pharaoh had done to Sarah, the king did not abduct Rebecca at once. Therefore, **after Isaac had already been there a long time**, he decided that he no longer needed to be so circumspect. **Avimelech, king of the Philistines, looked out the window of his palace and caught sight of Isaac gladdening his wife Rebecca in the course of marital intimacy.**

9 Avimelech summoned Isaac and said, “So she is really your wife! How could you have said, ‘She is my sister’?” Isaac answered him, **“For I thought, ‘Lest I die because of her.’”**

10 Avimelech then said, “What have you done to us? I, the most preeminent one among the people, could easily have had relations with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us!”

11 Avimelech issued an order of warning to all the people: “Whosoever lays a finger on this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.”

12 Isaac sowed grain in that region and in that year. Being that it was not a particularly fertile area, and it was also a year of famine, he estimated that it would be a small yield. But **he nonetheless reaped a hundredfold more than he expected, for God had blessed him.** Furthermore, when they then calculated the yield for the purpose of taking tithes, **they found** that it had miraculously increased **a hundredfold again, in the merit of his intention to tithe it, for God had blessed him.**⁹³

◆ **Third Reading 13** Thus, the man prospered, and continued to prosper until he became extremely wealthy. His wealth became proverbial; a common saying was: **“Better the dung of Isaac’s mules than the gold and silver of Avimelech.”**

14 He owned flocks and herds and many business enterprises, and the Philistines envied him.

15 They blocked up all the wells that his father’s servants had dug in the days of his father Abraham,⁹⁴ **and filled them with earth.** Their pretext was that these wells could serve as a water supply for an invading army.

16 Avimelech said to Isaac, “Go away from us, for you have become much more powerful than we are.”

17 Isaac went away from there and encamped in the Gerar Valley, at a distance from the city, and settled there.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

12 Isaac sowed grain in that region and in that year: As we know, whatever the patriarchs’ involvement in the physical world, it was for purely spiritual purposes;⁹⁵ they did everything solely with the objective of fulfilling God’s will.⁹⁶ In this case, Isaac’s true goal in sowing

grain was to be afforded the opportunity to give charity to the poor. Isaac wished to fulfill the commandment of tithing, which the Torah stipulates can only be performed with one’s own produce.⁹⁷

⁹³ *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, pp. 121-125. ⁹⁴ Above, 21:25-26. ⁹⁵ *Tanya*, chapter 23. ⁹⁶ See *Bereishit Rabbah* 47:6. ⁹⁷ *Mishneh Torah*, *Ma’aser* 2:2. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 74, based on *Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer* 33.

— ONKELOS —

18 וְתָב יִצְחָק וַחֲפָר יֵת בִּירֵי דְמִיָּא
די חֲפָרו בְּיוֹמֵי אַבְרָהָם אַבּוּהִי
וְטַמּוּנִין פִּלְשְׁתִּינֵי בְּתֵר דְּמִית
אַבְרָהָם וְקָרָא לְהֵן שְׁמוֹהֵן בְּשִׁמְהֵן
די הָוָה קָרִי לְהֵן אַבּוּהִי: 19 וַחֲפָרו
עֲבָדֵי יִצְחָק בְּנַחֲלָא וְאִשְׁכּוּחוּ תַּמָּן
בִּירָא דְּמִיָּין נִבְעִין: 20 וְנָצוּ רַעְיוֹתָא
דְּגֵר עִם רַעְיוֹתָא דִּי־יִצְחָק לְמִימַר די
לָנָא מִיָּא וְקָרָא שְׁמָא דְּבִירָא עֶשֶׂק
אַרִי אֲתַעֲסִיקוּ עִמָּה: 21 וַחֲפָרו
בִּירָא אַחֲרֵי וְנָצוּ אֵף עֲלֶיהָ וְקָרָא
שְׁמָה שְׁטָנָה: 22 וְאִסְתַּלַּק מִתַּמָּן
וַחֲפָר בִּירָא אַחֲרֵי וְלֹא נָצוּ עֲלֶיהָ
וְקָרָא שְׁמָה רַחוּבוֹת וְאָמַר אַרִי
כַּעַן אֲפִתִּי יֵי לָנָא וְנִפּוּשׁ בְּאַרְעָא:

18 וַיָּשֶׁב יִצְחָק וַיַּחְפֹּר | אֶת־בְּאֵרֵת הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר חָפְרוּ
בְּיָמֵי אַבְרָהָם אָבִיו וַיִּסְתַּמּוּם פְּלִשְׁתִּים אַחֲרֵי מוֹת
אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקְרָא לָהֶן שְׁמוֹת בְּשִׁמּוֹת אֲשֶׁר־קָרָא לָהֶן
אָבִיו: 19 וַיַּחְפְּרוּ עֲבָדֵי־יִצְחָק בְּנַחֲלֵי וַיִּמְצְאוּ־שָׁם בְּאֵר
מַיִם חַיִּים: 20 וַיְרִיבוּ רַעֲי גֵר עִם־רַעֲי יִצְחָק לֵאמֹר
לָנוּ הַמַּיִם וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם־הַבְּאֵר עֶשֶׂק כִּי הִתְעַשְׂקוּ עִמּוֹ:
21 וַיַּחְפְּרוּ בְּאֵר אַחֶרֶת וַיְרִיבוּ גַם־עָלֶיהָ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמָהּ
שְׁטָנָה: 22 וַיַּעֲתֵק מִשָּׁם וַיַּחְפֹּר בְּאֵר אַחֶרֶת וְלֹא רָבוּ
עָלֶיהָ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמָהּ רַחוּבוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי־עָתִידָהּ הָרְחִיב יְהוָה
לָנוּ וּפְרִינוּ בְּאַרְצָן:

— RASHI —

וַחֲפָרוֹ: 20 עֶשֶׂק. עֲרֵעוֹר: כִּי הִתְעַשְׂקוּ עִמּוֹ. נִתְעַשְׂקוּ
עִמּוֹ עָלֶיהָ בְּמַרְיָבָה וְעֲרֵעוֹר: 21 שְׁטָנָה. נוֹיִשִּׁימִין ט"ט²⁶:
22 וּפְרִינוּ בְּאַרְצָן. כְּתִרְגוּמוֹ: "וְנִפּוּשׁ בְּאַרְעָא":

18 וַיָּשֶׁב וַיַּחְפֹּר. הַבְּאֵרֹת אֲשֶׁר חָפְרוּ בְּיָמֵי אַבְרָהָם
אָבִיו, וּפְלִשְׁתִּים סָתְמוֹם, מִקֶּדֶם שָׁנְסַע יִצְחָק מִגֵּר חוֹר
נָק. 26

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

tual defilement; and studying inspirational teachings of the Torah.¹⁰³

These three types of preparation are derived from the parallel characteristic behavior of each of the patriarchs during their lifetimes: Charity is alluded to by Abraham's performance of deeds of kindness.¹⁰⁴ Immersion in water is alluded to by Isaac's efforts in digging wells. Inspirational Torah study is alluded to by Jacob's devotion to the study of the Torah.¹⁰⁵

20 The shepherds...quarreled with Isaac's shepherds, saying...the water is ours: Isaac's wells were then commandeered by the Philistines. Sometimes even our most well-intentioned efforts or spiritual labor boomerang, actually strengthening the forces that oppose holiness. We learn from Isaac that we should not be discouraged in the face of such unexpected setbacks,

but rather to continue our endeavors, which are certain to eventually succeed.

In particular, "digging wells" can mean digging for the goodness within people who appear to be worth nothing more than stones and mud, in order to reveal the fountain of spirituality and holiness buried beneath their soulless exterior. Just as Isaac dug wells despite the opposition of the Philistines, we should not be discouraged from reaching out to those who deliberately, and even sometimes spitefully, oppose holiness. Even if our initial efforts meet with failure—or worse, our actions actually backfire—we, like Isaac, must continue digging until we uncover those hidden wellsprings.¹⁰⁶

22 So he named it Rechovot ["open spaces"]: These three wells presage the three Temples that Isaac's descendants would later build. Isaac's first two wells,

INNER DIMENSIONS

[18] And gave them the same names that his father had given them: Or literally, "and gave them names (שְׁמוֹת) like the names (שְׁמָה) that his father had given them." The first time the word for "names" appears in this verse, in reference to Isaac's wells, it is spelled with the letter *vav*; the second time, in reference to Abraham's wells, it is spelled without the letter *vav*.

The image of the *vav*, a vertical line, represents a flow from a higher to a lower point. As we have seen, Abraham's inspiration did not permanently refine and transform his students. This fact is reflected in the missing *vav*—his inspiration did not "descend" into their consciousness. In contrast, Isaac's inspiration did effect a transformation in his students, which is why the *vav* is present in his wells.¹⁰⁷

103. *Likutei Torah* 43b. 104. *Megaleh Amukot* 250; see above, 18:19. 105. Above, 25:27. *Reshimot* 20. 106. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, pp. 29-31. 107. *Sefer HaMa'amarim Kuntreisim*, vol. 2, pp. 800-804.

18 He re-dug the other wells of water that had been dug in the days of his father Abraham, which the Philistines had blocked up after Abraham's death, and gave them the same names that his father had given them.

19 Isaac's servants then dug elsewhere in the Gerar valley, and found a well of fresh spring water there.

20 The shepherds of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's shepherds, saying, "Since we use this land to pasture our flocks, the water you have discovered is ours." Isaac named the well Esek ["contention"], because they had contended with him.

21 They dug another well, and they quarreled over that one, too, so Isaac named it Sitnah ["harassment"].

22 He moved on from there and dug yet another well, and they did not quarrel over it, so he named it Rechovot ["open spaces"], saying, "For now God has granted us ample space to expand, and we shall flourish materially in the land."⁹⁸

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

18 He re-dug the wells of water that had been dug in the days of his father Abraham: Despite the fact that digging wells characterized Isaac's approach in fulfilling the Divine mission, he did not begin digging wells until after Abraham died. This is because as long as Abraham was alive, he was the spiritual leader of his generation and set the tone for how the Divine mission was to be fulfilled. Therefore, during Abraham's lifetime, Isaac assisted him in his work; only when Isaac assumed the mantle of spiritual leadership did he begin to innovate.⁹⁹

Which the Philistines had blocked up after Abraham's death: As explained in the Overview, digging wells alludes to the process of self-refinement prerequisite to integrating Divine revelation. The Philistines succeeded in blocking up Abraham's wells because his methodology in spreading Divine awareness was antithetical to that exemplified by digging wells; he merely inspired others, but did not uncover their inner wellsprings of goodness. In contrast, Isaac's methodology in spreading Divine awareness was perfectly exemplified by digging wells: he made people take a candid look at themselves, forcing them to confront their psychological blocks standing in the way of living the Divine life, thereby uncovering their hidden goodness. He not only inspired others, but effected change in them. Therefore, the Philistines could not block up his wells.

Spiritually, the Philistines represent unbridled materialism. The root of the word for "Philistine" (פְּלִשְׁתִּי) means "to penetrate," "to break through borders." The Philistine's blocking up of Abraham's wells alludes to the victory of unbridled hedonism over Godly inspiration.

We often experience this dynamic during prayer. When

we pray and meditate, we "dig wells" by clearing away the emotional and mental "dirt" that has "blocked up" the flow of fresh "water" extant within our souls. But when we conclude our prayers and re-enter the world of our mundane affairs, the inspiration of prayer vanishes; the well has once again been blocked up by our inner "Philistines," our ingrained relish for material satisfaction.

This happens if we fail to direct our inspiration during prayer toward correcting a particular character flaw, opting rather to revel in our uplifted state of inspiration. In contrast, when we focus on improving a specific character trait while praying, we effect a change in ourselves, enabling us to retain our commitment and inspiration even after re-entering the material world; our "wells" are no longer at risk of once again becoming "blocked up."¹⁰⁰

The Philistines personified the evil of unrestrained levity and mindless frivolity. In this context, the word for "Philistine" implies "uncontrolled abandon." They were thus the natural opponents of Abraham and Isaac, who personified the joy that accompanies feeling close to God. The Philistines tried to appropriate the holy joy of Abraham and Isaac for their own, erroneously claiming that the service of God, which should be serious and solemn, cannot tolerate laughter and joyful release. These, they claimed, can only be used for empty levity and scoffing. This is why they plugged up Abraham's wells and claimed Isaac's for their own.¹⁰¹

19 Isaac's servants...found a well of fresh spring water: There are three recommended steps we can take to prepare ourselves spiritually for prayer: giving charity,¹⁰² which inspires God to act charitably toward us and answer our prayers; immersing in a natural body of water or *mikveh*, which purifies us from spiri-

⁹⁸ *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, pp. 72-74. ⁹⁹ *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, pp. 373-374. ¹⁰⁰ *Sefer HaMa'amarim Kuntreisim*, vol. 2, pp. 800-804; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 194. See *Torah Or* 17a-c; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, pp. 27-29. ¹⁰¹ *Torah Or* 61c; *Or HaTorah*, *Beshalach*, p. 367. See *Avodah Zarah* 19a. ¹⁰² *Bava Batra* 10a.

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23 וסליק מתמן לכאר שבע: 24 ואתגלי לה יי בלילא יהוא ואמר אנא אלהה דאברהם אבוק לא תדחל ארי בסעך מימרי ואברכך ואסגי ית בניך בדיל אברהם עבדי: 25 ובנא תמן מדבא וצלי בשמא דיי ופרסה תמן למשכנה וברו תמן עבדי יצחק בירא: 26 ואבימלך אול לותה מגר וסיעת מרחמוהי ופיכול רב חילה: 27 ואמר להון יצחק מא דין אתיתון לותי ואתון סנייתון יתי ושלחוני מלותכו: 28 ואמרו מחוא חוינא ארי הוה מימרא דיי בסעך ואמרנא תתקם כען מומתא דהות בין אבהתא בינא ובינך ונגור קים עמך: 29 אם תעבד עמנא בישא כמא די לא אנזיקך וכמא די עבדנא עמך לחוד טב ושלחך בשלם את כען בריכא דיי: 30 ועבד להון משתיא ואכלו ושתיאו: 31 ואקדימו בצפרא וקיימו גבר לאחיהי ושלחון יצחק ואזלו מלותה בשלם: 32 והוה ביומא יהוא ואתו עבדי יצחק וחיאו לה על עיסק בירא די חפרו ואמרו לה אשכנא מיא:

רביעי 23 ועל משם באר שבע: 24 וירא אליו יהוה בלילה ההוא ויאמר אנכי אלהי אברהם אביך אל- תירא כי-אתך אנכי וברכתך והרפיתי את-זרעך בעבור אברהם עבדי: 25 ויבן שם מזבח ויקרא בשם יהוה ויטשם אהלו ויכרושם עבדי יצחק באר: 26 ואבימלך הלך אליו מגר ואחזת מרעהו ופיכל שר- צבאו: 27 ויאמר אלהם יצחק מדוע באתם אלי ואתם שנאתם אתי ותשלחוני מאתכם: 28 ויאמרו ראו ראינו כי-היה יהוה עמך ונאמר תהי נא אלה בינותינו בינינו ובינך ונברתה ברית עמך: 29 אם-תעשה עמנו רעה פאשר לא נגענוך ובאשר עשינו עמך רק טוב ונשלחך בשלום אתה עתה ברוך יהוה:

חמישי 30 ויעש להם משתה ויאכלו וישתו: 31 וישכימו בבקר וישבעו איש לאחיו וישלחם יצחק וילכו מאתו בשלום: 32 ויהי ביום ההוא ויבאו עבדי יצחק ויגדו לו על-אדות הפאר אשר חפרו ויאמרו לו מצאנו מים:

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"ואחזת", ואף על פי שאינה תבה סמוכה יש דגמטה במקרא: "עזרת מצר"²⁸, "ושברת ולא מיין"²⁹; אחות. לשון קבוצה ואגדה, שנאחזין יחד: 28 ראו ראינו. "ראו" באביר, "ראינו" בך; תהי נא אלה בינותינו וגו'. האלה אשר בינותינו מימי אביר, תהי גם עתה בינינו ובינך: 29 לא נגענוך. כשאמרנו לך³⁰. "לך מעמנו": אתה. גם אתה עשה עמנו כמו כן:

26 ואחזת מרעהו. כתרגמו: "סיעת מרחמוהי", סיעת מאהביו. ויש פותרין "מרעהו" — מ"ם מיסוד התבה, כמו²⁷: "שלישים מרעים" דשמשון, כדי שתהיה תבת "ואחזת" דבוקה. אבל אין דרך ארץ לדבר על המלכות כן. "סיעת אהביו", שאם כן כל סיעת אהביו הולך עמו, ולא היה לו אלא סיעה אחת של אהבים. לכן יש לפותרו כלשון הראשון. ואל תתמה על תיז' של

27. שופטים יד, יא. 28. תהלים ס, יג. 29. ישעיה נא, כא. 30. פסוק טז.

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to God's will. Thus, our spiritual handicap becomes an advantage in this context: emptied of self-interest, our deeds become purer, and can therefore be more truly permeated with Divinity.

We therefore see that the Tabernacle that was built in the desert—which was constructed with the aid of an abundance of Divine guidance and Divine intervention¹¹⁰—did not endure as long as the Temples in Jerusalem, which were built with less Divine guidance¹¹¹ and amid less Divine revelation. The first Temple, in

turn, did not endure as long as the second Temple,¹¹² which was built with even less Divine involvement than the first¹¹³ and amid less Divine revelation. Finally, the third Temple, which will be built out of the good deeds accrued over the course of our last and longest exile, will endure eternally.¹¹⁴

32 **We have found water:** Isaac, who embodied Divine severity and judgment, dug a total of four wells, corresponding to the four days of Divine judgment in the Jewish year, as follows:

110. See Rashi on Exodus 39:33. 111. See 2 Samuel 7:6; *Mishneh Torah*, *Beit HaBechirah* 1:1, 3. 112. *Bava Batra* 3ab. 113. See *Mishneh Torah*, *Beit HaBechirah* 1:4. 114. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 30, pp. 116-122.

Isaac in Beersheba

- ◆ *Fourth Reading* 23 From there, he went up to Beersheba.

24 **GOD appeared to him that night and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid due to all this contention, for I am with you. I will bless you and make your descendants numerous, for the sake of My servant Abraham."**

25 **Isaac built an altar there and invoked GOD. He pitched his tent there, and there Isaac's servants dug yet another well, but did not discover water immediately.**

26 **In the meantime, Avimelech came to him from Gerar, together with a group of some of his friends and Pikol, chief of his troops.**

27 **Isaac said to them, "Why have you come to me, seeing that you evidently hate me and therefore sent me away from you?"**

28 **They replied, "We have seen about your father and seen regarding you, too, that GOD has been with you, granting you unnatural success,¹⁰⁸ so we said: Let the solemn oath made between us and your father now continue to be in force between us and you, and let us make a covenant with you**

29 that you will do us no evil, just as we did you no harm when we asked you to leave, and just as we treated you only with kindness and let you leave in peace. Now, you please treat us in the same manner, you who are blessed by GOD."

- ◆ *Fifth Reading* 30 Isaac agreed to their proposal. He prepared them a feast and they ate and drank.

31 **They got up early in the morning and made an oath to each other. Isaac then sent them on their way and they departed from him in peace.**

32 **On that very day, Isaac's servants came and told him about the well they had dug, and they said to him, "We have found water!"**

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

which were a subject of contention with the Philistines, foreshadowed the first and second Temples, which were ultimately destroyed. The third well, over which the Philistines did not contend, presages the third Temple, which will be built in the messianic era and will never be destroyed.¹⁰⁹

This metaphor is particularly apt, as both the wells and the Temples were the result of a synthesis of both human and non-human effort. Although well water gushes out of a spring on its own force, it cannot do so unless the well has been dug. Similarly, although God rests His presence in the Temple, He cannot do so until a Temple in which to rest His presence is built. In order to elicit God's presence, the Temple must be built not only with physical materials but also with our good deeds. No matter how imposing or resplendent the structure, if the people who build it are not worthy,

God's presence will not manifest itself in it.

Moreover, the worthiness of the people is what determines the permanence of the Temple. The more our Divine consciousness is such that we live our lives solely in order to fulfill God's will, the more perfect vessels we are for Godliness, being empty of any vestige of self. So too, the more selfless our motivation, the more the Temple built by us will be permeated with Godliness, and the more it will reflect God's eternity.

In times of greater Divine revelation, people are naturally more attuned to holiness and spirituality. In such times, observing God's commandments makes sense to us intellectually and feels right emotionally, so our primary motivation is personal, even selfish. In times of lesser Divine revelation, we become less attuned to holiness and spirituality, so our motivation to observe the commandments derives more from our submission

¹⁰⁸ *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, p. 217, note 36. ¹⁰⁹ Nachmanides on verse 20, above; Rabbeinu Bachaye on verse 19, above.

— ONKELOS —

33 וקרא יתה שבעה על בן שמה
דקרתא באר שבע עד יומא הדין:
34 והוה עשו בר ארבעין שני
ונסיב אתתא ית יהודית בת בארי
חתאה וית בשמת בת אילון חתאה:
35 והואה מסר בן ומרגון על מימר
יצחק ורבקה: 1:27 והוה בד סיב
יצחק וכהיא עינוהי מלמחי וקרא
ית עשו ברה רבא ואמר לה ברי
ואמר לה הא אנא:

33 ויקרא אתה שבעה עליבן שם העיר באר שבע עד

היום הזה: ס

34 ויהי עשו בן ארבעים שנה ויקח אשה את יהודית

בת בארי החתי ואת בשמת בת אילון החתי:

35 ותהיין מרת רוח ליצחק ולרבקה: ס

1:27 ויהי כייקון יצחק ותבהיין עיניו מראת ויקרא את

עשו | בנו הגדל ואמר אליו בני ואמר אליו הנני:

— RASHI —

רוח. לשון המראת רוח, כמו: "ממרים הייתם", כל מעשיהן היו להכעיס ולעצבון: **ליצחק ולרבקה**. שהיו עובדות עבודה זרה: 1 **ותבהיין**. בעשן של אל, שהיו מעשנות ומקטרות לעבודה זרה. דבר אחר: כשנעקד על גבי המזבח והיה אביו רוצה לשחטו, באותה שעה נפתחו השמים, וראו מלאכי השרת והיו בוכים, ונדרו דמעותיהם ונפלו על עיניו, לפיכך כהו עיניו. דבר אחר: כדי שישול יעקב את הברכות:

33 שבעה. על שם הברית: 34 בן ארבעים שנה. עשו היה נמשל לחזיר, שנאמר: "יכרסמנה חזיר מיער". החזיר הוה כשהוא שוכב, פושט טלפיו, לומר: ראו שאני טהור! כך אלו גזלים וחומסים, ומראים עצמם כשרים. כל ארבעים שנה היה עשו צד נשים מתחת יד בעליהן ומענה אותם, כשהיה בן ארבעים אמר: אבא בן ארבעים שנה נשא אשה, אף אני בן: 35 **מרת**

31. תהלים פ, יד. 32. דברים ט, כד.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

Esek (Contention): This first well corresponds to the first day of Rosh HaShanah, during which Satan, the prosecutor of the Heavenly Court, contends with the Jewish nation and attempts to indict them for their sins.

Sitnah (Harassment): This well corresponds to the second day of Rosh HaShanah, on which Satan's opposition is less harsh than on the first day—he no longer contends, but only harasses. This qualitative difference is alluded to by the fact that the reason why Isaac named the first well "contention" is mentioned explicitly ("because they had contended with him"), while the reason why he named the second well "harassment" is not.

Rehovot (Open Spaces or Relief): This well, dug by Isaac himself, corresponds to Yom Kippur, the one day of the year on which Satan is not allowed to prosecute. The word for "the Satan" (השטן) is numerically equivalent

to 364, alluding to the 364 days of the year on which he can bring charges against us, whereas on the 365th day, Yom Kippur, he is forced to remain silent.¹²² Just as the Philistines did not contend with Isaac over this well, so, too does Satan not contend with us on Yom Kippur.

Shevuah (Oath or Seven): This well corresponds to the seventh day of Sukot (known as *Hosha'ana Rabbah*), on which the world is judged regarding the quantity of rain that will fall during the coming winter. Isaac's servants seemed surprised to discover water in this well, too, since this day is not as holy as Rosh HaShanah or Yom Kippur.¹²³

1 His eyesight had become dim...by Divine providence so that he could be deceived into blessing Jacob rather than Esau: Instead of arranging for Isaac

~ A CLOSER LOOK ~

[1] The smoke from Esau's wives' idolatrous incense offerings gradually dimmed his eyesight: Although smoke can indeed damage one's eyesight,¹²⁴ the type of smoke emitted by the idolatrous incense offerings of Esau's wives obviously was not the sort that could blind a person, since neither Esau nor his wives went blind, even though they came

into much closer contact with the smoke than Isaac when performing their idolatrous rites.

Rather, Isaac's blindness was caused by his exposure to smoke coming specifically from idol-worship. He was so pure that his eyes could not tolerate this visible manifestation of idolatry.¹²⁵ He therefore went blind.¹²⁶

122. Nedarim 32b. 123. Likutei Levi Yitzchak, Igrot, pp. 329-330. 124. See Proverbs 10:26. 125. See Habakkuk 1:13 and commentary of Rabbi David Kimchi, *ad loc.* 126. Likutei Sichot, vol. 5, pp. 139-140.

33 He named the well **Shivah** [from *she-vuah* — “oath”]. The name of the city was **therefore** not changed, but re-designated¹¹⁵ as **Beersheba** [“Well of the Oath”], and this remains its name **to this very day** (see Figure 27).

Esau Marries

34 In the year 2148, **when Esau was forty years old**, he recalled that his father had married at that same age. Therefore, in filial emulation of his father’s conduct, **he also married**. Despite having seduced

married women and ravished them over the course of the preceding twenty-five years in flagrant disregard of his father’s morals, he did not consider this affectation the least bit hypocritical. Esau married two women: the first was named Oholivamah the daughter of Anah,¹¹⁶ but Esau nicknamed her **Judith** [*Yehudit* — “a woman who acknowledges (that idolatry is false)”] in order to trick Isaac into thinking that she was righteous. In order to hide the fact that she was illegitimate (since she was actually the daughter of Anah’s wife by Anah’s father¹¹⁷), Esau called her **the daughter of Be’eri** [“My well”], implying that her father had engaged in digging wells for the advancement of civilization, just as Isaac had. Esau called her father **the Hittite** rather than the Hivite, because he wanted Isaac to think that she was a local girl.¹¹⁸ The second was named Adah, daughter of Elon; people nicknamed her **Basmat** [“spice woman”] **daughter of Elon the Hittite** because she regularly burned incense-offerings to idols. Esau did not change her nickname; he simply lied to Isaac and said that she was so named because her deeds were as morally pleasing as the fragrance of spices is physically pleasing.¹¹⁹

35 These wives **were spiritually rebellious toward Isaac and Rebecca** and caused them great anguish for, among other things, they unabashedly served idols.

The Blessings of Isaac

27:1 Twenty-three years after Esau married, in the year 2171, **Isaac had grown old**. Despite the fact that he had been blessed by God with good health and longevity,¹²⁰ the smoke from Esau’s wives’ idolatrous incense offerings gradually **dimmed his eyesight**. In addition, **his eyesight had** already become **dim** by then because of the ministering angels’ tears that had fallen into his eyes when he was bound on the altar, eighty-six years prior to this.¹²¹ All this was arranged by Divine providence so that he would be deceived into blessing Jacob rather than Esau, as will now be recounted.

He summoned his elder son Esau and said to him, “My son,” and he answered him, “Here I am.”

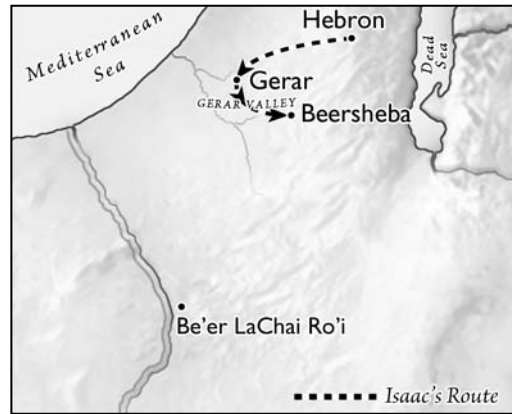


Figure 27: Isaac in Philistia

115. See above, 21:31. 116. Rashi on 36:2, below. 117. Below, 36:2. 118. Cf. 24:3, above. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, pp. 166-168, with notes 16 and 18. 119. *Maskil LeDavid*. 120. Above, 25:11. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 211-215, 217. 121. Above, 22:10.

ONKELOS

2 ואמר הִנֵּה־נָא זְקַנְתִּי יוֹם מוֹתִי: 3 וְעַתָּה שְׂאֵ־נָא כְּלִיךָ תְּלִיךָ וְקִשְׁתְּךָ וְצֵא הַשָּׂדֶה וְצוּרָה לִי צִידָה {צִיד}: 4 וְעִשְׂה־לִּי מִטַּעַמִּים כַּאֲשֶׁר אֶהְבֵּתִי וְהִבִּיאָה לִּי וְאִכְלָה בְּעֵבֹר תִּבְרַכְךָ נַפְשִׁי בְּטָרֶם אָמוּת: 5 וְרִבְקָה שָׁמַעַת בְּדִבְרֵי יִצְחָק אֶל־עֵשָׂו בְּנוֹ וַיֵּלֶךְ עֵשָׂו הַשָּׂדֶה לְצוּר צִיד לְהִבְיֹא: 6 וְרִבְקָה אָמְרָה אֶל־יַעֲקֹב בְּנֶה לְאִמֹּר הִנֵּה שָׁמַעַתִּי אֶת־אֲבִיךָ מְדַבֵּר אֶל־עֵשָׂו אַחִיךָ לְאִמֹּר: 7 הִבִּיאָה לִּי צִיד וְעִשְׂה־לִּי מִטַּעַמִּים וְאִכְלָה וְאִבְרַכְכָּה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לִפְנֵי מוֹתִי:

קדם מותי:

RASHI

3 תְּלִיךָ. חֲרֻבָּה, שְׂדֵרָה לְתוֹלְדָה: שֵׁא נָא. לְשׁוֹן הַשְׁחָזָה, כְּאוֹתָהּ שֶׁשְׁנִינָה¹³⁵. אֵין מִשְׁחִיזִין אֶת הַסִּבִּין, אֲבָל מִשְׁחִיזָה עַל גְּבִי חֲרֻבָּתָהּ. חֵדֶר סִבִּינָה וְשִׁטָּה וְפָה, שֶׁלֹּא תִאֲכִילֶנִּי נִבְלָה: וְצוּרָה לִי. מִן הַהֶפְקֵר וְלֹא מִן הַגֹּזֶל: 5 לְצוּר צִיד לְהִבְיֹא. מִהוּ "לְהִבְיֹא"? אִם לֹא יִמְצֵא צִיד, יָבִיא מִן הַגֹּזֶל: 7 לִפְנֵי ה'. בְּרִשְׁתּוֹ, שִׁסְכִּים עַל יָדֵי:

2 לֹא יָדַעְתִּי יוֹם מוֹתִי. אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן קָרְחָה: אִם מִגִּיעַ אֲדָם לִפְרָק אֲבוֹתָיו, יֵדָא חֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים לִפְנֵיהֶן וְחִמֵּשׁ לְאַחֵר בֶּן. וְיִצְחָק הָיָה בֶּן מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים וְשֵׁשׁ, אָמַר: שָׂמָא לִפְרָק אִמִּי אֲנִי מִגִּיעַ, וְהִיא מֵתָה בֶּת מֵאָה עֶשְׂרִים וְשֵׁשׁ, וְהָרִינִי בֶּן חֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים סְמוּךְ לִפְרָקָה, לִפְיָךְ "לֹא יָדַעְתִּי יוֹם מוֹתִי", שָׂמָא לִפְרָק אִמִּי שָׂמָא לִפְרָק אָבָא:

133. ביצה כח, א.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

Rebecca realized Isaac's error. It was true that Jacob was not the cunning, wild warrior that Esau was. But his prowess in Torah study could well provide him with the cunning necessary to wrest the sparks of holiness from the clutches of evil when confronted with the

challenge. On the contrary: Jacob's devotedness to the Torah would imbue him with a much stronger drive to make the world into God's home—and the knowledge and skill to do it—than Esau could possess.¹³⁵

INNER DIMENSIONS

[4] So that I may grant you my soul's blessing: Although Isaac recognized Esau's shortcomings,¹³⁶ he chose to give him the blessings anyway because he saw that Esau possessed an exalted soul originating in the lofty but inchoate energies of the world of *Tohu*.

Isaac sought to liberate these spiritual forces by giving Esau the blessings. He intended to bless him with the benediction of "dew," associated with a sublime Divine energy capable of reviving the dead in the messianic era.

In truth, however, the blessings would not have succeeded in elevating Esau. Instead, one of two things would have happened: either they would have penetrated him but had no impact, like someone who swallows food whole without chewing; or they would have overwhelmed his being and brought about his death.

Rather, Esau could only be elevated through Jacob, for the lofty energies of *Tohu* had to be integrated within the world of order, *Tikun*. God therefore ensured that Jacob receive the blessings so he would be able to elevate Esau, who represented the physical realm.

Because of the loftiness of this blessing, Isaac could not consciously give it to Jacob—it had to bypass Isaac's consciousness. God therefore arranged that the blessing be received by Jacob without Isaac's knowledge at the time.¹³⁷

Jacob, the recipient of the blessing, also had to be operating at a level where his consciousness would not hinder receiving the blessing. In order to receive the blessings, he had to exhibit self-sacrifice, which he did by exposing himself to the risk of being cursed by his father.¹³⁸

135. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 20, p. 114. 136. See above, on verse 1. 137. *Torah Or* 20b; *Sefer HaMa'amarim Melukat*, vol. 4, p. 64. 138. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, p. 56. See below, on verse 13.

2 Isaac said, “See, I have now grown old; I am now 123 years old. I do not know the day of my death. True, God blessed me with longevity, but it could be that this blessing has already run its course. As a rule, people die either five years before or five years after the age at which their parents died. Of my two parents, my mother died at the younger age, 127. But she had already reached old age—her natural longevity¹²⁷—at ninety;¹²⁸ she lived until 127 only because of God’s blessing. If my natural longevity is to be five years less than my mother’s, that is, age eighty-five, then I have already lived out the same Divine blessing of thirty-seven additional years that my mother did.¹²⁹ It is therefore time to put my affairs in order. In particular, I must bless you, in order that the spiritual leadership of the family pass on to you after I die. In order for me to bless you properly, I must be properly inspired; I must sense the spiritual potential in some physical act of yours.

3 So therefore, now, please, sharpen your weapons—your sword and the arrows for your bow—and go out to the field and trap me some ownerless game. Be sure to trap only an ownerless deer, so that you not serve me something stolen, and to sharpen the slaughtering knife so that you slaughter the animal in accordance with the Torah’s laws.

4 Then prepare me some delicacies to my liking, and bring them to me so that I may eat, so that I may grant you my soul’s blessing before I die.”

5 Rebecca had been listening while Isaac was speaking to Esau, his son. Esau went out to the field—intending to trap some ownerless game, as his father had stipulated, but was nevertheless also prepared to bring home stolen game if no ownerless deer could be found.

6 When Esau left, Rebecca said to her son Jacob, “I just heard your father speaking to your brother Esau, saying,

7 ‘Bring me some game and prepare me delicacies, so that I may eat and bless you in God’s presence and with His approval before I die.’

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

to become blind, God could have simply revealed Esau’s wickedness and unworthiness to his father; God would not have been divulging anything that Isaac did not already suspect of his son. After all, Isaac already knew that Esau’s wives were idolaters—although he excused his son by saying that he could not control his wives—and that he did not usually mention God in his conversation.¹³⁰

God’s reticence in this matter teaches us an important lesson: If God chose to allow Isaac to go blind rather than speak negatively about the wicked Esau, certainly we must take extreme care not to speak negatively of others.

Similarly, the Talmud¹³¹ relates how God refused to identify Achan by name as the one who had stolen some of the spoils that had been dedicated to God after

the conquest of Jericho. The sacrilege of one lone individual caused God’s protection to be removed from the entire Jewish army,¹³² yet when Joshua asked God to name the culprit, He responded, “Am I to be a tale-bearer to you?”¹³³

4 So that I may grant you my soul’s blessing: Isaac wanted to bless Esau—thus naming him his successor—rather than Jacob, for he envisioned him as a fearless, Godly warrior, dedicated to combating evil. Although he saw how Esau had succumbed to the very forces he originally battled and had now totally sided with evil, he felt that if he would only bless him, he would again take up the cause of good and righteousness. With his superior power, sophistication, and skill, he would then be able to accomplish God’s purposes on earth far better than Jacob would.¹³⁴

¹²⁷. Above, 18:11. ¹²⁸. Above, 17:17. ¹²⁹. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 217-220. ¹³⁰. V. 21, below. Cf. Nachmanides and commentaries on Rashi *ad loc.* ¹³¹. *Sanhedrin* 11a. ¹³². Joshua 7. ¹³³. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 215-216. ¹³⁴. *Torah Or* 20c ff.

ONKELOS

8 ובען ברי קבל מני למא די אנא
מפקדא יתה: 9 אזל בען לות ענא
וסב לי מתמן תרין גדיי עזין טבין
ואעבד יתהון תבשילין לאבון
כמא די רחם: 10 ותיתי לאבון
וייכול בדיל די יברכנך קדם מותה:
11 ואמר יעקב לרבקה אמה הא
עשו אחי גבר שערן ואנא גבר
שעיע: 12 מאים ימושני אבא
ואחי בעינוהי כמתלעב ואחי מייתי
עלי לוטין ולא ברך: 13 ואמרת
לה אמה עלי אתאמר כנבואה
דלא ייתון לוטין עליך ברי ברם
קבל מני ואזל סב לי: 14 ואזל
ונסיב ואיתי לאמה ועבדת אמה
תבשילין כמא די רחם אבוחי:
15 ונסיבת רבקה ית לבושי
עשו ברה רבא דכיתא די עמה
בביתא ואלבישת ית יעקב ברה
ועירא: 16 וית משכי דגדיי בני עזי
אלבישת על ידוהי ועל שעיעות
צורה: 17 ויהבת ית תבשיליא
וית לחמא די עבדת בידא דיעקב
ברה: 18 ועל לות אבוחי ואמר
אבא ואמר הא אנא מאן את ברי:

8 ועתה בני שמע בקלי לאשר אני מצוה אתך: 9 לך-
נא אליהצאן וקחלי משם שני גדיי עזים טבים ואעשה
אתם מטעמים לאביך כאשר אהב: 10 והבאת לאביך
ואכל בעבר אשר יברכך לפני מותו: 11 ויאמר יעקב
אלרבקה אמו הן עשו אחי איש שער ואנכי איש
חלק: 12 אולי ימשני אבי והייתי בעיניו כמתעתע
והבאתי עלי קללה ולא ברכה: 13 ותאמר לו אמו עלי
קללתך בני אך שמע בקלי ולך קחלי: 14 וילך וילך
ויבא לאמו ותעש אמו מטעמים כאשר אהב אביו:
15 ותקח רבקה אתבגדי עשו בנה הגדל החמדת
אשר אתה בבית ותלבש אתיעקב בנה הקטן: 16 ואת
ערת גדיי העזים הלבשה עלידי וועל חלקת צואריו:
17 ותתן אתהמטעמים ואתהלחם אשר עשתה ביד
יעקב בנה: 18 ויבא אל-אביו ויאמר אבי ויאמר הנני
מי אתה בני:

RASHI

טעם הגדי כטעם הצבי: 11 איש שער. בעל שער:
12 ימשני. כמו: "ממשש בצדדים": 15 החמדת.
הנקיות, כתר גומו: "דכיתא". דבר אחר: שחמד אותן מן
נמרד: אשר אתה בבית. והלא כמה נשים היו לו, והוא
מפקיד אצל אמו? אלא שהיה בקי במעשיו וחושדן:

9 וקח לי. משלי הם ואינם גזל, שכן כתב לה יצחק
בכתבתה, לטל שני גדיי עזים בכל יום. בראשית רבה:
שני גדיי עזים. וכי שני גדיי עזים היה מאכלו של
יצחק? אלא, פסח היה, האחד הקריב לפסחו והאחד
עשה מטעמים. בפרקי רבי אליעזר: 35. כאשר אהב. כי

34. סה, יד. 35. פרק לב. 36. דברים כח, כט.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

12 Perhaps my father will...regard me as an impostor, and I will bring a curse upon myself, not a blessing: The Midrash applies the verse, "Those who sow with tears will reap with joy,"¹⁴³ to Jacob.¹⁴⁴ Jacob was filled with dread and despair over having to deceive his father and possibly incur his curse, especially since he was an artless person by nature and lying was anathema to him.¹⁴⁵ But through this painful experience of "sowing with tears," he was able to receive the blessings, to then be able "to reap with joy."

Similarly, in our lives, it is often through pain and desperation that we attain the greatest blessings.¹⁴⁶

15 Rebecca took...Esau's clothes...and put them on...

Jacob: In addition to the explanations given above¹⁴⁷ as to why Jacob had to receive the blessings dressed as Esau, there is also a homiletic interpretation: Rebecca wanted to ensure that Isaac's blessings would rest upon her descendants, the Jewish people, no matter to what degree they would remain openly loyal to the teachings and practices of the Torah. By having Jacob receive Isaac's blessings dressed as Esau, Rebecca ensured that the blessings would rest even on those Jews who would drift away from their Jewish roots and would no longer be recognizable as Jacob's children. We learn from Rebecca that even those Jews disguised as "Esau" are deserving of blessing since, beneath their external garb, they too are truly "Jacob."¹⁴⁸

143. Psalms 126:5. 144. Bereishit Rabbah 79:4 and 65:11. 145. Sefer HaMa'amarim 5703, p. 186; Sefer HaMa'amarim Melukat, vol. 4, p. 64, note 11. 146. Sefer HaMa'amarim 5704, pp. 239-241. 147. On verses 4 and 15. See also below, on verse 35. 148. From a letter of the Rebbe, cited in Biurei HaChumash, Bereishit, vol. 1, p. 350.

8 So now, my son, heed my words in regard to what I command you.

9 Your father provided in our marriage contract that I may take two kid-goats from the flock every day, if need be. Therefore, go to the flock and bring me from there two choice kid-goats. Since today is the 14th of Nisan, we will use one for the Passover-offering, and **I will make delicacies out of the other one of them, such as your father likes**, for the meat of a kid-goat can be made to taste like deer meat.

10 You shall then bring them to your father and he will eat, so that he will bless you before he dies."

11 Jacob said to Rebecca his mother, "But my brother Esau is a hairy man, while I am a smooth-skinned man.

12 Perhaps my father will touch me, and then he will regard me as an impostor, and I will bring a curse upon myself, not a blessing!"

13 His mother said to him, "Let your curse be upon me, my son. Just heed my voice and go and bring them to me."

14 He went and got them and brought them to his mother, and his mother prepared delicacies to his father's liking.

15 Rebecca then took her older son Esau's clean clothes, which had belonged to Nimrod; Esau had coveted them and killed Nimrod to acquire them.¹³⁹ These clothes **were with her in the house** because Esau did not trust his wives; to prevent his wives from stealing them, he kept them at his mother's house. **She put them on her younger son Jacob,**

16 and placed the kid-goat skins on his arms and on the smooth part of his neck.

17 She then handed to her son Jacob the delicacies and the bread she had prepared.

18 He came to his father and said, "Father," and he replied, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?"

✧ INNER DIMENSIONS ✧

[13] Let your curse be upon me: As we have seen,¹⁴⁰ receiving these lofty blessings called for self-sacrifice. When Rebecca demonstrated to Jacob that she was prepared to sacrifice her own life in order that he receive the blessings, he understood their momentous importance, and from then on was willing to go along with her plan, even if it meant risking his own life. He became convinced not because he thought that she would bear the consequences of his actions, but rather because her selfless declaration taught him the critical importance of his receiving the blessings and that he must do so with self-sacrifice.¹⁴¹

[15] Rebecca...took her older son Esau's... clothes...and put them on her younger son Jacob:

The words for "older" and "younger" can also be translated as "the great one" and "the small one." Esau is called "great" since he embodies the great and intense energies of *Tohu*. Jacob is called "small" since he embodies the restrained energies of *Tikun*.

As is known, the intense energies of *Tohu* "exploded," causing its lofty sparks to become embedded in physical reality. Through observance of the commandments, which involve physical matter, we redeem those sparks and access the intense energies of *Tohu*.

Metaphorically, then, "donning the garments of Esau" means engaging in the observance of the commandments, which are "garbed in the garments of Esau," physical matter.¹⁴²

139. *Bereishit Rabbah* 65:16. 140. Above, on verse 4. 141. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, p. 56. 142. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5702, p. 40.

ONKELOS

19 ואמר יעקב לאבובי אָנא עֲשׂוּ בְכֶרֶךְ עֲבִדִית כְּמֵא דִּי מְלִילָתָא עֲמִי קוּם כְּעַן אֶסְתַּחֲרֵי וְאִכּוּל מִצִּידִי בְדִיל דִּי תִבְרַכְנִי נִפְשָׁךְ: 20 ואמר יצחק לבריה מֵא דִּין אוֹחִיתָא לְאַשְׁכַּחא בְּרִי ואמר אָרִי זְמִין יִי אֱלֹהֵךְ קְדָמִי: 21 ואמר יצחק ליעקב קְרֵב כְּעַן וְאִמּוּשְׁנָךְ בְּרִי הֵאֵת דִּין בְּרִי עֲשׂוּ אִם לֹא: 22 וקריב יעקב לות יצחק אבובי וּמְשִׁיָּה וְאָמַר קְלֵא קְלֵא דִיעֲקֵב וּיְדִיא יְדוּהִי דְעֲשׂוּ: 23 וְלֹא אֶשְׁתַּמּוּדְעָה אָרִי הִוָּאָה יְדוּהִי בִידִי עֲשׂוּ אֲחוּהִי שְׁעֲרִין וּבְרַכָּה: 24 ואמר את דִּין בְּרִי עֲשׂוּ וְאָמַר הָא אָנֹא: 25 ואמר קְרֵב קְדָמִי וְאִכּוּל מִצִּידִי דְבִרִי בְדִיל דִּתְבְּרַכְנָךְ נִפְשִׁי וְקְרִיב לָהּ וְאָכַל וְאִתִּי לָהּ חֲמֵרָא וְשִׁתִּי: 26 ואמר לָהּ יִצְחָק אֲבֹהִי קְרִיב כְּעַן וְנִשְׁק לִי בְרִי: 27 וקריב וְנִשְׁק לָהּ וְאַחַר יֵת רִיחָא דְלִבְנוֹשׁוּהִי וּבְרַכָּה וְאָמַר חֲזִי רִיחָא דְבְרִי בְּרִיחַ חֲקֵלָא דִּי בְּרַכָּה יִי:

19 וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל-אֲבִיו אֲנֹכִי עֲשׂוּ בְכֶרֶךְ עֲשִׂיתִי כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ אֵלַי קוּם-נָא שָׁבָה וְאִכְלָה מִצִּידִי בַעֲבוּר תִּבְרַכְנִי נַפְשֶׁךָ: 20 וַיֹּאמֶר יִצְחָק אֶל-בְּנוֹ מִדְּוָה מִהֲרֵת לְמַעַן בְּנִי וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי הִקְרָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְפָנַי: 21 וַיֹּאמֶר יִצְחָק אֶל-יַעֲקֹב גִּשְׁה-נָּא וְאִמְשֶׁךְ בְּנִי הֵאֵתָה זֶה בְּנִי עֲשׂוּ אִם-לֹא: 22 וַיָּגֶשׁ יַעֲקֹב אֶל-יִצְחָק אָבִיו וַיְמַשְׁהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר הִקְלָ קוֹל יַעֲקֹב וְהִידִים יָדָי עֲשׂוּ: 23 וְלֹא הִכִּירוּ כִּי-הָיוּ יָדָיו בִּידֵי עֲשׂוּ אָחִיו שְׁעֵרֵת וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ: 24 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵתָה זֶה בְּנִי עֲשׂוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי: 25 וַיֹּאמֶר הַגִּשְׁה לִי וְאִכְלָה מִצִּידִי בְנִי לְמַעַן תִּבְרַכְךָ נַפְשִׁי וַיִּגְשְׁלוּ וַיֹּאכֵל וַיִּבֵּא לוֹ יֵין וַיִּשְׁתְּ: 26 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יִצְחָק אָבִיו גִּשְׁה-נָּא וַיִּשְׁקֶה-לִּי בְנִי: 27 וַיָּגֶשׁ וַיִּשְׁקְלוּ וַיֵּרַח אֶת-רִיחַ בְּגָדָיו וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר רֵאחַ רִיחַ בְּנִי בְרִיחַ שְׂדֵה אֲשֶׁר בָּרַכְוָה יְהוָה:

RASHI

"קום נא". אָכַל עֲשׂוּ בִלְשׁוֹן קְנִטוּרִיא דְּבִרָּה: 37. "יקום אָבִי": 24 וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי. לֹא אָמַר "אָנִי עֲשׂוּ", אֶלָּא "אָנִי": 27 וַיֵּרַח וְגו'. וְהֵלֵא אֵין רִיחַ רַע יוֹתֵר מִשְׁטַף הָעוֹשִׂים? אֶלָּא, מִלְּמַד שְׁנִכְנַס עִמּוֹ רִיחַ גֵּן עֵדֶן: בְּרִיחַ שְׂדֵה אֲשֶׁר בָּרַכְוָה ה' שְׁנֵת בּוֹ רִיחַ טוֹב, וְזֶה שְׂדֵה תְּפוּחִים. כִּךְ דָּרְשׁוּ רַבּוֹתֵינוּ וְזָכוּרָם לְבְרַכָּה: 38.

19 אֲנֹכִי עֲשׂוּ בְכֶרֶךְ. אֲנֹכִי הוּא הַמְּבִיא לָךְ, וְעֲשׂוּ הוּא בְכֶרֶךְ: עֲשִׂיתִי. כְּמֵה דְּבִרָּת, "כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ אֵלַי": שָׁבָה. לְשׁוֹן מִסָּב עַל הַשְׁלָחַן, לְכַף מִתְרָגֵם "אֶסְתַּחֲרֵי": 21 גִּשְׁה נָא וְאִמְשֶׁךְ. אָמַר יִצְחָק בְּלִבּוֹ: אֵין דָּרָךְ עֲשׂוּ לְהוֹיֹת שֵׁם שְׁמַיִם שְׁגוּר בְּפִי, וְזֶה אָמַר: "כִּי הִקְרָה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ": 22 קוֹל יַעֲקֹב. שְׁמִדְבָּר בִּלְשׁוֹן תַּחְנוּנִים:

37. פסוק לא. 38. תענית כט, ב.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

study of the Torah. We pray before studying in order to boost our Divine consciousness enough to ensure that we remain aware of the Torah's Divine author while we are studying it.¹⁵² (The exception, mentioned above,¹⁵³ is the inspirational parts of the Torah, which may be studied in preparation for prayer.)

The voice is the voice of Jacob...the hands are the hands of Esau: The Midrash reads the verse as follows: "When the voice of Jacob, the voice of the Jewish people, is heard praying and studying Torah in the synagogues and halls of Torah study, the hands of Esau cannot harm them."¹⁵⁴ This verse echoes the prophecy given to

INNER DIMENSIONS

[25] **And he brought him wine:** According to the *Zohar*,¹⁵⁵ Jacob diluted the wine he served Isaac with water. Wine signifies *gevurah* (strength), since it intensifies the emotions. Wine is [thus] associated with fire, which is constantly drawn upward and yearns to escape from the wick restraining it. Wine is thus a metaphor for one who longs to escape the limitations of this world and cleave to God. This quality is associated with the world of *Tohu*.

In contrast, water, which naturally flows down-

ward, is a metaphor for bringing God into the world through performing the commandments. As we have seen, Abraham is compared to water and Isaac to fire.¹⁵⁶ Jacob, who embodied the ultimate synthesis of these two approaches, therefore mixed water into the wine he gave his father. This synthesis is the hallmark of the world of *Tikun*.

This synthesis is further alluded to in the rare double cantillation mark (a *mercha kefulah*) under the word for "him" (לו) in this phrase.¹⁵⁷

152. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5699, p. 34. 153. On 26:19. 154. *Bereishit Rabbah* 65:20. Cf. *Yefeh Toar ad loc.* 155. 3:189a. 156. See above, on 26:18. 157. *Torah Or* 25b.

19 Jacob answered his father, “[It is] I; Esau [is] your firstborn.” Since the verb “to be” is not articulated in Hebrew, Jacob’s answer had two meanings: (a) “I am Esau, your firstborn,” and (b) “It is I; Esau is your firstborn.” Jacob intended his father to understand his words according to the first meaning, but in order not to be technically guilty of lying, he phrased his reply so that it could also be understood the second way. Continuing to pose as Esau, Jacob said, **“I have done as you told me.”** Jacob intended his father to understand this statement to mean that he had fulfilled Isaac’s instruction to Esau, i.e., to prepare him a meal; in order not to be technically guilty of lying, Jacob phrased this statement so that it could also be understood, “I have *always* done as you instructed me.” He continued, **“Please arise and be seated at the table, and partake of my game, so that you may grant me your soul’s blessing.”**

20 Isaac asked his son, “How did you find it so quickly, my son?” He replied, “Because God, your God, arranged it to happen this way for me.”

21 Isaac said to himself, “This seems out of character for Esau: he does not usually mention God, nor does he usually address me so politely.” **He therefore said to Jacob, “Please come close and let me touch you, my son. Are you really my son Esau?”**

22 So Jacob drew close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, “The voice—the manner of speaking—is the voice of Jacob, but the hands—to the physical touch—are the hands of Esau.”

23 He did not recognize him, because his arms were hairy like the arms of his brother Esau, so he proceeded to prepare to bless him.

24 He said, “So you really are my son Esau,” and he replied, “I [am].” Here again, Jacob simply said “I,” intending to mean simply “It is I,” but allowing his father to understand his reply as meaning “I am [Esau].”

25 Then Isaac said, “Serve me so that I may partake of my son’s game, so that I may grant you my soul’s blessing.”

Jacob served him and he ate, and he brought him wine and he drank.

26 His father Isaac said to him, “Please come close and kiss me, my son.”

27 He came close and kissed him, and Isaac smelled the fragrance of his garments. Although goatskins usually have an unpleasant odor, in this case they miraculously took on the fragrance of an apple orchard, like the Garden of Eden.¹⁴⁹ Isaac **blessed him** with ten blessings,¹⁵⁰ as follows: **He said, “See, my son’s fragrance is already like the fragrance of a field which God has blessed.** This indicates that you are fit to receive my blessings.

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

22 The voice (קוֹל) is the voice (קוֹל) of Jacob: The word “voice” appears twice in this verse, alluding to the two types of voices employed by “Jacob,” i.e., the Jewish people, in their relationship with God: the voice of prayer and the voice of Torah study. As we have seen,¹⁵¹ the image of the *vav*, a vertical line, denotes a downward flow. The first “voice” in this verse, al-

luding to prayer, is spelled without a *vav*, since prayer rises *upward*. The second “voice,” alluding to Torah study, is spelled with a *vav*, since studying the Torah “brings down” God’s lofty wisdom into the finite human mind.

The order of the two “voices” in the verse reflects their proper sequence in our lives: Prayer must precede the

¹⁴⁹. Above, 2:9. ¹⁵⁰. *Bereishit Rabbah* 84:6, cited by Rashi on 37:2, below. ¹⁵¹. Above, on 26:18.

ONKELOS

28 ויתן לך מוטל דשמיא ומטובא דארעא וסגיות עבור וחקר: 29 יפלהך עממין וישתעבדון לך מלכון הוי רב לאחיה ויסגדון לך בני אמך מלטטיף יהון ליטין ומברכיך יהון בריכין: 30 והוה כד שיצי יצחק לברקא ות יעקב והוה ברם מפק נפק יעקב מן קדם יצחק אבוי ועשו אחוי על מצידה: 31 ועבד אף הוא תבשילין ואעיל לאבוי ואמר לאבוי יקום אבא ויכול מצידא דברה בדיל די תברכני נפשיך:

שישי 28 ויתן לך האלהים מוטל השמים ומשמני הארץ ורב דגן ויתירש: 29 יעבדוך עמים וישתחו וישתחוו לך לאמים הוה גביר לאחיה וישתחו לך בני אמך ארריך ארור ומברכיך ברוך: 30 ויהי כאשר בלה יצחק לברך את יעקב ויהי אך יצא יעקב מאת פני יצחק אביו ועשו אחיו בא מצידו: 31 ויעש גם הוא מטעמים ויבא לאביו ויאמר לאביו יקם אבי ויאכל מציד בנו בעבר תברכני נפשיך:

RASHI

"אתה תשמע השמים וגו' ועשית ככל אשר יקרא אליך הנביר", בין ראוי בין שאינו ראוי תן לו, כדי שלא יקרא עליך תגר: 29 בני אמך. ויעקב אמר ליהודה: "בני אביר", לפי שהיו לו בנים מבמה אמהות. וכאן שלא נשא אלא אשה אחת, אמר: "בני אמך"; ארריך ארור ומברכיך ברוך. ובבלעם הוא אומר: "מברכיך ברוך וארריך ארור". הצדיקים תחלתם יסורים וסופן שלווה ואוריהם ומצעריהם קודמים למברכיהם, לפיכך יצחק הקדים קללת אוררים לברכת מברכים. והרשעים תחלתן שלווה וסופן יסורין, לפיכך בלעם הקדים ברכה לקללה: 30 יצא יצא. וזה יוצא וזה בא:

28 ויתן לך. יתן ויחזור ויתן. ולפי פשוטו מוסב לענין הראשון: "ראה ריח בני" שנתן לו הקדוש ברוך הוא, "כריח שדה וגו' ועוד "יתן לך מטל השמים" וגו': מטל השמים. כמשמעו. ומדרשי אגדה יש להרבה פנים: האלהים. מהו "האלהים"? בדין, אם ראוי לך יתן לך, ואם לאו לא יתן לך. אבל לעשו אמר: "משמני הארץ יהיה מושקך", בין צדיק בין רשע יתן לך. וממנו למד שלמה כשעשה הבית וסדר תפלתו: ישאל שדוא בעל אמונה ומצדיק עליו את הדין, לא יקרא עליך תגר, לפיכך "ונתת לאיש ככל דרכיו אשר תדע את לבבו".⁴⁰ אבל נכרי — מחסר אמונה, לפיכך אמר:⁴¹

39. פסוק לט. 40. מלכים א ח, לט. 41. שם, מג. 42. בראשית מט, ח. 43. במדבר כד, ט.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

perity as a reward¹⁶⁶ for having drawn the transcendent holiness of the Ten Commandments into the natural order signified by the ten statements with which God created the world. True, throughout history, these blessings of prosperity have not, by-and-large, been fulfilled; the Jewish people have not generally enjoyed abundant material wealth. This is because there are actually two facets to God's reward to us for fulfilling His commandments: spiritual reward, i.e., sublime levels of Divine consciousness, and material reward, i.e., material prosperity. We cannot receive the full spiritual reward for observing the commandments until the world is prepared for it, that is, until its materiality has been sufficiently refined so that it can tolerate the infusion of such sublime levels of Divine consciousness. In the meantime, we only receive a glimmer of this reward, in the form of heightened spiritual awareness and inspiration. Inasmuch as the spiritual and material facets of our reward are inexorably intertwined, our great material reward is also being delayed; in the meantime, we receive only an occasional trickle of it. When the Messiah comes, however, all these blocks will disap-

pear, the physicality of the world will be refined, and we will receive our full spiritual and material rewards for having fulfilled God's commandments.

Because of the imminence of the messianic era, the world has already become somewhat refined. Increasing numbers of people are seeking spiritual enlightenment, and spiritual experiences are in many respects more easily attainable than in the past. In tandem, we have already begun to taste the full material reward we will receive in that time, and can in many ways see the empirical results of our good deeds.¹⁶⁹

31 Let my father arise and partake of his son's game: Esau's respect for his father was exemplary. He made it a point to wait on his father dressed in the special garments he had taken from Nimrod, which he valued so much that he entrusted them solely to his mother Rebecca's care.¹⁷⁰ Later on, when he decides to kill Jacob, he refrains from doing so—despite his raging anger—in order not to pain his father.¹⁷¹

Nevertheless, his reverence for his father did not prevent him from speaking to him discourteously, saying,

166. Exodus 20:1, 24:12. 167. Above, before 1:1. 168. See Leviticus 26:3-4. 169. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, pp. 58-59. 170. *Bereishit Rabbah* 65:16. 171. Below, verse 41 and Rashi *ad loc.*

- ◆ **Sixth Reading 28 May God** therefore **grant you** all the following blessings, plus the ability to capitalize on them and increase them by yourself.¹⁵⁸ But whatever He grants you, may He give it to you only if you deserve it, for I know that you and your descendants will accept His justice unquestioningly.

Besides having already given you the fragrance of a blessed field, may He give you (1) **of the dew of the heavens** and (2) **the fat**—i.e., the choicest fruits—**of the land**, and (3) **an abundance of grain** and (4) **wine**.

29 (5) May peoples serve you, and (6) nations bow down to you. (7) May you be master over your brothers, and (8) may your mother's sons prostrate themselves before you. Although it may seem to you, at the outset, that your life is cursed, rest assured that, in the end, (9) **those who curse you shall be cursed**, and (10) **those who bless you shall be blessed.**"

30 It was just then, when Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and when Jacob had scarcely left his father Isaac's presence, that his brother Esau came back from his hunt.

31 He, too, had prepared delicacies and brought them to his father. He said to his father, "Let my father arise and partake of his son's game, so that you may give me your soul's blessing."

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

Rebecca, "When one rises, the other will fall."¹⁵⁹ When Jacob strengthens himself with Torah study and prayer, Esau falls.¹⁶⁰

27 See, my son's fragrance is like the fragrance of a field which God has blessed: Prior to pronouncing his blessings, Isaac saw visions of the construction, destruction, and reconstruction of the Temple, as alluded to in this verse:

My son's fragrance: The word for "my son" (*beni*) is similar to the word for "constructed" (*banui*), and therefore alludes to Isaac's vision of the constructed Temple. "Fragrance" also alludes to the Temple, since the sacrifices are described as creating a "fragrance pleasing to God."¹⁶¹

Like the fragrance of a field: "Field" alludes to the destruction of the Temple, as in the verse, "Zion shall be plowed like a field."¹⁶²

Which God has blessed: This alludes to the reconstruction of the Temple.¹⁶³

Isaac intended for his blessing to confer upon Esau the power to repent. He was therefore granted a vision of the built Temple, followed by visions of its destruction and subsequent reconstruction, for the process of destruction followed by reconstruction parallels the process of sin followed by repentance. It is for this very reason that the destruction is symbolized by a plowed field, because in the first stage of repentance—realizing how bitter is our estrangement from God—we metaphorically "plow" our own selves; that is to say, we break up our hardened psyches so that new growth

can take place, and "overturn" our previous selves in order make way for our new selves.

This "self-plowing," however, is only the first step in the process. We may indeed experience an overwhelming sense of regret and desire for change, yet neglect to actually change our behavior because we continue to be immersed in our daily routine and distracted by it. We must therefore stay focused—even while "plowing"—on the next step: the "planting" and the growth that it will bring in its wake.

Isaac was therefore also granted a vision of the reconstructed Temple, indicating that his blessings would empower their recipient to not only experience regret, but to proceed on to the process of growth, as well.¹⁶⁴

28 May God grant you: We are taught that God created the world with ten statements.¹⁶⁵ As we shall see,¹⁶⁶ the entire Torah is encapsulated within the Ten Commandments we heard at Mount Sinai. The fact that the creation of the world and the giving of the Torah both revolve around the number ten indicates that they are intrinsically related: the world was created *through* the Torah and *for* the Torah.¹⁶⁷

In other words, God's ten creational statements thus signify the natural order of reality, while the Ten Commandments signify the heightened Divine awareness that we are expected to infuse into natural reality through learning the Torah and observing its commandments, thereby sanctifying all of life and transforming the world into God's home.

Isaac blessed Jacob with ten blessings of material pros-

^{158.} *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, pp. 82-83. ^{159.} Above, 25:23. ^{160.} *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5709, p. 34. See above, on 25:23. ^{161.} Genesis 8:21, etc. ^{162.} Micah 3:12. ^{163.} *Sifrei*, Deuteronomy 33:12. ^{164.} *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, pp. 85-86. ^{165.} *Avot* 5:1. See *Rosh HaShanah* 32a; *Zohar* 3:11b ff; *Tikunei Zohar* 83ab; *Pelach HaRimon* (commentary on *Pardes Rimonim*) 2:2, 2:4 (quoted in *Melechet Shlomo* on *Avot* 5:1)

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32 וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ יִצְחָק אָבוּהִי מֵאֵן אֶת וַאֲמַר אָנָּה בְּרַךְ בּוֹכְרָךְ עֲשׂוּ: 33 וְתוֹהָ יִצְחָק תּוֹהָא רַבָּא עַד לַחֲדָא וַאֲמַר מֵאֵן הוּא דִּיכִי דְצִיד צִידָא וְאֶעֱיֵל לִי וְאֶכְלִית מִכָּלָא עַד לֹא תִיעוֹל וּבִרְכָתָהּ אִף בְּרִיךְ יְהִי: 34 כֹּד שְׁמַע עֲשׂוּ יֵת פִּתְגָמִי אָבוּהִי וְצוּחַ צוּחָא רַבָּא וּמְרִירָא עַד לַחֲדָא וַאֲמַר לְאָבוּהִי בְּרַכְנִי אִף אָנָּה אָבָא: 35 וַאֲמַר עַל אַחוּךְ בְּחוּכְמָא וְקַבֵּל בְּרַכְתְּךָ: 36 וַאֲמַר יְאֻת קְרָא שְׁמָה יַעֲקֹב וְחִכְמִנִי דְנֵן תְּרִמִּין וּמִנִּין יֵת בְּכִירוּתִי נְסִיב וְהָא כַּעַן קַבֵּל בְּרַכְתִּי וַאֲמַר הֲלֹא שְׂבָקְתָּ לִי בְּרַכָּא: 37 וְאֶתִּיב יִצְחָק וַאֲמַר לַעֲשׂוּ הָא רַב שׁוֹיְתָה עֲלוֹךְ וְיֵת כָּל אַחוּהִי יִהְיִית לֵה לַעֲבָדִין וּבְעַבּוֹר וּבְחִמּוֹר סְעִידָתָהּ וְלֵךְ כַּעַן מָה אַעֲבִיד בְּרִי: 38 וַאֲמַר עֲשׂוּ לְאָבוּהִי הַבְּרַכָּתָא חֲדָא הִיא לֵךְ אָבָא בְּרַכְנִי אִף אָנָּה אָבָא וְאָרִים עֲשׂוּ קִלְה וּבִכָּא: 39 וְאֶתִּיב יִצְחָק אָבוּהִי וַאֲמַר לֵה הָא מְטוּבָא דְאַרְעָא יְהִי מוֹתְבָךְ וּמְטָלָא דְשִׁמְיָא מְלַעֲלָא:

32 וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ יִצְחָק אָבִיו מִי־אַתָּה וַיֹּאמֶר אָנִי בְנֶךָ בְּכֹרְךָ עֲשׂוּ: 33 וַיַּחֲרֹד יִצְחָק חֲרָדָה גְּדֹלָה עַד־מָאֹד וַיֹּאמֶר מִי־אֲפֹא הוּא הַצִּיד־צִיד וַיָּבֵא לִי וְאָכַל מִכָּל בְּטָרִם תְּבוּא וַאֲבִרְכֵהוּ גַם־בְּרוּךְ יִהְיֶה: 34 כִּשְׁמַע עֲשׂוּ אֶת־דְּבָרֵי אָבִיו וַיַּעֲקֵק צַעֲקָה גְּדֹלָה וּמָרָה עַד־מָאֹד וַיֹּאמֶר לְאָבִיו בְּרַכְנִי גַם־אֲנִי אָבִי: 35 וַיֹּאמֶר בָּא אַחִיד בְּמִרְמָה וַיִּקַּח בְּרַכְתְּךָ: 36 וַיֹּאמֶר הֲכִי קָרָא שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב וַיַּעֲקֹבֵנִי זֶה פְּעָמִים אֶת־בְּכֹרְתִי לָקַח וְהִנֵּה עֲתָה לָקַח בְּרַכְתִּי וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלֹא־אַצְלַתְּ לִי בְּרַכָּה: 37 וַיַּעַן יִצְחָק וַיֹּאמֶר לַעֲשׂוּ הֵן גְּבִיר שְׁמָתִיו לֵךְ וְאֶת־כָּל־אָחָיו נָתַתִּי לוֹ לַעֲבָדִים וְדָגֵן וְתִירֵשׁ סִמְכָתִּיו וְלָכָה אֲפֹא מָה אֶעֱשֶׂה בְּנִי: 38 וַיֹּאמֶר עֲשׂוּ אֶל־אָבִיו הַבְּרַכָּה אַחַת הוּא־לֵךְ אָבִי בְּרַכְנִי גַם־אֲנִי אָבִי וַיֵּשֶׂא עֲשׂוּ קִלּוֹ וַיִּבֶךְ: 39 וַיַּעַן יִצְחָק אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הִנֵּה מִשְׁמֵנִי הָאָרֶץ יִהְיֶה מוֹשְׁבָךְ וּמִטָּל הַשָּׁמַיִם מַעַל:

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לו: "את בכרתי לקח". אָמַר: בְּכָךְ הֵייתִי מִצַּר וְחָרָד, שְׁמָא עֲבָרְתִי עַל שׁוֹרֵת הַדִּין, עֲכָשׁוּ לְבָכוֹר בְּרַכְתִּי — "גַּם בְּרוּךְ יִהְיֶה": וַיַּעֲקֹבֵנִי. כְּתַרְגּוּמוֹ: "וּכְמִנִּי" — אָרְבָּנִי. "וְאָרַב",⁴⁷ "וּכְמִין". וַיֵּשׁ מִתְּרַגְּמִין: "וּכְמִנִּי", נִתְחַכֵּם לִי: אֲצִלַּתְּ. לְשׁוֹן הַפְּרָשָׁה, כְּמוֹ:⁴⁸ "וַיֹּאצֵּל": 37 הֵן גְּבִיר. בְּרַכָּה זוֹ שְׁבִיעִית הִיא, וְהוּא עוֹשֶׂה אוֹתָהּ רֵאשׁוֹנָה? אֵלָּא, אָמַר לוֹ: מָה תוֹעֵלַת לֵךְ בְּבִרְכָּה, אִם תִּקְנֶה נְכָסִים — שְׁלֹו הֵם, שֶׁהֵרִי גְבִיר שְׁמָתִיו לֵךְ, וּמָה שִׁקְנָה עָבֵד קָנָה רַבּוֹ: וְלָכָה אֲפֹא מָה אֶעֱשֶׂה. אִיֶּה אִיפּוֹא אֲבָקֶשׁ מָה לַעֲשׂוֹת לֵךְ: 38 הַבְּרַכָּה אַחַת. ה"א זוֹ מִשְׁמָשֶׁת לְשׁוֹן תִּימָה, כְּמוֹ: "הַבְּמִכְנִים"⁴⁹, "הַשְּׁמִנָה הִיא"⁵⁰, "הַכְּמוֹת נִבֵּל"⁵¹: 39 מִשְׁמֵנִי הָאָרֶץ וְגו'. זוֹ אִיטְלִיא־הָ שֶׁל יוֹן:

33 וַיַּחֲרֹד. כְּתַרְגּוּמוֹ: "וְתוֹהָ" לְשׁוֹן תִּימָה. וּמִדְרָשׁוֹ: רָאָה גִיְהִנָּם פְּתוּחָה מִתְחַתִּיו: מִי אֲפֹא. לְשׁוֹן לַעֲצָמוֹ, מִשְׁמָשׁ עִם כְּמָה דְּבָרִים. "אִיפֹה" "אִיֶּה פֹה", מִי הוּא וְאִיפֹה הוּא הַצִּיד צִיד: וְאָכַל מִכָּל. מִכָּל טַעֲמִים שְׂבָקְשָׁתִי לְטַעַם טַעֲמִיתִי בּוֹ: גַּם בְּרוּךְ יִהְיֶה. שְׁלֹא תֹאמַר: אֵלּוּלִי שְׂרָמָה יַעֲקֹב לְאָבִיו לֹא נָטַל אֶת הַבְּרַכּוֹת, לָכֵךְ הִסְכִּים וּבִרְכוּ מִדַּעְתּוֹ: 35 בְּמִרְמָה. בְּחִכְמָה: 36 הֲכִי קָרָא שְׁמוֹ. לְשׁוֹן תִּימָה הוּא, כְּמוֹ:⁴⁵ "הֲכִי אָחִי אַתָּה". שְׁמָא לָכֵךְ נִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב, עַל שֵׁם סוּפּוֹ שְׁהוּא עֲתִיד לַעֲקֹבֵנִי. תְּנַחוּמָא:⁴⁴ לָמָּה חָרַד יִצְחָק? אָמַר: שְׁמָא עוֹן יֵשׁ בִּי, שֶׁבְּרַכְתִּי קָטָן לִפְנֵי גְּדוֹל וְשִׁנְיִתִּי סֹדֵר הִיחַס. הִתְחִיל עֲשׂוּ מִצַּעֲקָה: "וַיַּעֲקֹבֵנִי זֶה פְּעָמִים". אָמַר לוֹ אָבִיו: מָה עֲשֶׂה לֵךְ? אָמַר

44. תנחומא ישן זאת הברכה א. 45. בראשית כט, טו. 46. תנחומא ישן סימן כג. 47. דברים יט, יא. 48. במדבר יא, כה. 49. במדבר יג, יט. 50. שם, כ. 51. שמואל-ב ג, לג.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

35 **Your brother came with guile:** The blessings Isaac bestowed upon Jacob were for material prosperity. The fact that he obtained them with guile is meant to offer us instruction as to how we should engage in our own material pursuits. When eating or conducting business, for example, we may appear to be merely tending to our physical needs, similar to the materialistic Esau. But behind this façade, we should really be thinking

like Jacob: our true intention should be a spiritual one—to eat in order to have the strength to study the Torah and observe the commandments, to earn a livelihood in order to have the financial means with which to fulfill the commandments, and so on. This is the sort of “duplicity” that we are to employ in our interactions with the material world.¹⁷⁷

32 His father Isaac asked him, “Who are you?” and he replied, “I am your first-born son, Esau.”

33 Isaac shuddered in great bewilderment. At that moment, he also had a vision of Purgatory opening up beneath Esau’s feet. From this, he understood that it was indeed Esau in front of him. He therefore asked, “Then who was it—and where is he—who trapped game and brought it to me, and I partook of it all before your arrival, and I blessed him? I miraculously tasted in the food he served me every single flavor that I desired to find in it. Therefore, although he received my blessings by tricking me, I understand now that he really was the one who deserved my blessing, so he will indeed be blessed.” Yet Isaac still feared that he done something terribly wrong by blessing Jacob, since Esau was, after all, his firstborn.

34 When Esau heard his father’s words, he let out an exceedingly great and bitter cry and said to his father, “Bless me, too, my father!”

35 He replied, “Your brother came with guile and took your blessing.”

36 Esau said, “Is that why he was named Jacob [Yaakov, from the verb *akov*—“ensnare”], foretelling that he would someday ensnare me twice?!” Hearing this, Isaac asked, “What did he do to you the *first* time?” Esau replied, “He took away my birthright, and now look, he has also taken my blessing!” “If so,” Isaac said, “I have committed no wrong, for I have indeed blessed my firstborn!” Esau then asked Isaac, “Have you not reserved a blessing for me?”

37 Isaac answered, saying to Esau, “What good will a blessing do you now? I have made him master over you, and have given him all his brothers as servants, so whatever belongs to you—even your children!¹⁷²—will now automatically be his! And I have sustained him with grain and wine, so what, then, is there left that I can do for you, my son?”

38 Esau said to his father, “Do you have only one blessing, my father? Father, bless me too!” And Esau wept aloud.

39 His father Isaac then replied and said to him, “Very well, I shall bless you as you request. But when I blessed Jacob, I stipulated that my blessings would take effect only if he deserved them, for I sensed that he would accept God’s justice unquestioningly. You and your descendants, however, will not be so accepting of God’s will; I fear you will rebel against God if He does not grant you what you think you deserve. Therefore, whether you deserve it or not,¹⁷³ I hereby bless you that your dwelling will be blessed with the fat of the land and with the dew of the heavens above. Even though your land will belong to your brother and you will serve him, you will live in comfort. The future homeland of your mightiest descendants will be the fertile Italian peninsula.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

“Let my father arise,” as opposed to his brother Jacob’s courteous mode of address, “Please arise.”¹⁷⁴ Similarly, he makes coarse reference to his father’s death, saying, “The days of mourning for my father will soon be here.”¹⁷⁵

We learn from Esau’s behavior that it does not suffice to merely do what is right; we must do what is right in a refined way. Our speech should not only be meaningful and free of any prohibited types of talk (falsehood, gossip, etc.); it should also be refined, as Jacob’s was.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 233. ¹⁷³ Rashi on v. 28, above. ¹⁷⁴ Above, verse 19; Rashi on verse 22, above. ¹⁷⁵ Below, verse 41. ¹⁷⁶ *Sefer HaMa’amarim* 5697, p. 232. ¹⁷⁷ *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 3, p. 796.

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40 ועל חרבך תחיה ואת אחיך תעבד והיה כאשר תריד ופרקת עלו מעל צוארך: 41 וישטם עשו את יעקב על הברכה אשר ברכו אביו ויאמר עשו בלבו יקרבנו ימי אבל אבי ואהרנה את יעקב אחי: 42 ויגד לרבקה את דברי עשו בנה ותקרא ליעקב בנה הקטן ותאמר אליו הנה עשו אחיך מתנחם לך להרנה: 43 ועתה בני שמע בקלי וקום ברחלך אל לבן אחי חרנה: 44 וישבת עמו ימים אחדים עד אשר תשוב חמת אחיך: 45 עד שוב אף אחיך ממך ושכח את אשר עשית לו ושלחתי ולקחתי משם למה אשכל גם שניכם יום אחד: 46 ותאמר רבקה אלי יצחק קצתי בחיי מפני בנות חת אם ללקח יעקב אישה מבנות חת כאלה מבנות הארץ למה לי חיים: 28:1 ויקרא יצחק אלי יעקב ויברך אותו ויצוהו ויאמר לו לא תקח אישה מבנות כנען: 2 קום לך פדנה ארם ביתה בתואל אבי אמך וקח לך משם אישה מבנות לבן אחי אמך: 3 ואל שדי יברך אתך ויפרך וירבך והיית לקהל עמים: לכנשת שבטין:

RASHI

הברכות בהריגתך: 44 **אחרים**. מועטים: 45 **למה אשכל**. אהיה שכולה משניכם, הקובר את בניו נקרא "שכול", וכן ביעקב אמר: 46 **קצתי בחיי**. אם יקום עליך ואתה תהרגנו, יעמדו בניו ויהרגו. ורוח הקדש נקרא בה, ונתנבאה שביום אחד ימותו, כמו שמפרש בפרק "המקנא לאשתו": 46 **קצתי בחיי**. מאסתי בחיי: 2 **פדנה**. כמו "לפדן": **ביתה בתואל**. "לבית בתואל". כל תבה שצריכה למיד בתחלתה — הטיל לה ה"א בסופה: 3 **ואל שדי**. מי שדי בברכותיו למתברכין מפיו, "ברך אותך":

40 ועל חרבך תחיה ואת אחיך תעבד והיה כאשר תריד ופרקת עלו מעל צוארך: 41 וישטם עשו את יעקב על הברכה אשר ברכו אביו ויאמר עשו בלבו יקרבנו ימי אבל אבי ואהרנה את יעקב אחי: 42 ויגד לרבקה את דברי עשו בנה ותקרא ליעקב בנה הקטן ותאמר אליו הנה עשו אחיך מתנחם לך להרנה: 43 ועתה בני שמע בקלי וקום ברחלך אל לבן אחי חרנה: 44 וישבת עמו ימים אחדים עד אשר תשוב חמת אחיך: 45 עד שוב אף אחיך ממך ושכח את אשר עשית לו ושלחתי ולקחתי משם למה אשכל גם שניכם יום אחד: 46 ותאמר רבקה אלי יצחק קצתי בחיי מפני בנות חת אם ללקח יעקב אישה מבנות חת כאלה מבנות הארץ למה לי חיים: 28:1 ויקרא יצחק אלי יעקב ויברך אותו ויצוהו ויאמר לו לא תקח אישה מבנות כנען: 2 קום לך פדנה ארם ביתה בתואל אבי אמך וקח לך משם אישה מבנות לבן אחי אמך: 3 ואל שדי יברך אתך ויפרך וירבך והיית לקהל עמים:

40 ועל חרבך. כמו "בחרבך". יש "על" שהוא במקום אות ב"ת, כמו: "עמדתם על חרבכם" ⁵², בחרבכם, "על צבאתם" ⁵³, בצבאתם: והיה כאשר תריד. לשון צער, כמו: "אריד בשיחי". בלומר, כשיעברו ישראל את התורה, ויהיה לה פתחון פה להצטער על הברכות שנטל, "ופרקת עלו וגו'": 41 **יקרבנו ימי אבל אבי**. במשמעו, שלא אצער את אבא. ומדרש אגדה לכמה פנים יש: 42 **ויגד לרבקה**. ברוח הקדש הגד לה, מה שעשו מהרהר בלבו: **מתנחם** לה. נחם על האהבה לחשוב מחשבה אחרת להתנבך לה ולהרגה. ומדרש אגדה ⁵⁵: כבר אתה מת בעיניו, ושתה עליך כוס של תנחומים. ולפי פשוטו, לשון תנחומים, מתנחם הוא על

52. יחזקאל לג, כו. 53. שמות ו, כו. 54. תהלים נה, ג. 55. בראשית רבה טז, ט. 56. בראשית מג, יד. 57. סוטה יג, א.

40 You shall live by your sword, and you shall serve your brother. But when you see Jacob or his descendants sinning, and are therefore rightly aggrieved that they were the primary recipients of the blessings, you will be permitted to throw his yoke off your neck and temporarily be freed of his lordship, even though you remain his servant in essence.”¹⁷⁸

41 Esau harbored hatred toward his brother Jacob because of the inferior blessing with which his father had blessed him, and wanted to seek revenge from him. But he did not want to upset his father, **so Esau said to himself, “The days of mourning for my father will soon be here; I will wait until after his death and then kill my brother Jacob.”**

Isaac Sends Jacob to Padan Aram

42 Rebecca was told through Divine inspiration what her older son Esau had said to himself. She sent word and summoned her younger son Jacob, and said, “Your brother Esau is consoling himself over the appropriation of the blessings he feels were rightfully meant to be conferred on him by planning to kill you. He regrets being your brother; in his eyes, you are already dead and it is as if he is now **being consoled** by others over your death.

43 So now, my son, listen to my voice: arise and flee to my brother Laban in Charan.

44 Remain with him a while, up to seven years,¹⁷⁹ **until your brother’s anger has subsided,**

45 until your brother’s rage against you has abated and he has forgotten what you did to him. I will then send word and bring you from there. Do not make the grave error of lingering around to try to defend yourself against his attack, for if you kill him, his children will then seek to avenge their father’s death and kill you in turn. **Why should I be bereaved of both of you in one day?”** Rebecca unwittingly prophesied here that Jacob and Esau would die around the same time and both be buried on the same day.¹⁸⁰

46 Rebecca then said to Isaac, “I am disgusted with my life because of the Hittite women. If Jacob marries a Hittite girl like these that Esau married, one of the local girls, why should I go on living?”

28:1 So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him as follows.¹⁸¹ **He instructed him, saying to him, “Do not take a wife from among the Canaanite women.**

2 Arise and set out for Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel, your mother’s father, and take yourself a wife from there, from among the daughters of Laban, your mother’s brother.

3 And may God Almighty, who is the infinite source of blessing, bless you and make you fruitful and numerous, so that your descendants become a community of peoples.

¹⁷⁸ *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, p. 295, note 18. ¹⁷⁹ Rashi on 29:18, below. ¹⁸⁰ Below, 50:13. ¹⁸¹ *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 20, p. 119, note 30.

— ONKELOS —

4 וַיִּתֵּן לָהּ יֵת בְּרִכְתָּא דְּאַבְרָהָם
לָהּ וּלְבָנֶיהָ עִמָּךְ לְמִירְתָּךְ יֵת אָרֶע
תּוֹתִיבִיתְךָ דִּי יִהְיֶה יֵי לְאַבְרָהָם:
5 וַיִּשְׁלַח יִצְחָק יֵת יַעֲקֹב וְאֵזֶל לְפָדֹן
אָרֶם לֹות לָבֵן בֶּר בְּתוּאֵל אֲרַמָּא
אֲחוּהָא דְרִבְקָה אִמָּה דִּיעֲקֹב
וַעֲשׂוֹ: 6 וְחֹזָא עֲשׂוֹ אַרִי בְרִיךְ יִצְחָק
יֵת יַעֲקֹב וְשִׁלַּח יֵתָה לְפָדֹן אָרֶם
לְמַסֵּב לָהּ מִתַּמָּן אֲתַתָּא כַּד בְּרִיךְ
יֵתָה וּפְקִיד עֲלוּהִי לְמִימֵר לֹא תִסָּב
אֲתַתָּא מִבְּנֵת בְּנֵעֵן: 7 וְקָבֵל יַעֲקֹב
מִן אֲבוּהִי וּמִן אִמָּה וְאֵזֶל לְפָדֹן
אָרֶם: 8 וְחֹזָא עֲשׂוֹ אַרִי בִישָׁן בְּנֵת
בְּנֵעֵן בְּעֵינֵי יִצְחָק אֲבוּהִי: 9 וְאֵזֶל
עֲשׂוֹ לֹות יִשְׁמַעֲאֵל וְנָסִיב יֵת מַחֲלָת
בֵּת יִשְׁמַעֲאֵל בֶּר אֲבָרָהָם אֲתַתָּה
דְּנָבִיּוֹת עַל נְשׁוּהִי לָהּ לְאַנְתּוּ:

4 וַיִּתֵּן לָהּ אֶת־בְּרִכְתָּא אֲבָרָהָם לָהּ וּלְבָנֶיהָ אֲתַתָּה לְרִשְׁתָּךְ
אֶת־אָרֶץ מִגְרִיד אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן אֱלֹהִים לְאַבְרָהָם:

שביעי 5 וַיִּשְׁלַח יִצְחָק אֶת־יַעֲקֹב וַיֵּלֶךְ פָּדְנָה אָרֶם אֶל־
לָבֵן בֶּן־בְּתוּאֵל הָאֲרָמִי אֲחֵי רִבְקָה אִם יַעֲקֹב וַעֲשׂוֹ:
6 וַיֵּרָא עֲשׂוֹ בֶן־בְּרַךְ יִצְחָק אֶת־יַעֲקֹב וַיִּשְׁלַח אֹתוֹ פָּדְנָה
אָרֶם לְקַחַת־לוֹ מִשָּׁם אִשָּׁה בְּבָרְכוֹ אֹתוֹ וַיֵּצֵא עָלָיו לְאֹמֶר
לֹא־תִקַּח אִשָּׁה מִבְּנֹת בְּנֵעֵן:

מפטיר 7 וַיִּשְׁמַע יַעֲקֹב אֶל־אָבִיו וְאֶל־אִמּוֹ וַיֵּלֶךְ פָּדְנָה
אָרֶם: 8 וַיֵּרָא עֲשׂוֹ בִן רַעוּת בְּנֹת בְּנֵעֵן בְּעֵינֵי יִצְחָק
אָבִיו: 9 וַיֵּלֶךְ עֲשׂוֹ אֶל־יִשְׁמַעֲאֵל וַיִּקַּח אֶת־מַחֲלָת
בֵּת־יִשְׁמַעֲאֵל בֶּן־אֲבָרָהָם אֲחוֹת נְבִיּוֹת עַל־נְשָׁיו לֹו
לְאִשָּׁה: ס ס ס

ק"ו פסוקים. על"ו סימן.

— RASHI —

שבע של שובע ושתים של רעב, ויעקב אמר לפרעה:
"ימי שני מגורי שלשים ומאת שנה". צא וחשוב, ארבע
עשרה שנה שלפני לידת יוסף ושלשים של יוסף ותשע
משמולך עד שבא יעקב, הרי חמשים ושלש, וכשפרש
מאביו היה בן ששים ושלש, הרי מאה ויש עשרה,
והוא אומר: "שלשים ומאת שנה", הרי חסרים ארבע
עשרה שנים. הא למדת, שאחר שקבל הברכות נטמן
בבית עבר ארבע עשרה שנים. אבל לא נענש עליהם,
בזכות התורה, שהרי לא פרש יוסף מאביו אלא עשרים
ושתים שנה, דהיינו משבע עשרה עד שלשים ותשע
בנגד עשרים ושתים שפרש יעקב מאביו ולא כבדו,
והם עשרים שנים בבית לבן ושתים שנים ששהה בדרך,
בדכתיב⁶⁴: "ויבן לו בית ולמקנהו עשה סכת", ופרשו
רבותינו וזרונים לברכה⁶⁵ מזה הפסוק, ששהה שמונה
עשר חדשים בדרך, דבית היה בימות הגשמים וסבות
היה בימות החמה. ולחשבון הפסוקים שחשבונו לעיל,
משפרש מאביו עד שירד למצרים, שהיה בן מאה
ושלשים שנים, ששם אנו מוצאים עוד ארבע עשרה
שנים, אלא, ודאי נטמן בבית עבר בהליכתו לבית
לבן ללמד תורה ממנו, ובשביל זכות התורה לא נענש
עליהם, ולא פרש יוסף ממנו אלא עשרים ושתים שנה,
מדה בנגד מדה: על נשיו. הוסיף רשעה על רשעתו,

שלא גרש את הראשונות:

חסלת פרשת תולדות

4 את ברכת אברהם. שאמר לו: "ואעשה לגוי גדול"⁶⁶,
והתברכו בורעך⁶⁷. והיו אותן ברכות האמורות
בשבילך, ממך יצא אותו הגוי ואותו הורע המברך:
5 אם יעקב ועשו. איני יודע מה מלמדנו: 7 וישמע
יעקב. מחבר לענין של מעלה: וירא עשו כי ברך יצחק
וגו' וכי שלח אותו פדנה ארם, וכי שמע יעקב אל אביו
והלך פדנה ארם, וכי רעות בנות בנען — והלך גם הוא
אל ישמעאל: 9 אחות נביות. ממשמע שגאמר: "בת
ישמעאל", איני יודע שהיא אחות נביות? אלא, למדנו
שמת ישמעאל משיעדה לעשו, קדם נשואיה, והשיאה
נביות אחיה. ולמדנו שהיה יעקב באותו הפרק בן ששים
ושלש שנים, שהרי ישמעאל בן שבעים וארבע שנים
היה כשנולד יעקב, שארבע עשרה שנה היה גדול
ישמעאל מיצחק, ויצחק בן ששים שנה בלדת אותם,
הרי שבעים וארבע, ושנותיו היו מאה שלשים ושבוע,
שגאמר⁶⁸: "ואלה שני חיי ישמעאל" וגו', נמצא יעקב
כשמת ישמעאל בן ששים ושלש שנים היה. ולמדנו
מכאן, שנטמן בבית עבר ארבע עשרה שנה, ואחר
כך הלך לחרון, שהרי לא שהה בבית לבן לפני לידתו
של יוסף, אלא ארבע עשרה שנה, שגאמר⁶⁹: "עבדתיך
ארבע עשרה שנה בשתי בנותי ויש שנים בצאנך",
ושכר הצאן משנולד יוסף היה, שגאמר⁷⁰: "ויהי פאשר
ילדה רחל את יוסף" וגו', ויוסף בן שלשים שנה היה
כשמולך, ומשם עד שירד למצרים יעקב למצרים תשע שנים,

58. בראשית יב, ב. 59. שם כב, יח. 60. פסוק יז. 61. בראשית לא, מא. 62. בראשית ל, כה. 63. בראשית מז, ט. 64. בראשית לו, יז. 65. מגילה יז, א.

4 You are now setting out on a journey. Traveling generally decreases a person's odds of having children and adversely affects a person's renown.¹⁸² Nevertheless, **may God bestow upon you the same blessing that He gave to my father Abraham** when *he* set out on a journey, i.e., to become a great and famous nation¹⁸³ despite the negative effects of the journey. And may your *children* also gain renown: may people invoke their names when they bless one another as examples to be emulated.¹⁸⁴ Moreover, God's blessing to Abraham included not only fertility and renown; it also included the promise that his descendants will one day proudly refer to themselves collectively by his name. May God fulfill this promise in you. Laden with such blessings, I have no qualms about sending you off to Charan to marry, even though, in my case, my father Abraham preferred for me to remain here and have a wife brought to me from Charan. True, these blessings were not fulfilled in my father Abraham himself, for he only had one successor (myself) and his other son, Ishmael, has been more despised than admired.¹⁸⁵ May God therefore fulfill these blessings **through you, for yourself and for your descendants with you**, rather than through Esau and his descendants. Furthermore, although of course I know that God promised that Ishmael¹⁸⁶ and Esau¹⁸⁷ will also become great nations, this promise has no bearing whatsoever on the blessing He bestowed on my father Abraham.¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, do not think that my purpose in sending you out of Canaan to start your family while Esau remains here is for him to inherit the land. On the contrary: specifically **because** I am passing on Abraham's blessing of fertility to you, it will be *you* who **will take possession of the land in which you have been sojourning, which God gave to Abraham.**"¹⁸⁹

- ◆ *Seventh Reading* 5 Isaac then sent Jacob on his way and he set out for Padan Aram, to the house of Laban, son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebecca, who was the mother of Jacob and Esau. As Abraham had done when he dispatched Eliezer, Isaac, too, sent Jacob laden with gifts for the future bride and her family, along with a document attesting to the fact that he was bequeathing all his wealth to Jacob.¹⁹⁰

Esau Takes Another Wife

6 When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and had sent him to Padan Aram to take himself a wife from there, and that when he blessed him he had commanded him, saying, "Do not take a wife from among the Canaanite girls,"

- ◆ *Maftir* 7 and that Jacob had obeyed his father and mother, and had gone to Padan Aram,

8 Esau understood that the Canaanite girls were evil in the eyes of his father Isaac.

9 So Esau went off immediately, trying to flaunt his alacrity,¹⁹¹ to his uncle Ishmael, and married his cousin Machalat, daughter of Abraham's son Ishmael, in order to show that he was no less deferential to his father's wishes than was his

¹⁸². See above, 12:2. ¹⁸³. Above, 12:2. ¹⁸⁴. Above, 22:18. ¹⁸⁵. Above, 16:12. ¹⁸⁶. Above, 16:10-11, 17:20. ¹⁸⁷. Above, 25:23. ¹⁸⁸. Above, 17:19, 21 (Ishmael), 27:33-35 (Esau). ¹⁸⁹. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 20, pp. 117-123. ¹⁹⁰. Rashi on 29:11, below. ¹⁹¹. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 165, note 13.

brother, Jacob; in fact, he was even *more* deferential to his father's wishes, because Jacob had been explicitly instructed to marry a family girl whereas he did so of his own volition. For two reasons, however, Esau did not follow Jacob to Padan Aram to marry one of his cousins from the royal line of Shem: Firstly, he understood that Jacob had gone there in order to fulfill Isaac's blessings, and he knew very well that he was no longer party to these blessings.¹⁹² And secondly, he sought to outdo Jacob—who went to marry a girl who was merely a member of Abraham's extended family—by marrying a girl who was Abraham's direct descendant.¹⁹³

Shortly after Machalat became engaged to Esau, her father Ishmael died, making her an orphan bride. Therefore, when she married Esau, she did so only as **the sister** of her brother **Nevayot**, who was responsible for handling the wedding in lieu of their late father. She continued to be called "the sister of Nevayot" throughout her life.¹⁹⁴

Machalat's given name was Basmat (not to be confused with Esau's Hittite wife, Basmat daughter of Elon¹⁹⁵). She was nicknamed Machalat ("The Forgiven One") on her wedding day because she repented of all past sins on that day, and God forgives all a person's past sins on their wedding day if they repent properly.¹⁹⁶ She was thus a righteous woman; Esau wanted to use this fact as a ploy to trick his father into believing that he, too, had repented. But he married her **in addition to his other**, Canaanite **wives**—he did not divorce them. It was therefore clear that, just as his first marriages had been acts of duplicity, so, too, was this marriage.¹⁹⁷

Esau also heard that Isaac had promised Jacob that he would inherit the land of Israel, so Esau looked for another place to live and started spending time around Mount Seir.¹⁹⁸ He did not move their permanently until later.¹⁹⁹

The *Haftarah* for *parashat Toldot* may be found on p. 347.



¹⁹². *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 221-225. ¹⁹³. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 165, note 14. ¹⁹⁴. Below, 36:2; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 168. ¹⁹⁵. Above, 26:34. ¹⁹⁶. Rashi on 36:3, below; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 170. ¹⁹⁷. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 35, pp. 113-116. ¹⁹⁸. Below, 32:4. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, p. 111, note 19. ¹⁹⁹. Below, 36:6.



Toldot

הפטרות *Haftarot*



Haftarah for Toldot

Malachi 1:1–2:7

In *parashat Toldot*, the lines begin to be drawn between the opposing cultures derived from the twin brothers Jacob and Esau. In this *haftarah*, God reaffirms his choice for the descendants and inheritors of Jacob, despite the apparent success of Esau's materiality, which served to enervate the Jewish people's enthusiasm for their Divine mission.

1:1 The prophetic burden of the word of God, to be transmitted to Israel through Malachi:

2 “I loved you, says God. If you ask, ‘How have You shown Your love for us?’ this is God’s response: ‘Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? Yet I loved Jacob, giving him the most desirable land on earth; **3** and I hated Esau, banishing him from that land so Jacob could have it. I made his mountains desolation and his heritage a habitat for the jackals of the desert.’

4 If Edom says, ‘We have become destitute, but we will return to the land we have been forced to leave and rebuild our ruins,’ then this is what God of Hosts has said: ‘They may build, but I will demolish, and they will be known as ‘the region of wickedness, the people who angered God forever.’ **5** Your eyes shall behold it, and you will say, ‘God is known as great even beyond the borders of Israel, by making it known that we are His people.’

6 A son is required to honor his father; and a servant, his master. ‘If, then, I am a father to you, where is My honor? And if I am a master to you, where is My awe?’

says God of Hosts to you, the priests who scorn My Name. You say, as I knew you would, ‘How have we scorned Your Name?’ **7** I answer, ‘By offering abominable food on My altar.’ You say, ‘How have we abominated You?’ I answer, ‘By saying, “God’s table is contemptible.”’ You have scorned the law according to which priests working in the Temple may not swap among themselves their portions in the various sacrifices and grain offerings, but rather each priest must receive his portion of every sacrifice and grain offering, no matter how minute.²² Thus, if it happened that each priest only received a few crumbs of a grain offering, you called God’s table contemptible.

8 And when you present a blind animal for sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer up the lame or sick, is that not evil? Just try to present such things to your governor! Will he be pleased with you, or receive you favorably?’ says God of Hosts.

1 מִשָּׁא דְּבִרְיָהוָה אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיַד מַלְאָכָיו
2 אֶהְבֵּתִי אֶתְכֶם אָמַר יְהוָה וְאַמְרָתֶם
בְּמִה אֶהְבֵּתֵנוּ הֲלוֹא־אֵת עֲשׂו לַעֲקֹב נָאִם־
יְהוָה וְאֶהֱבֵ אֶת־עֲקֹב: 3 וְאֶת־עֲשׂו שְׂנֵאתִי
וְאֲשִׁים אֶת־הָרָיו שְׂמֵמָה וְאֶת־נַחֲלָתוֹ לְתַנּוֹת
מִדְּבַר: 4 כִּי־תֹאמַר אָדָם רֵשִׁישֵׁנוּ וְנָשׁוּב
וְנִבְנֶה חֲרֻבֹת כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת הַמָּה
יִבְנוּ וְאֲנִי אֶהְרֹם וְקִרְאוּ לָהֶם גְּבוּל רִשְׁעָה
וְהָעָם אֲשֶׁר־זָעַם יְהוָה עַד־עוֹלָם: 5 וְעֵינֵיכֶם
תִּרְאִינָה וְאַתֶּם תֹּאמְרוּ יִגְדַל יְהוָה מֵעַל לְגְבוּל
יִשְׂרָאֵל: 6 בֶּן יִכְבַּד אָב וְעֶבֶד אֲדֹנָיו וְאִם־אֵב
אֲנִי אֵינִי כְבוֹדִי וְאִם־אֲדֹנִים אֲנִי אֵינִי מוֹרְאִי
אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת לָכֶם הַבְּהֵמִים בּוֹזֵי שְׁמִי
וְאַמְרָתֶם בְּמִה בּוֹזֵנוּ אֶת־שְׁמִי: 7 מִגִּישִׁים
עַל־מִזְבְּחִי לֶחֶם מִנְאֵל וְאַמְרָתֶם בְּמִה
גִּאֲלֻנָּד בְּאַמְרָתְכֶם שְׁלַחַן יְהוָה נִבְנָה הוּא:
8 וְכִי־תִגְשׁוּ עוֹר לְזִבְחָה אֵין רָע וְכִי תִגִּישׁוּ
פֶסֶח וְחֹלָה אֵין רָע הַקְרִיבֵהוּ נָא לְפָנֶיךָ
הִרְצֵךְ אוֹ הִשָּׂא פָנֶיךָ אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:

22. *Menachot* 73a.

9 'Yet now, you priests, the people ask of you, "Please implore the favor of God, that He be gracious to us!" But this evil is your own doing, so will He receive the prayers you offer favorably?' says God of Hosts.

10 'If only there were one among you who would close the Temple doors, so that you might not kindle fire on My altar in vain and offer up such abominable sacrifices. Moreover, you expected Me to reward you for even the slightest task in the Temple, so I have no pleasure in you,' says God of Hosts, 'and I will not accept a gift-offering from your hand. 11 For from where the sun rises until where it sets, My Name is great among the nations. Even idolaters know that I am the supreme God. Everywhere, burnt offerings are presented by the gentiles to My Name, as well as pure grain-offerings, for My Name is great among the nations,' says God of Hosts. 'Furthermore, wherever there are Torah scholars who study the laws of the sacrifices, and wherever there are Jews who do My will and pray sincerely, I consider it as if they had offered up pure grain-offerings to Me. 12 But you priests profane My Name and My altar by saying, "God's table is abominable," and by remarking, "Its food is contemptible."

13 You people of Israel say, "Here is a feeble animal"; you offer up emaciated animals, saying that this is the best you can afford. You thereby aggrieve My altar,' says God of Hosts. 'You bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick, and present them as a gift offering. Will I accept it from your hand?' says God. 14 'Cursed be the deceiver who has a robust ram in his flock, yet vows and sacrifices something blemished to God, saying he has none better than this; for I am a great King,' says God of Hosts, 'and My Name is feared among the nations.

2:1 And now, O priests, this commandment is for you: Do not offer up such animals on My altar!

2 If you will not listen, and will not take it to heart, to give glory to My Name,' says God of Hosts, 'then I will send a curse among you, and I will curse your blessings, i.e., your grain, wine, and oil. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you do not take it to heart and I know you will not obey this command. 3 I am going to rebuke your seed in the field and strew dung on your faces—the dung of your festival sacrifices—and it will make you resemble it.

9 ועתה חלונא פניאל ויחננו מידכם היתה זאת הישא מכם פנים אמר יהוה צבאות: 10 מי גם-בכם ויסגר דלתים ולא-תאירו מזבחי חנם איני-לי חפץ בכם אמר יהוה צבאות ומנחה לא-אצעה מידכם: 11 כי ממזרח-שמש ועד-מבואו גדול שמי בגוים ובכל-מקום מקמר מגש לשמי ומנחה טהורה כגדול שמי בגוים אמר יהוה צבאות: 12 ואתם מחללים אותי באמרכם שלחן אדני מגאל הוא וניבו נבזה אכלו: 13 ואמרתם הנה מתלאה והפחתם אותו אמר יהוה צבאות והבאתם גזול ואת-הפסח ואת-החולה והבאתם את-המנחה הארצה אותה מידכם אמר יהוה: 14 וארור נוכל ויש בעדרו זכר וגדר ויבית משחת לאדני כי מלך גדול אני אמר יהוה צבאות ושמי נורא בגוים: 2:1 ועתה אליכם המצוה הזאת הכהנים: 2 אם-לא תשמעו ואם-לא תשימו על-לב לתת כבוד לשמי אמר יהוה צבאות ושלחתי בכם את-המארה וארותי את-ברכותיכם וגם ארותיה כי אינכם שמים על-לב: 3 הנני גער לכם את-הזרע ווריתי פרש על-פניכם פרש חניכם ונשא אתכם אליו:

4 Then you will finally know that I have sent you this commandment, so that you repent and My covenant with the priests of the tribe of Levi may endure,' says God of Hosts. 5 'My covenant with the priests was for life and peace;²³ I granted them to them, to be accepted in awe. And, indeed, the priests of old stood in awe of Me, and stood in dread of My Name. 6 The teaching of truth was in the priest's mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and turned many away from transgression. 7 For the lips of the priest must guard knowledge because men will seek instruction from his mouth, since he is the emissary of God of Hosts.' "

4 וידעתם בי שלחתי אליכם את המצוה הזאת להיות בריתי את־לוי אִמַּר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת: 5 בְּרִיתִי | הִיְתָה אִתּוֹ חַיִּים וְהַשְׁלָם וְאַתְּנֶם־לּוֹ מוֹרָא וַיִּירָאֵנִי וּמִפְּנֵי שְׁמִי נָחַת הוּא: 6 תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת הִיְתָה בְּפִיהוּ וְעוֹלָה לֹא־נִמְצָא בְּשִׁפְתָיו בְּשָׁלוֹם וּבְמִישׁוֹר הָלַךְ אִתִּי וּרְבִים הָשִׁיב מֵעוֹן: 7 כִּי־שִׁפְתָי כַּהֵן יִשְׁמְרוּ־דֵעַת וְתוֹרָה יִבְקֹשׁוּ מִפִּיהוּ כִּי מִלֶּאֱד יְהוָה־צְבָאוֹת הוּא:



23. Numbers 25:12.

Dedicated in honor of our children

**Nathan, Yitzchok,
Moshe Lev,
and Gilana**

*May you continue to grow in the ways
of our holy Torah*

Yuri and Deana Pikover

