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PARSHA INSIGHTS

AS CLOSE TO ETERNITY

“Yitzchak loved Esav, for game [food] was in his mouth; but Rivka loves Yaakov.” (25:28)

Not far from where I lived as a child there was a particularly fascinating shop. On the sides of the entrance doors two mirrors faced each other, and as you extended your leg over the threshold, millions of legs, in perfect synchronization, also extended themselves to your right and left.

It seemed that the reflections went on forever. And indeed they did. There was no beginning and no end.

To my young mind this was as close to eternity as you could get.

Of all the misrepresented words in the English language, “love” must be up there with the top scorers.

Love is unique because it’s like those mirrors. In love, the cause and the effect are indistinguishable. Any love that depends on a reason will evaporate when the reason is no longer valid. If you love someone because they are young, their old age will not appeal to you; because they’re beautiful – they better watch the lines around their eyes, the chins under their chins and the escalating battle of the bulge. Love that depends on something else isn’t really love. It’s love of... love of this; love of that.

Real love is defined as zero distance between cause and effect.

G-d chose Noach because he was a righteous person. In Parshat Lech Lecha, however, the Torah describes how G-d chose Avraham without mentioning anything about his prototypical kindness or his hospitality or any of his other merits. The reason is that G-d chose

Avraham for no other reason than that He loved him. Why did He love him? Because He loved him! The cause was the effect, and the effect was the cause, like an infinite unceasing reflection.

“Yitzchak loved Esav for game [food] was in his mouth; but Rivka loves Yaakov.”

The grammar of this verse is strange: The love of Yitzchak for Esav is described in the past tense “Yitzchak loved Esav...” The love of Rivka for Yaakov, however, is portrayed in the present: “Rivka loves Yaakov.” The love of Yitzchak was a love that depended on an outside factor: He loved Esav because “game was in his mouth.”

When that external reason turned out to be misplaced, the love ceased. Rivka’s love, on the other hand, was a love that was self-sustaining, it needed no cause, and thus the Torah describes it in the present tense, for it never came to an end.

• Based on the Ramban and the Shelah HaKadosh

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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

GIVING AND GIVING AGAIN

When the Patriarch Yitzchak blessed his son Yaakov he began with the words "And He shall give you" which our Sages interpret as meaning that "G-d shall give you and continue to give you."

But why bless him with the need for receiving continued blessings rather than have him enjoy a massive one-time showering of prosperity which would last him for a lifetime?

The answer lies in a midrashic parable about a king who used to give his sons yearly living allowances. When he realized that they came to visit him only when the time came for receiving these handouts, he began dis-

tributing his largess on a weekly basis so that his sons would visit him more often. Yaakov and all his descendants are the children of the King of Kings Who desires their attention and "gives and continues to give" so that they will constantly be turning to Him.

This is true in regard to security matters as it is to economic ones. Every momentary setback we suffer as a people in our Land must be viewed as another opportunity to appreciate the deliverance which Heaven provides to guarantee our survival.

It is this perspective of dependence upon our Heavenly Father which will secure 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

KEREM MAHaRaL – MOREINU HARAV LIVO

Near the Carmel Coast is this settlement named for the great Torah philosopher and author, Rabbi Livo of Prague.

Although there are some doubts about the authenticity of the legends of the "golem"



which he is reputed to have created to protect his people from hostile anti-Semites, the MaHaRaL occupies a very special place in Jewish history thanks to the much studied volumes of Torah thought which he authored.

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.

- Weighing meat and sharpening knives on Yom Tov
- What repairs may be done on Yom Tov
- How to order meat from the butcher and eggs from the grocer
- Providing wine or oil in proper fashion
- Carrying things in a non-weekly manner
- When reproof can be counterproductive
- Removing sticks from the succah
- Which wood can be used for burning
- How can the wood be chopped
- Collapsed houses, closed pits and vessels
- Things forbidden because they are considered creating a vessel
- The importance of being merciful
- What cannot be done to aid the cooking process
- Avoiding anything that simulates building
- The problem of leading an animal with a stick
- Making toothpicks and creating fire
- The impact of Shabbat on non-tithed products

THE UNWANTED LEFTOVERS

“We would like you to use these three hundred barrels of wine and three hundred barrels of oil for any of the needs of the *Beit Hamikdash*.”

This was the offer made by Abba Shaul ben Botnit and his fellow merchants.

Both the wine and the oil were the accumulation of what remained by the sellers of these commodities after they measured out to the buyers the amount they paid for. The foam which formed when the wine was poured caused the buyer's vessel to have the appearance of being filled, while in actuality he was receiving less than a full measure. In the case of the oil, it was the amount of oil sticking to the bottom and sides which created the false impression of a full vessel.

The *Beit Hamikdash* trustees understood that these donors were concerned that they might have unwillingly acquired these leftovers in a dishonest fashion. The donors therefore informed them that this was not so because their customers were well aware that they were

not receiving full measure, but because the buyers didn't want to devote the time necessary for guaranteeing full measure they willingly forgave the sellers for the amount left behind.

When the donors insisted that they did not wish to benefit from something which should have belonged to others, they were advised to dedicate it for some public project. Just as the rule is that someone who actually stole from somewhere and is unaware of the victim's identity when he wishes to return the stolen property is advised to do something for the general public, so too these merchants who so righteously felt uncomfortable about owning wine and oil acquired in a questionable manner could make amends by devoting these items to the public good.

Maharsha points out that the trustees did not accept the wine and oil for *Beit Hamikdash* use despite the assurance they gave the donors that they were legally theirs because they hesitated to use something that had even the slightest hint of dishonesty for sacred purposes. Although they told the merchants that they could rightly assume that the buyers had forgiven them, their failure to verbalize this in advance disqualified it for sacred use.

• *Beitzah 29a*

WHAT THE SAGES SAY

“Whoever fails to show mercy towards people is not from the seed of the Patriarch Avraham.”

• *Shabtai bar Marinas*
Beitzah 32b

TRUTH LAUNDERING

From: Carson Hughes

Dear Rabbi,

Is a “white lie” a sin? This question was raised in our Sunday School class by a 7th grade student.

Dear Carson Hughes,

A “white lie” — a falsehood that does not cause any harm — is not as serious as cheating or being dishonest in business, but it is still prohibited. Rabbi Yona of Gerona in his classic “The Gates of Repentance” enumerates nine different levels of falsifying, beginning with dishonesty in crime and monetary matters and ending with a few types of white lies. I highly recommend the study of this passage.

In limited cases lying is permitted. For instance, it is sanctioned where it will bring peace between people. Moshe’s brother Aharon is praised for the way he made peace between quarreling parties. Aharon would approach one of the people and say: “The other person

sent me to tell you that he apologizes and is truly sorry for the way he acted towards you.” Then he would go to the other person and say the same thing. The next time the two people would meet on the street they would conciliate and ask each other for forgiveness.

Even when it is permitted to lie, one should avoid it if possible, as illustrated by the following incident in the Talmud. The wife of the great Talmudic Sage Rav always did the opposite of what he requested. If Rav asked for lentils she made beans, if he asked for beans she made lentils. When Rav’s son, Chiya, grew up, he tried to rectify the situation by telling his mother the opposite of what his father wanted, thereby tricking her into making the correct food. Rav, realizing what Chiya had done, chastised him by quoting the verse, “They have taught their tongues to speak falsehood.” Rav understood the verse to mean that a person should avoid lying even when it’s permitted, lest he become accustomed to lying and lose his integrity.

Sources:

- *The Gates of Repentance, Gate 3, notes 178-186*
- *Tractate Yevamot 63a, 65b*
- *Yirmiyahu 9*
- *Tractate Kalla Rabbati 3:5*

WHAT’S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

TRASH TOTING TOTS

Question: In my neighborhood, garbage is placed in, and collected from, large bins centrally located. I recently passed near such a bin and observed a little boy quickly walking away from it after placing a smelly bag of garbage on the street because he could not reach the opening of the bin. I was very upset at this sight and would like to know what was the right thing to do.

Answer: We can assume that you did your civic duty of tossing that bag of garbage into the bin, and your question relates to what you can do to prevent the recurrence of such an unpleasant mess.

It is understandable for a busy homemaker with a

family to sometimes desperately rely on a tot to tote the overflowing trash can to the public bin. But a child is only a child, and such reliance borders on irresponsibility.

If you are aware of the identity of the family to which that child belongs the right thing to do is to call to the attention of the parents, either personally or by letter, what you witnessed, and to impress upon them the need to be more careful in how the child disposes of the disposables. It might also be a good idea to bring this matter to the attention of the local rabbi who could include in one of his public talks some guidance in this matter.

THE YOUNG MITZVAH ENTREPRENEUR

Ever watch little boys pouncing upon the candies thrown at the *aufruf* of a *chatan* or at any occasion when sweets are for the grabbing?

It doesn't take much imagination to figure out what these tots are going to do with those treats. But even the wildest imagination could not anticipate what an eight-year old youngster in the Arzei Habirah neighborhood of Jerusalem does with the sweets he gathers.

This little boy has succeeded in amassing quite a collection of toffee candies he has acquired at celebrations. But he has not eaten them. Instead he has made a practice of persuading youngsters like himself and even younger to say *tehillim* by offering them these candies as a reward.

This young mitzvah-entrepreneur has succeeded in demonstrating what a sacred initiative can accomplish at any age.

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