

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT TOLDOT · 4 KISLEV 5763 · NOV. 9, 2002 · VOL. 10 NO. 6

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### THE RED STUFF

*“Pour into me some of that red, red stuff...” (25:30)*

Neoteny is the retention of immature characteristics into adulthood. It happens in the animal world. If your dog grew up, it would start to act like a wolf and devour your neighbor’s kids. This would not make your neighbor very happy and puppy sales would plummet. So we arrest a dog’s development so that it remains ever juvenile.

The same is true of TV sitcoms. The silly plots and sillier characters in which heartbreaks are resolved within minutes (usually just before the commercials) only make sense if they are seen as pubescent children trapped in adult bodies. So much of social and political life only makes sense if one sees in it the influence of neoteny.

The spiritual Masters tell us that the world we live in now is the world of Esav. It is a superficial world where appearance is all. Yaakov, the Jewish People, stands opposed to everything that is superficial. Our job is to teach the world there is reality beyond what you can see with your eyes. There is a G-d and He is One.

Esav and Yaakov (the Jewish People) share a symbiotic adversarial relationship. They are like two ends of a seesaw in a children’s playground. When one is up, the other

must be down. It can never be that both are up or down at the same time. We learn this from the verse in this week’s Torah portion: *“Two nations are in your womb; two regimes... the might shall pass from one regime to the other, and the elder shall serve the younger.”*

Esav’s superficiality is revealed when he bursts in on Yaakov who is cooking lentils for the funeral meal of his grandfather Avraham and demands “Pour into me some of that red, red stuff!” Why does Esav repeat the fact that the lentil stew is red? Because Esav is overly interested in the surface, in what things look like.

A small boy once came to visit Rav Shach, *zatzal* (the great leader of our generation who left us for the world of Truth almost exactly a year ago). The great sage proceeded to pull out two lollipops. “Which one would you like?” asked Rav Shach, “The red one or the green one?” Rav Shach’s personal secretary turned to him and said “The Rosh Yeshiva will teach him to be Esav!” Rav Shach replied “He’s a young boy, he should be interested in the way things look from the outside. Esav’s problem was that he never grew up. He acted like a *yingel* even when he was supposed to be an adult.”

Esav was the prototypical neotenist.

“...the world we live in now is the world of Esav. It is a superficial world where appearance is all. Yaakov, the Jewish People, stands opposed to everything that is superficial.”

Sources:

• *Talmud (Avoda Zara 11b)*, Rabbi C. Z. Senter

## 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 world-wide conflict that will rage between the two great nations descended from these twins, Rome and Israel. Esav is born, and then Yaakov, holding on to 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 firstborn. A famine strikes Canaan and Yitzchak thinks to escape 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

### A TALE OF THREE WELLS

“Unity” was the message Prime Minister Sharon communicated the other week to thousands of delegates of the Likud Party which he heads. His call was primarily directed to those in his political party, which is divided in its support for him or his rival, former Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu. But it was also a call for the unity amongst all segments of Israelis, a unity so sorely needed in the current crisis.

The three wells dug by servants of the Patriarch Yitzchak described in this week's Torah portion tell a tale of the price we pay for disunity. Our Torah commentaries view them as symbolic of the first two Holy Temples which were destroyed by enemies and the third one which will be built with the arrival of the Mashiach.

The names which Yitzchak gave these wells were based on his own experience in contending with the Philistines over them. But their life-giving water also symbolizes the spiritual life-giving function of the Holy Temple. He called them Eiseq, Sitnah and Rechovot.

Eiseq means strife, and hints to the 410-year era of the First Temple which was characterized by strife between the leaders of the people, as exemplified by the rivalry between the kingdoms of Yisrael and Yehuda. It was this

internal strife which eventually led to strife with neighboring lands and the destruction and exile which followed.

Sitnah means hatred and refers to the 420-year era of the Second Temple which was marred by the tensions between ordinary people. When the Talmudic Sages state that the sin which brought about the destruction of that Temple was “unwarranted hatred” they are defining this hatred as not founded on the understandable power struggle of the earlier era but rather on an animosity which had no real cause other than simple intolerance of others.

Rechovot, the name of the third well, whose ownership was not challenged, refers to the Temple which will arise when Jews are finally blessed with redemption from their long exile and will be able to enjoy life in their land in perfect peace. The name connotes expansiveness and prophesies a time when all of Yitzchak's descendants will, like him, be able to declare that “G-d has made room for us and we will be fruitful in the land” (*Bereishet 26:22*). This is not merely a tale of a return to Eretz Yisrael and a dramatic increase in our numbers but a guarantee that despite our population explosion we will be capable of overcoming our internal dissension and living in peace with each other in the land that G-d has given us forever.

Published by **Ohr Somayach** Tanenbaum College

POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

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## A QUESTION OF RELEVANCE

What is the criterion of “relevance” in matters of Torah study? This issue arises in our *gemara* when the Sage Rav is quoted as ruling on a *halachic* issue concerning what sort of death penalty the Torah stipulates for the married daughter of a *kohen* guilty of adultery. It is clear from the passage (*Vayikra 21:9*) that her infidelity is deemed more serious than that of a married daughter of a non-*kohen* because she “profanes her father” by disgracing his holy status. There is a difference of opinion, however, between Rabbi Simon and the other Sages as to whether the penalty mentioned in that passage also applies to such a woman if she is only an “*arusa*” – betrothed through an act of *kiddushin* and forbidden to other men but not yet a “*nesua*” – whose marriage is consummated with a *Chupa*. Rav’s ruling in favor of the Sages raised a challenge from Rabbi Yosef as to why we need a ruling for something which will only be relevant in the time of Mashiach when the *Sanhedrin* will once again be empowered to inflict capital punishment.

Rabbi Yosef’s disciple, the Sage Abaye, countered with the argument that it is important to study Torah matters even if they are not relevant today just as we study the laws of Temple sacrifices although they will not be relevant until Mashiach’s arrival and the rebuilding of the *Beit Hamikdash*. But it is the challenge of the master which invited the analysis of the leading commentaries.

The same challenge is found in *Mesechta Zevachim* (44a-45b) in regard to a ruling concerning the disqualification of a sacrifice because of an improper intention of the *kohen* performing the service. (Our texts identify the challenger there as the Sage Rava but Tosefot identifies him as the same Rabbi Yosef as in our *gemara*.) Tosefot here and elsewhere raises the question why the same challenge is not presented in regard to other halachic discussions in the *Talmud* which are not relevant to the present. Among the resolutions offered by Tosefot to this problem is that of Rabbi Chaim Kohen. There is no basis for challenging the need for a halachic ruling, he explains, even if it is not relevant today. The two above mentioned challengers, however, both deal with cases of sin – adultery of the *kohen*’s daughter and disqualification of a sacrifice. The application of the halachic ruling in such cases will only be in the time of Mashiach and then everyone will be righteous so that there will be virtually no need to apply them. This is why Rabbi Yosef felt that rulings in these cases were and would remain irrelevant as opposed to other halachic matters which would regain their relevance in Messianic times.

• *Sanhedrin* 51b

## THE SEVENTH MITZVAH

We are all familiar with the seven Noachide commandments which G-d legislated for all of Mankind. But why are they referred to as commandments given to the descendants of Noach rather than to the descendants of Adam since he was the first to receive all seven of them?

This problem is based on the statement of Rabbi Yochanan in our *gemara* that in addition to six others Adam was also commanded to refrain from eating flesh cut from a live animal. This is deduced from the text of the passage (*Bereishet 2:16*) which ends with the words “eat, you shall eat” which limited his right to eat only things which were intended to serve as food, to the exclusion of a live animal whose function is to reproduce (Rashi).

This view, however, seems to be disputed by the Sage Rav (*Sanhedrin 59b*) who states that Adam was not permitted to eat any meat, even after the animal was slaughtered. This ban was in effect on all of Adam’s descendants until Noach who was told that all living things were permitted to him for consumption in the same manner as vegetation had always been but that he could not eat from the animals while they were still alive (*Bereishet 9:3-4*).

Rambam indeed saw this as a clash of opinions and recorded (*Hilchot Melachim 9:1*) the latter opinion that Adam received only six *mitzvot* with the seventh one given to Noach along with his permission to eat meat. This explains why the seven commandments incumbent on all Mankind are referred to as Noachide rather than Adamide.

Tosefot, however, attempts to reconcile the two views. The ban on Adam eating meat, he writes, related only to slaying an animal in order to eat its flesh. If the animal otherwise died its flesh was permissible but if part of it fell off from its body while it was still alive it was forbidden because Adam was bound by that seventh mitzvah as well.

Some commentaries raise a question regarding this approach. When the *gemara* challenged the aforementioned view of Rav by citing a statement of Rabbi Yehuda ben Taima that angels broiled meat for Adam to eat the response was that it was not earthly meat forbidden to Adam but meat which had descended from heaven. According to Tosafot’s approach the *gemara* could simply have answered that it was not Adam who slaughtered the animals but the angels. In defense of Tosefot it has been suggested that it is unlikely that the angels would do something in his behalf which was prohibited to him.

• *Sanhedrin* 56b

## 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.

## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PEOPLE

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

### ELISHA – THE PERFECT GUEST

Should one avail himself of the hospitality of others or to make every effort to fend for himself?

The Talmudic Sages point out that there are models in Tanach for either approach. The Prophet Shmuel made his rounds of Eretz Israel each year, judging and guiding his people, but always took his home along with him so that he would not be dependent on anyone. (*Shmuel 7:16-17*)

The Prophet Elisha, on the other hand, accepted the



hospitality of a "great woman" in Shunam who not only provided him with meals but also built for him a special guest-room furnished for his comfort.

Elisha was the perfect guest who insisted on repaying the kindness shown him. Upon discovering that his hostess was childless he blessed her to give birth to a child. When that child was the victim of a sudden death some years later the prophet brought him back to life. (*Melachim II 4:8-37*)

## NON-OBSERVANT SPOUSE

**From: Name@Withheld in Washington, DC**

*Dear Rabbi,*

*My husband and I would like to start a family. We are both in our mid-20's and Jewish. Our levels of Judaism and practice, however, are different. I am more observant (observe Shabbat, keep kosher, feel very connected to G-d). My husband, on the other hand, does not feel the same spirituality (he was not raised this way) and therefore does not place the same value on Judaic laws and customs. He makes an effort to stay home with me on Shabbat and keep kosher in the home - but this is more out of respect for me than his religious belief. Now that we are considering children I am realizing the implications this "conflict" could have on our family. I feel very alone and confused. Please help guide us in the right direction. Thank you so much.*

Dear Name@Withheld,

Your situation is difficult, but not hopeless. The mother of the family usually sets the tone in the household, especially when it comes to Jewish practice. However, to raise children as committed Jews requires the efforts of your husband as well. You and your husband must discuss, frankly and respectfully, the problems that you envisage. Explain to him the confusion that the children will have, the inconsistencies in their outlook that will result from two opposed educational outlooks. Parents must be united in raising their children.

Try not to pressure your husband. Every step you take in Judaism, discuss with him. Make as little imposition as you can on him, and suggest to him the possibility of studying some Judaism on a regular basis.

## CREMATION

**From: Judy in Los Angeles, CA**

*Dear Rabbi,*

*I am a ba'alat teshuva (newly observant). My parents are close to 90 years old, and my mother has directed that her body be cremated. I have tried to bring up this issue with no success. Do you have any advice for me? Perhaps you know of an article I can send them which may be easier than me speaking to them about it. Thank you.*

Dear Judy,

I suggest "The Bridge of Life" by Rabbi Y. M. Tuchichinsky.

In the right time and place, you might respectfully point out to your parents that according to Jewish law, one should not "sit shiva" (observe Jewish mourning rites) for someone who was cremated voluntarily, nor is one obliged to bury their ashes. You will not be able to properly mourn for her, and no *kaddish* will be said for her. This may have an impact.

In addition, the body of a voluntarily cremated person is not liable for resurrection; this is not so much because of the physical impediment, but rather in line with the concept that one who doesn't believe in resurrection will not experience it.

Cremation declares that this world is the beginning and end of Man. A basis of Jewish faith is that this is not true. The body is held on deposit, and together with the soul, it really belongs to G-d. G-d decides when and where a person should die, and what should be done with the body once it has fulfilled its "this-worldly" purpose.

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