

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

LIVING UNDER SIEGE

“When the boys grew up...” (25:27)

In exclusive restaurants where the cost of a meal could be double the average monthly salary, they thoughtfully omit the prices from the menu to avoid spoiling your appetite.

While it's common knowledge that there's no such thing as a free lunch, the price of that lunch may be far more than you bargained for.

Israel is a war zone with two fronts: Not only are we constantly threatened and attacked by our cousins, the children of Yishmael, a billion of whom surround us, but also right in our own backyard we are often vilified by a secular culture inimical to Torah values. Calvin Klein does not like Rabbi Klein.

This latter challenge has created a “siege mentality” in the Israeli Orthodox mind. For example, in England to play or be interested in soccer is no harbinger of incipient atheism. Here in Israel, however, a child who is more interested in kicking a ball around a field than learning Rishonim runs the risk of being marginalized, and consequently associating with the least salubrious elements of Israeli society.

Soccer in Israel is not a game or a sport. It's akin to “*avoda zara*” — idol worship.

Abroad, the lines that distinguish acceptable from non-acceptable Torah-observant behavior are much grayer. Here in our Holy Land the divisions are as sharp as black and white.

Not all children are cut out to sit over a Gemara for 10 hours a day.

Those who are forced to do so against their nature and against their will either go through the motions, bored out of their minds, spending more time engrossed in the coffee machine than in Tosefos, or ironically, if they are more honest, they will buck the whole system and end up “on the streets”.

Everyone will agree that in an ideal world it's better for a

young boy to learn for three hours and then go and kick a piece of leather around a field than to find himself on skid row with junkies and other evils.

The priceless advice of our Sages: “*Educate a child according to his way*” is but one casualty of living “under siege”.

Our Sages never shrunk from pointing out both small and major mistakes of our Forefathers, for we can learn as much from their mistakes as from their virtues.

They point out that the striking differences between Avraham's grandchildren may come more from mistakes in their upbringing than in their innate temperaments. When Esav and Yaakov were little, it seems that no attention was paid to the slumbering — and vast — differences between them. Both had exactly the same education.

To send Esav to the same Yeshiva as Yaakov was courting disaster. Given a studious, sedate and meditative life, a Yaakov will imbibe knowledge with ever-increasing zeal and zest, while an Esav will count the hours and minutes until he can throw out the old books, and with it an entire purpose for life — since he sees nowhere that he can integrate this one view of the world into his nature.

There is nowhere in the world that one can bring up children with such love and attachment to Torah, and with such separation from the lures of the world, than in the black-and-white world of Eretz Yisrael. For some of our children, however, that purity comes at a steep price.

And please don't think that I'm suggesting that things could or should be otherwise. I'm just saying that if we don't want to end up with a tab that would put an exclusive French restaurant to shame, we must find a way for those embryonic Esavs to find their niche too amongst the Twelve Tribes of Yaakov.

• Sources: Based on Rabbi Shimshon Rafael Hirsch

PARSHA OVERVIEW

After 20 years of marriage, Yitzchak's prayers are answered and Rivka conceives twins. The pregnancy is extremely painful. G-d reveals to Rivka that the suffering is a microcosmic prelude to the worldwide conflict that will rage between the two great nations descended from these twins, Rome and Israel. Esav is born, and then Yaakov, holding onto Esav's heel. They grow and Esav becomes a hunter, a man of the physical world, whereas Yaakov sits in the tents of Torah developing his soul. On the day of their grandfather Avraham's funeral, Yaakov is cooking lentils, the traditional mourner's meal. Esav rushes in, ravenous from a hard day's hunting, and sells his birthright (and its concomitant spiritual responsibilities) for a bowl of lentils, demonstrating his unworthiness for the position of first-born. A famine strikes Canaan and Yitzchak thinks of escaping to Egypt, but G-d tells him that because he was bound as a sacrifice, he has become holy and must remain in

the Holy Land. He relocates to Gerar in the land of the Philistines, where, to protect Rivka, he has to say she is his sister. The Philistines grow jealous of Yitzchak when he becomes immensely wealthy, and Avimelech the king asks him to leave. Yitzchak re-digs three wells dug by his father, prophetically alluding to the three future Temples. Avimelech, seeing that Yitzchak is blessed by G-d, makes a treaty with him. When Yitzchak senses his end approaching, he summons Esav to give him his blessings. Rivka, acting on a prophetic command that the blessings must go to Yaakov, arranges for Yaakov to impersonate Esav and receive the blessings. When Esav in frustration reveals to his father that Yaakov has bought the birthright, Yitzchak realizes that the birthright has been bestowed correctly on Yaakov and confirms the blessings he has given Yaakov. Esav vows to kill Yaakov, so Rivka sends Yaakov to her brother Lavan where he may find a suitable wife.

ISRAEL Forever

STICKING IT OUT

When the Patriarch Yitzchak was faced by a famine he planned to seek relief by going to Egypt. But before he left Eretz Yisrael he was commanded by G-d to remain in the Land.

The reason given was that he had become sanctified by being prepared to be a sacrifice and was therefore too holy to be anywhere outside the Holy Land.

Although this applied to Yitzchak alone it perhaps can be

seen as a hint to the challenges that his descendants would have to face throughout history. Jews in Eretz Yisrael have faced not only famine but plagues, wars and terror. If Yitzchak was commanded to stick it out because anywhere outside of Eretz Yisrael was not worthy of his presence, perhaps this applies in some degree to every Jew in every generation as a message to stick it out and remain in Israel forever.

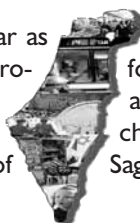
LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

TSEFAT- TOMB OF THE "WHITE TZADDIK"

Jews in Tsefat were faced with a dilemma one year as Yom Kippur approached. The Turkish sultan had prohibited the purchase of white chickens for use as kapparot and they were forced to buy black ones.

Just before Yom Kippur they came to the tomb of



Rabbi Yosef Bena'ah, pouring out their hearts and asking forgiveness before using the black chickens for their ritual. Upon their return home they discovered that those chickens had miraculously turned white. From then on this Sage became known as the "White Tzaddik".

לע"נ

ר' מנחם אריה בן ר' מרדכי ז"ל

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why was it important that Yitzchak look like Avraham?
2. Why does the Torah stress that Rivka was Betuel's daughter and Lavan's sister?
3. What are the two differences between Tamar's pregnancy and Rivka's pregnancy?
4. Why was Esav named Esav?
5. Who gave Yaakov his name?
6. How did Esav deceive his father?
7. Why was Esav faint when he returned from the field?
8. Why are lentils a food for mourners?
9. What was the birthright that Yaakov bought from Esav?
10. Why was Yitzchak not permitted to go to Egypt?
11. Why did the Philistines plug up the wells?
12. Why did Yitzchak lose his sight? (three reasons)
13. At what age should one anticipate his own death?
14. Why did Rivka ask Yaakov to bring two kid goats?
15. Why did Esav leave his special garments with Rivka?
16. What fragrance did Yitzchak detect on Yaakov's garments?
17. What was the "fat of the land" promised to Esav?
18. When will Esav be freed from subjugation to Yaakov?
19. What inspired Esav to marry the daughter of Yishmael?
20. Knowing that Machalat was Yishmael's daughter, it's self-evident that she was the sister of Nevayot. Why, then, does the Torah state that Esav married "Yishmael's daughter, the sister of Nevayot?"

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 25:19 - So everyone would agree that Avraham was indeed his father.
2. 25:20 - To praise her, that even though her family was evil she was righteous.
3. 25:24 - Rivka gave birth at full term to two children, one righteous and one wicked. Tamar gave birth after seven months to two righteous children.
4. 25:25 - He was born fully developed. The name Esav is based on the Hebrew word for "made".
5. 25:26 - G-d.
6. 25:27 - Esav deceived Yitzchak by asking questions that suggested that he was very strict in mitzvah observance.
7. 25:29 - From having murdered.
8. 25:30 - They are round like a wheel and mourning is like a revolving wheel that eventually touches everyone.
9. 25:31 - The right to bring sacrifices.
10. 26:2 - Through the *akeida* he had attained the status of a *korban* and was forbidden to leave Eretz Canaan.
11. 26:15 - They felt that either marauders would attack to capture the wells, or, if attacking for other reasons, they would use the wells as a water supply.
12. 27:1 - a) From the smoke of the incense offered by Esav's wives to their idols; b) From the angel's tears which fell into Yitzchak's eyes at the time of the *akeida*; c) In order for Yaakov to receive the blessings.
13. 27:2 - When he reaches five years from the age his parents were when they passed away, until five years after.
14. 27:9 - One for Yitzchak and the other to offer as a *korban Pesach*.
15. 27:15 - He suspected that his wives might steal them.
16. 27:27 - The scent of *Gan Eden*.
17. 27:36 - Italy.
18. 27:40 - When the Jewish People transgress the Torah.
19. 28:7 - Seeing that his father despised his current wives, he resolved to take a wife from his father's family.
20. 28:9 - To indicate that Yishmael died between her betrothal and her wedding, and that it was Nevayot who gave his sister in marriage to Esav. Knowing the date of Yishmael's death, we can determine the date of Esav's marriage and thus Yaakov's age, 63, at the time of his flight from Esav.

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- The agent for *kiddushin* who marries the woman for himself
- *Kiddushin* made to take effect at a later date
- Can *kiddushin* be revoked by simply changing her mind before it takes effect
- The powers of thought, word and action
- *Kiddushin* made to take effect now and in thirty days
- How it is possible for a woman to be affected by 100 acts of *kiddushin*
- *Kiddushin* on condition of giving large sum of money or divorce on condition of receiving large sum of money
- *Kiddushin* made on condition of owning large sum of money or land
- The requirements for making a condition which limits the effectiveness of *kiddushin* or any transaction

CONDITIONS FOR THE CONDITION

One of the concepts we frequently encounter in this *mesechta* and others is that of *tenai* – a condition made for any transaction to be valid. The practical application mentioned by Rashi is the case of a man who agrees to give his wife a divorce on condition that she gives him a substantial sum of money. If he properly phrases the condition, the divorce will be invalidated if she fails to pay this sum. Failure to properly phrase the condition will allow the divorce to take effect even if the woman does not come up with the money.

What constitutes proper phrasing of a condition?

Rabbi Meir in the *mishna* refers us to the condition made by Moshe with the tribes of Gad and Reuven who asked to

receive their portion of Eretz Yisrael on the eastern side of the Jordan River. He spelled out clearly that if they helped the other tribes conquer the rest of the land their wish would be granted, and that if they failed to do so they would not have that privilege. From this we learn that a condition must spell out both consequences and we cannot rely on a mere inference. Moshe also made sure to spell out the condition before mentioning the gift, and also made a point to mention the positive before the negative.

All of these rules, concludes Rabbi Meir, apply to any condition made between two parties. His position is challenged, however, by Rabbi Chanina ben Gamliel who has a different interpretation of why Moshe phrased his condition as he did and that this does not apply to general conditions.

• *Kiddushin* 61a

What the SAGES Say

"An agent for *kiddushin* who marries the woman for himself succeeds in effecting the marriage between her and himself but is considered as having acted dishonestly."

• *Tosefta* (*Kiddushin* 58b)

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DRINK BEFORE DAVENING

From: Stefan in CA

Dear Rabbi,

I would like to know if there is anything wrong with drinking things like coffee or tea before praying the morning prayers. My question stems from the fact that I seem to recall that it's forbidden to drink anything other than water, but when I look around, I see plenty of people who seem to be basically knowledgeable in Torah who do have a drink before davening. When I ask for the source of this, none seems to be able to explain why it's allowed so it would seem to be prohibited. Is this the case, or am I missing something? Thanks.

Dear Stefan,

Technically speaking, you are right. A person may not eat and drink before the morning prayers. The reason for this is stated in the Talmud and fixed in the Shulchan Aruch that one may not "fill his blood" before praying for his blood, and that one who does so is referred to as arrogantly throwing G-d "behind his back".

The general idea is that the beginning of a new day is a time when we should be aware of and express our thanks to G-d for having rejuvenated our souls and bodies and having given us another day of life and vitality. It is only proper, then, that before eating and drinking we acknowledge the above, as well as recognize and pray for G-d's fulfilling our daily needs. Eating before praying for our lives and sustenance is tantamount to rejecting our need for G-d.

And this is the meaning of our Sages' comment that indulging in food and drink is like arrogantly throwing G-d behind one's back, since such person is taking from G-d's

bounty which He bestowed upon him and using it before its proper time, expressing that he is only interested in what he wants, and not concerned about what G-d wants.

It is for these reasons that the prohibition applies primarily when the eating or drinking is an indulgence. However, water is permitted; and even tea or coffee without sugar or milk is permitted, because this hydrates and warms the body in preparation for prayer.

That being said, the prohibition only applies in normal circumstances when there is no health issue involved, and a person can wait until after the prayers to eat or drink. But if a person is elderly, weak or ill, one is allowed to drink or eat what's necessary to maintain one's health and prevent sickness, and in order to be able to concentrate on the prayers.

It is for this last reason, namely the need to be able to concentrate properly during prayer, that in recent times a certain leniency has evolved concerning drinking tea and coffee with sugar. Since people have generally weaker constitutions and are more pampered than in days of old, sugar is viewed as less of an indulgence and more of a necessity. Also, the argument goes, people are not as interested in the sugar as making the coffee or tea palatable. In addition, many feel that coffee in particular catalyzes the body's need to cleanse itself, which is an important prerequisite for prayer.

So for these reasons, many have become lenient regarding drinking with sugar; and in truth, most extend the allowance to make the tea/coffee palatable to milk as well since they are not drinking the milk for the milk's sake but rather for the coffee, which is permitted, and which they feel helps prepare themselves before prayer and enables them to better concentrate during prayer. Therefore it would be better to drink only water or plain coffee/tea before davening. However, those who add sugar and milk have basis to be lenient.

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Question: In the neighborhood in which I reside there are neighbors with fruit trees whose branches extend into the sidewalk and make passage for pedestrians most uncomfortable. What is the right thing to do if the owners of the trees refuse to trim those branches?

Answer: When this question was put to Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein, rav of the Ramat Elchanan community in Bnei Brak, he compared the situation to that of someone harboring a dangerous animal. The ruling of our Sages is that one

may take the law into his own hands and eliminate the danger. The basic concept of this ruling is that the rabbis have the power to expropriate a danger to the public.

Rabbi Zilberstein even went a step farther. Should the offending branches be that of an etrog tree, he noted, the civic-minded Jew who trims them can use an etrog from the tree for the fulfillment of the mitzvah on Succot. Even though one must own the etrog he uses on the first day of the Festival, the trimmer is considered the owner because of the rabbinical expropriation.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

TEARS OF JOY

Loud weeping pierced the midnight air at the Western Wall. A middle-aged man was crying in a manner that made all those around him wonder what was wrong.

Among those present was Rabbi Elimelech Firer, head of the "Ezra Lemarpei" medical aid organization, who is highly respected for his medical advice. Together with him was a visiting philanthropist, and the two made an interesting pact. First, Rabbi Firer would approach the weeping man and ask if he needed medical assistance. If the reply was in the negative, the philanthropist would approach him with an offer of financial help.

To both offers the response was that he was not in need

of anything because G-d had provided him with all his needs.

When he was finally pressed to reveal why he was crying, he reported that the night before he had married off the last of his 12 children and he had come to the Kotel to express his thanks to G-d, just as he came to the Kotel in earlier years to pray for Heavenly assistance for his children finding suitable marriage partners.

"Should one come to the Kotel only when he needs help and not when he needs to thank G-d", he asked. "And when one comes to thank for so much kindness can he hold himself back from crying?"

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