

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

WAKE-UP CALL

“And Yitzchak prayed to Hashem opposite his wife.” (25:20)

The verse here doesn't say that Yitzchak prayed 'about' his wife, rather, 'opposite' his wife. The Talmud (Yevamot 64) learns from this anomaly that both Yitzchak and Rivka were barren. And why, asks the Talmud, were our Patriarchs incapable of bearing children? Because G-d desires the prayers of the righteous.

“The will of those that fear Him, He will do, and to their cries He will hearken and save them.” (Tehillim 145:19)

Ostensibly, the second half of the verse is redundant. If G-d does the will of those that fear Him, surely that means that He will hear their cries and save them. What is the second half of the verse adding here?

Someone who truly fears G-d has no will or desire. To a person like this, all is good and appropriate and thus he or she seeks for nothing from G-d.

However, since G-d desires the prayers of the righteous, He awakens in them the desire for something. This is the explanation of the verse in Tehillim. The first part of the verse can also be read, “He will make desire in those that fear Him,” and thus they will need to pray for that thing, and then afterwards, “Their cries He will hear and save them,” for G-d desires the prayers of the righteous.

• Source: *Kotzke Rebbe in Iturei Torah*

A TOPICAL MESSAGE FROM THE ROSHEI YESHIVA OF YESHIVAT OHR SOMAYACH

The outstanding success which has blessed Ohr Somayach's efforts in Yerushalayim, Toronto, London, Johannesburg and Sydney, and the impact which our work has had on countless campuses, communities and individuals throughout the world, is certainly something for which we must constantly offer thanks to Heaven.

As you are well aware, this success has been the result of overcoming, with Heaven's help, so many obstacles on the way to reaching our goal. In a material sense the challenge of securing funds for the maintenance and expansion of our wide range of programs has become a very serious issue in light of the current economic situation. Add to this the urgent need to secure and expand physical facilities to more efficiently accommodate the ever-growing number of people seeking our help.

The proper hashkafa for facing such challenges can be learned from what happened at the akeida right after Avraham Avinu was commanded to desist from slaughtering his son. “Then Avraham looked up and saw behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns.”

How did Avraham, without a direct command, know that this ram was intended to serve as a korban in place of Yitzchak?

Aggadic tradition has it that Satan attempted to prevent the ram from approaching Avraham by getting its horns stuck in the thicket of the surrounding trees. When Avraham saw this obstacle being placed before him by the very same Satan who had persistently tried to dissuade him from offering his son, he realized that this was a sign from Heaven that this ram was to be a korban.

When we face difficulties such as the paying of salaries on time, or realize that we cannot afford to continue or expand particular programs, we must view these crises as “ram horns caught in the thicket.”

While we consistently pray for Heavenly help in surviving this crisis, we also look towards our alumni, our traditional supporters, and every Jew who cares, to help us “take the ram out of the thickets” and continue our sacred efforts.

Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

Rabbi Nota Schiller

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

PHILISTINES AND PALESTINIANS

The envy felt by the nations throughout history towards the success of Jews in every field seems to find expression in an incident described in this week's Torah portion.

"Yitzchak sowed in the land and in that year reaped a hundredfold... the man became great and kept becoming greater... and the Philistines envied him."
(*Bereishet* 26:12-14)

The envious Philistines stopped up and filled with earth

the wells that Yitzchak's father had dug, and when Yitzchak's servants dug two new wells of fresh water the Philistines claimed the water was theirs. Only when a third well was dug there was finally no resistance.

The success of Jews in our own day in turning a barren land into a thriving state has once again stirred the envy of "Philistines". We must be confident that we will someday reach that third uncontested well and enjoy a peaceful 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

THE JUDEAN HILLS AND THE BAR KOCHBA REBELLION

The theory of historians that Jews took refuge in the Judean hills during the Bar Kochba rebellion received some support from a recent archeological discovery.

In a 20-meter-deep cave, archeologists from Hebrew and Bar Ilan Universities found 120 gold, silver



and bronze coins believed to have been used by Jewish refugees during that rebellion in 132-135 CE. Most of these coins were originally Roman but the Jewish fighters impressed them with their own insignia and dated them for each year of the rebellion.

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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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- When one discovers that his wine has become vinegar
- Diluting raw wine with water and making wine from lees
- Which wine could be used for *nesachim* on the altar and for kiddush on Shabbat
- Responsibility of the seller of wine for its quality
- Selling a site for building a wedding hall or other structures
- Position of the *keruvim* on the Holy Ark
- Access to reservoir in someone else's home

WINE FOR THE ALTAR

Along with the communal sacrifices offered on the altar in the Beit Hamikdash was the offering of *nesachim* – wine poured into a duct on the altar.

Since the wine was part of a sacred service, it had to be of quality. Several kinds of wine were disqualified based on passages in Scripture that attest to their lack of the required quality.

One is wine that was left uncovered and there is a danger that a serpent may have injected his poisonous venom into it. Even if we strain the wine and eliminate the venom this wine is unfit for use upon the altar. Another example is wine that developed a repugnant odor as a result of being stored in an unclean vessel.

The reason for the disqualification of both these wines is a passage that chastises Jews for offering sick and disabled animals as sacrifices. The Prophet Malachi (1:8) challenges

these offenders. “If you offered such to your governor, would he be pleased and would he show favor to you?”

Since wine which contained venom or which has a bad odor would be unfit as a gift to a human ruler, it is considered as unfit as an offering to Heaven.

Another wine disqualified for us in *nesachim* is white wine. This is based on a passage (*Mishlei* 23:31) in which King Solomon advises those who wish to avoid the danger of intoxication, “Look not upon the wine when it is red.” The implication is that red wine is generally of better quality and is more likely to have a greater impact, which makes it more suitable for *nesachim* use.

(This is one of the reasons why red wine is preferred for the four cups of the Pesach Seder unless white wine of better quality is available.)

• *Bava Batra 97b*

What the SAGES Say

“It is not customary for a man to reside in the home of his father-in-law.”

• *Gemara based on the Book of Ben Sira - Bava Batra 98b*

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MALADY OR MEDICINE

From: Jennie

*Dear Rabbi,
What is the Torah's position on healing? Since everything is from G-d, do sickness and ailments have to be suffered because that's G-d's will? Or can we try to cure the maladies sent by G-d? If so, doesn't that undermine His intentions?*

Dear Jennie,

According to Judaism, everything that happens, whether we perceive it as good or as bad, comes from G-d – including illness and ailments.

Of course, in the case of physical sickness, there are natural causes and venues through which the illness or malady is contracted or occurs. But the root of the illness and a person's susceptibility to it are from G-d.

G-d often sends the sickness as a warning signal that something is not only physically out of balance, but spiritually out of sync as well. This is not a curse but rather a blessing in disguise because it enables us to do spiritual reckoning and find out where we need correcting.

Would a person moving his hand toward fire resent the pain from the heat causing him to recoil before roasting his fingers? Would he complain, "Why did G-d have to cause me this pain?" Of course not! He'd be thankful for the pain that saved him from serious harm. So too sickness is viewed as a warning sign that he may need to recoil from or adjust what he's doing wrong before causing serious damage.

The converse is also true: Just as one wouldn't reconcile himself to the pain from the flame based on the reasoning that it's from G-d but would rather recoil, so too in healing.

Our recognition that illness comes from G-d does not mean we are to reconcile ourselves to the pain but rather we must remove the malady – spiritually by recoiling from transgression and physically by seeking a cure.

This is the meaning of the teaching of the Sages that G-d gives permission and allows the doctor to heal. G-d brings sickness not because He wants there to be sickness, but because He wants there to be healing, both physical and spiritual. A person's attempt to cure his body must be accompanied by an attempt to mend his ways.

The Torah describes how the People, audaciously complaining about their condition in the desert despite G-d's miraculous provision for them, were smitten by a plague of poisonous snakes in which many died. The people realized they were being punished for their venomous speech against G-d and Moses and repented. G-d told Moses to fashion a snake and place it on a pole for the people to see (probably the original source for the well-known symbol of Medicine, see our article **The Healing Serpent**). So, "Moses made a copper snake and put it on a pole, and whenever a snake bit a man, he would gaze upon the copper snake and live" (Numbers 21:5-9).

Commenting on this event, our Sages challenged, "And does the copper snake cause life or death? Rather, those who saw the snake and humbled themselves before G-d in repentance were cured, those who didn't were not" (Rosh Hashanah 29a).

From these sources we see that illness comes from G-d not because He wants illness but rather because He wants us to correct our ways. If we focus on the spiritual malady underlying the sickness, G-d finds favor in the doctor's attempt to heal. After all, the illness was only brought in order to alarm us to the need for spiritual realigning. With this approach, healing does not undermine G-d's intention; it brings us in line with His will.

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HEADING OFF A BINGE

Question: I sometimes find myself sitting at a wedding meal near a fellow who is obviously imbibing too much alcohol and is in danger of getting drunk. What is the right thing to do to help him avoid embarrassing himself by losing control of his actions?

Answer: Taking away his supply of liquor will not always work because there is always more at another table. What you can do is enlist the aid of his wife or another member of

his family who may have the ability to either control him or take him home.

If such help is not available you can tell him that he doesn't look well and offer to take him outside for some air. This break may be successful in bringing his drinking to a halt, especially if you whisper into his ear that continued drinking will seriously harm him and embarrass his family and friends by spoiling the atmosphere of the wedding.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

A GRAVESIDE WISH

A touching story circulated in Jerusalem soon after the recent passing of Rabbi Shlomo Lorincz, of blessed memory. This distinguished activist, who served for many years as the representative of the Torah community in the Israeli Knesset, was an accomplished Torah scholar who studied in his later years together with a neighbor in the Kiryat Mattersdorf neighborhood of Jerusalem.

This neighbor was Rabbi Simcha Wasserman, of blessed memory, a highly respected Torah educator. When Rabbi Wasserman passed away more than a decade ago Rabbi Lorincz instructed his family to purchase a burial plot next to that of his beloved learning partner. Since Rabbi Wasserman left behind no children, the Lorincz family was instructed

that whenever psalms would be recited at his graveside, a psalm should also be recited at the neighboring grave even if it was not on the *yahrzeit* anniversary of Rabbi Wasserman's death when such psalms are traditionally recited by his survivors.

The family of the deceased traditionally comes to his grave at the end of their *shiva* mourning period. But that day was Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan when such a visit is not made. The first opportunity to do so was on the second day of Cheshvan which turned out to be the *yahrzeit* of Rabbi Wasserman.

A graveside wish that Heaven fulfilled in such a touching way.

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